

Emergent urban spaces: a planetary perspective

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The session explores some of the conceptual, methodological and practical strengths and limitations of one dominant approach in contemporary urban theory – planetary urbanisation. With its main advocate being Brenner (2014), this is a neo-Lefebvrian approach, which intends to overcome dichotomies such as North and South, developed and developing, and city and countryside. It challenges bounded urbanisms and holds the key assumption that in our contemporary world everything is urban. According to Brenner (2014), the urban describes the concentration of infrastructure and populations in cities (implosions) but, simultaneously, it refers to urban features in non-urban settings (explosions). Hence, the urban represents a global condition characterised by a set of politico-economic relations associated with processes of extractivism, neoliberalism, capitalist land management, etc. Though an increasingly dominant approach in urban studies, planetary urbanisation perspectives also pose new challenges: Current research mainly set out a new research agenda but has not provided a sufficient theoretical and methodological ‘tool kit’ which allows for its application. In addition, planetary urbanism’s universalising vocabulary can be criticised for leaving hardly any room in deciphering new and ‘emergent urban spaces’.

In a world where everything is urban, are there still any particularities about Northern, Southern, Western, or Eastern urbanisms? How do policy makers and planners involved in the development and implementation of a new 'global urban agenda' address planetary urbanisation? Where have the particularities of cities gone? What are the socio-environmental consequences of this process? The contributions to this session will address these questions from different perspectives, namely: Paola Alfaro D'Alençon (Technical University, Berlin, Germany) analyses similarities and differences in processes (i.e.: informality, land management, right to the city) associated with planetary urbanisation in Northern and Southern cities (paola.alfarodalencon@tu-berlin.de) Ana Cláudia Cardoso (Federal University of Pará, Brazil) illustrates how the planetary urbanization process reaches the Western Amazon region of Brazil. She particularly focuses on a discussion of processes of urban expansion and on multi-scalar relationships between built and natural spaces. (aclaudiacardoso@gmail.com; acardoso@ufpa.br) Philipp Horn (The Open University, UK) investigates the nexus between planetary urbanisation and land management with a particular focus on conflicts around indigenous communal rights and human rights for tenure and shelter. (Philipp.Horn@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk) Roberto Monte Mor (Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil) explores the limits of present urbanization patterns in developing countries when considering an environmental dimension of planetary urbanization. (montemor@cedeplar.ufmg.br)