



ESSAY ON THE CONFERENCE UNSETTLED
Dialogues on Urban Temporalities

PHD Seminar Doing Urban Studies 280.491 – 2017S
SKuOR – Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sabine Knierbein – Prof. Dr. Charis Christodoulou



Authors
Elina Kränzle
Santiago Sanchez Guzman

Vienna University of Technology
Faculty of architecture and planning
Department of spatial planning

June 27, 2017

ESSAY ON THE CONFERENCE UNSETTLED
Dialogues on Urban Temporalities

PHD Seminar Doing Urban Studies 280.491 – 2017S
SKuOR – Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sabine Knierbein – Prof. Dr. Charis Christodoulou

PRESENTATION

This essay is the result of a dialogue between the two authors, Elina Kränzler and Santiago Sanchez Guzman, about some of the concepts and topics presented in the sub-chapter of urban temporalities during the conference “**Unsettled**, Urban Routines, temporalities and contestations” held in Vienna during the 29th and 31st of march 2017.

For these dialogues we reviewed our own notes taken during the presentations and the book of abstracts of the conference.

Thus, we will discuss the topics of five presentations as follows:

- How to do things with research?
By Bernd Kniess and Anna Richter
- The politics of small things: conceptualizing the repertoire of policy and resistance at the street level.
By Nanke Verloo
- The time of gentrification: Theory, history, and urban change
By Judit Bodnar
- Misplaced: Permanent Non-Citizens and their Silent Pursuit to Belong
By Racha Daher
- The Constitution and Emergence of Al-SOUQ in the Zaatari refugee camp
By Sara Al-Nassir

These dialogues aimed to examine the presentations from different angles. In order to structure our dialogic reviews, we looked at the recommended “categories” of the research presentations and **highlighted them in red** in each text. The categories used are:

- Research gap/phenomena studied
- Research approach
- Empirical material and theory linkages
- Research positionality and reflexivity
- Urban temporalities

How to do things with research?

Bernd Kniess and Anna Richter

Presenting their project “University of the neighbourhoods”, Bernd Kniess and Anna Richter gave insights into teaching and research carried out in a neighbourhood in Hamburg, where they were invited by a group of citizens to develop a design of a community centre to be developed together with the refugees who were newly housed in the area. Instead of handing the residents a finalized visualized design of the community centre, the project team developed a process-oriented proposal, on how to jointly develop the centre with neighbours, refugees and students. The **research approach** the two presented was firstly research by design, and secondly design by research, all carried out in a “learning by doing”-fashion and exploratory way when building e.g. a mini-golf course or creating a neighbourhood festival.

Although the approach is very involved with the real life world of cities and its inhabitants, it would be interesting to learn more about how they addressed a certain **research gap** addressed in the project and how their own **positionality as researchers** or university students was reflected in the activities.

The authors **position themselves** with a critical perspective about the notion of “accommodation” of refugees due to its objectification and proposed the discussion should be done from a perspective concerned with dwelling and housing as a doing. These perspectives are built upon the **theoretical framework** and literature connections presented including McFarlane(2011), Lefebvre(1965) and Elden (2004), as well as an **empirical research** and observation of several refugee shelter in Germany and its regulations. Although the presentation was originally not intended to be part of the panel about **temporalities**, it refers in any case to the everyday life of refugees and their activities.

The politics of small things: conceptualizing the repertoire of policy and resistance at the street level

Nanke Verloo

Based on a conflict between urban planning officials and welfare professionals and a group of citizens in a new urban neighbourhood in The Hague, Nanke Verloo pointed out the “critical moments” that shaped the discourse and fight for who would be represented and participate in the neighbourhood’s community centre. With this **approach** she aimed to analytically capture the **phenomenon of conflict** in urban neighbourhoods, which she assumes can not just be explained through a more contextualized analysis of different stakeholders, but rather can be explained through “small things”, such as for example the escalation of a fight between a social worker and a citizen. As a trained anthropologist Nanke Verloo worked very closely to her **empirical study**, with a detailed outline of the story of that community centre. The **link to agonistic democratic theory** and Hannah Arendt’s notion of the public sphere though has not been pointed out so clearly. How does she **relate her empirical findings** more broadly to these concepts?

The researcher explores the paradoxical and controversial **temporalities** of the everyday life practices between state strategies and community tactics and contextualized this conceptualization within her case study. The author **positions her research** recognizing conflicts as opportunities for democratic development and the possibility for urban negotiations.

The time of gentrification: Theory, history, and urban change

Judit Bodnar

Judit Bodnar developed an **approach** that considers gentrification not from its causes and consequences but seeks to understand the whole lifetime of a gentrification project and puts into perspective historical **phenomena of urban change**, such as the transformation of Paris with Haussmann. Based on the case Cabrini Green, a housing project in Chicago, famous as an example of “failed” social housing, Bodnar explains the gentrification of the area, with the idea of a new urbanism-style future of the area through the national Hope 6 programme for urban renewal, but finally the rebuilding of high-rise housing, where the big blocks of social housing have been condemned just some years before. Although she **relates her research to common gentrification theory**, the research does not explore new ways of understanding gentrification, but puts emphasis on understanding the **temporality of gentrification** as an intensified version of general urban change. It is rather implicit that her lifetime-approach to gentrification could be transferred to processes of urban renewal and gentrification in other cities as well.

Based on her **empirical evaluation**, the researcher proposed that some of the negative impacts of urban renewal, or better say in some degree gentrification, can be controlled or diminished, when reducing the speed of urban transformation processes. Deaccelerating these processes can lead to giving more time to the dwellers and inhabitants to “accommodate” to the change and socialize some of its benefits.

What consequences for policy or activism can we derive from the insights of her research and what could the **position of the urban researcher** be in the context of gentrification processes? Does an urban researcher act as a distant analyst or rather an involved citizen looking for answers on how to influence gentrification processes for better cities?

Misplaced: Permanent Non-Citizens and their Silent Pursuit to Belong

Racha Daher

Architect and urban designer Racha Daher explored the fascinating different temporalities of non-citizens but long-term residents of Dubai, which account for 90% of the entire city's population. With her **research approach** she identified and articulated different social and spatial dimensions of identity, citizenship and belonging of foreigners and expats living in the most populated Arab Emirate city, which can be summarized in three main topics. The first one is related to Dubai's urban spatial characteristics and historical urbanization process, explaining how different social groups developed fragmented and heterogeneous housing fabrics with very few qualified public spaces for interaction between expats and nationals. The second aspect she explored were the different **temporalities, cycles and routines** of short and long term expatriates keeping and renovating its residency permits highlighting why **several authors refer** to Dubai as a corporation more than as a city. As a conclusion of this part a **reflexive** relationship is proposed by the author when understanding expatriates as "contemporary nomads" and "forever unsettled" due to the different migration policies and its spatial and temporal characteristics previously analysed.

While the researcher explored the **studied phenomena** features and conceptual framework within the first two parts, within the last topic she explained her research methodology and showed some of her **empirical material** obtained by interviewing, talking and listening to different expats who lived or actually still live in Dubai.

Although architect Racha Daher presented a very solid and objective scientific and sociological perspective of the reality lived by expats and migrants in Dubai her own **research positionality** became clear when she quoted and identified with an answer from one of the subjects interviewed about where was home for him. The person answered that "... home is not one place... sometimes is Dubai, sometimes it is New York, sometimes it is Palestine. Sometimes it is family, sometimes it is experience and sometimes it is roots".

The Constitution and Emergence of AI-SOUQ in the Zaatari refugee camp

Sara Al-Nassir

Architect and PHD researcher Sara Al-Nassir presented part of the results of her **empirical research** carried out during July 2016 in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. With her fieldwork in the street markets in Zaatari and **research approach** aiming to represent the lived experience/ lived reality of the street vendors, the researcher explored the state of “permanent temporariness” as a sort of immanent **temporality** of the refugees whose exile can last for decades living in a “temporal space”. Al-Nassir’s **theoretical framework** aims to understand and explain the interplay that human agency and space have produced or “re-produced” when formalized very basic stages of “market” exchange, interactions in the everyday life and power structures within the refugee camp. The conceptualization of agency from Bork-Hüffer et al. 2014 and understanding of the everyday from Fischer-Nebmaier from 2015 are key literature references for the author, whose broader understanding of space as a social product refers to its mental, physical and lived dimensions. The author **studied the phenomena** intensively with visits and interviews of different actors in the refugee camp, rooting her conclusions upon her findings. She concluded that camps evolve into cities, reworking identities, subjectivities and belongings of its inhabitants and thus put emphasis on the opportunities for policy makers, planners and researchers to put themselves in a **position of learning from** the refugees’ creative ways of appropriating spaces in camps. She therefore opened up opportunities of further developing **reflexivity** in researching issues of refuge and migration.