CUAA Sessions as of 8/25/25- Subject to change before final program

Contents

4551 Illiberal Urbanisms: Violent Hauntologies of Our Urbanizing World

5505 Panel 2 - Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change

11/21/2025 08:30 AM-11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Marriott Bacchus

Oral Presentation Session; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Panel 2 - Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change

This panel examines how urban communities, living on the margins of interconnected energy hubs, manage the sociocultural and health effects of chemical air pollution. A secondary focus explores how longstanding struggles over industrial toxicity are newly being shaped as climate science becomes increasingly integral to contemporary governance. The panelists, all contributors to the forthcoming edited volume Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change, draw on qualitative methods - including ethnographic participant observation and historical archival research - applied at a scale typically reserved for quantitative climate studies. The panelists work within a clear network of scientists, policymakers, workers, and residents across transnational sites. Each panelist investigates the practices and interactions of ordinary people as they grapple with energy industries that are at the center of their lives and with community debates about their health and that of the planet. By studying these networked practices and interactions as key drivers for reordering urban life and politics, we may be better able to dismantle homogenized perspectives on transboundary air pollution to build more equitable and sustainable cities.

Organizer: Kerry Ryan Chance , Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Kerry Ryan Chance , Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: Christine Walley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Kerry Ryan Chance

Presentations: Atmospheres of Hazard: Different Socio-Technical Ways of Knowing Airborne Risks in North China

This paper, focusing on an energy hub of North China, examines different socio-technical modes of knowing atmospheres of hazard. Exploring residents' use of the Air Quality Index, mobile phone apps, collecting medical evidence, and relying on somatic symptoms, the paper tracks how bodies, lives, and populations become entangled with atmospheric risks. The paper argues that as citizens engage in networks of ecological redress around hazardous atmospheres, their political and personal stakes in environmental governance fracture shared visions of local and global energy futures.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Bruckermann

"Cheap" Life: Asthma and the Passing of a Refinery in Durban, South Africa

In May 2024, the state-owned Central Energy Fund (CEF) bought a flooded and inoperable oil refinery in Durban, South Africa, for 1 rand (or 5 cents in $US). The purchase was meant to mark a new era of environmental struggle between the state and citizens in response to emerging forms of "energy transition" in South Africa, an ostensible move away from fossil fuels and toward less-carbon intensive alternatives. By focusing on asthma symptoms among local residents living near to the refinery, this paper examines public discussions about the "cheap" refinery and "cheap life" in the petrochemical hub of Durban at a time when demands for energy justice and Pan-African social ownership are taking hold.

Presenter(s): Stefan Ogedengbe

Air Pollution without Human Lungs: Lignite Mining and "Geopolitics" against Geopolitics in Germany

This paper unpacks issues of air pollution and geopolitics in Germany's Rhineland region, where vast open-pit mines supply power plants and energy generation. Lussem analyzes how, in this "hotspot of energy transition," diverse critical civil society actors try to localize problems associated with global climate change in the context of national coal exit policies. This contribution focuses on how these actors frame air pollution as a question of the unequal distribution of planetary habitability between generations. The paper ends with a brief reflection on the return of "classical" geopolitics in the sense of accounting for "Earth" as a political actor.

Presenter(s): Felix Lussem

Prospectors: Power and Pollution in South Lebanon's Artisanal Crypto Mines

Amidst Lebanon's worsening economic crisis, the paper focuses on South Lebanon as a hotspot for small-scale, artisanal cryptocurrency mining due to its availability of Litani River hydropower. The chapter delves into economic opportunities created for some and new demands on an aging fleet of dams and the rural communities that rely on them. Discussing how miners navigate a complex and dynamic terrain, the paper investigates how this geography of digital extraction exposes the changing relationships between rural communities and the state, as energy infrastructure itself becomes a newly contested site of accumulation.

Presenter(s): Adam Hasan

Presenters: Charlotte Bruckermann, Stefan Ogedengbe, Felix Lussem, University of Cologne, Adam Hasan

3779 The Social Properties of Concrete

11/21/2025 10:15 AM-11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Marriott Studio 4

Roundtable/Town Hall ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

The Social Properties of Concrete

Concrete is the most ubiquitous human-made building material in the world. What might be learned about social life from thinking through the manifold ways that concrete is brought to bear on the world? What might be learned about concrete by understanding how social, political, and economic practices embed themselves in particular ways within the material? The recently published volume, The Social Life of Concrete (punctum books, 2025) considers these questions by developing conceptual insights from a range of globally situated case studies. Across its 40 chapters, the authors in the volume reveal concrete's local impacts, its global history, and its planetary reach. Read together, the book develops new insights into the materiality of infrastructures, modernization, democracy, settler colonialism, militarism, ecological transformation, and more. In this roundtable, the authors and editors of the book come together to explore the insights their work has developed and the questions the book has produced. We will debate our conceptual findings, explore their limits, and speculate about the material's future(s).

Organizer: Eli Elinoff, Victoria University of Wellington

Discussant: Kali Rubaii, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Presenters:Lukas Ley, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Rachel Cypher , Jerome Whitington, New York University, Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

3238 Security Labour: Working towards (In)Security

11/21/2025 12:45 PM-11/21/2025 02:15 PM

Marriott Studio 4

Roundtable/Town Hall ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Security Labour: Working towards (In)Security

Although numerous studies on security show how security is shaped by questions of labour, having to do with such issues as working hours, working conditions, and relationships with colleagues, the analytical lens of labour has not been systematically

applied to the field of security. In this roundtable, we centralize the experiences of security workers as prime conduits through which to view not only the inner workings of security regimes, but also the effects these regimes have on the people who labour within them. This is relevant considering the exponential growth and diversification of security infrastructures and security-related tasks. Furthermore, in addition to the growth and expansion of the uniformed and formalised security workers within clearly recognized career paths, we also see workers in numerous (non-security) fields who are compelled to engage in practices that aim, in covert/overt ways, to achieve "security". We thus aim to better understand the efforts and practices of labour that are traditionally and commonly associated with security, such as guarding, patrolling, and access control, and the various tasks that are not defined as security, but also centre around security practices, often even pervading seemingly non-security occupations like service work. In this roundtable session, we bring together experts from different ethnographic practices to discuss the opportunities of a research agenda that analyses security as labour. By gathering speakers who have done extensive research in both 'classical' security fields and those that have been 'coopted' into doing security work, we will discuss how ideas and experiences of security and insecurity pervade different spheres of labour and the impact this has for both the individuals working in these industries, as well as the (re)production of global capital circuits of power.

Organizer: Tessa Diphoorn , Erella Grassiani

Discussant: Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center, Sahana Ghosh, National University of Singapore

Presenters: Rivke Jaffe , Taveeshi Singh , Jessica Katzenstein, Arizona State University, Sareeta Amrute, The New School, Beatrice Jauregui, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Negar Razavi, Princeton University, Edward Schwarzschild

2540 The Sensory City: Feeling and Futurity in Urban Southeast Asia

11/21/2025 12:45 PM-11/21/2025 02:15 PM

Sheraton Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Oral Presentation Session ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

The Sensory City: Feeling and Futurity in Urban Southeast Asia

What will the city of tomorrow be like? And what will it feel like to be there? In Southeast Asia today, developments like Nusantara in Indonesia, Silicon Island in Malaysia, and Gardens by the Bay in Singapore are competing to provide vivid sensory models of the

possible future: "smart," "sustainable," even "more-than-human" cities (Wang 2024) designed by renowned international architects and built in rainforests, on reclaimed coastlines, and on islands made of imported sand (Munn 2021). Others, such as Sihanoukville in Cambodia and Forest City in Malaysia, have garnered global attention for their purported emptiness as "ghost cities" of extreme proportions (Avery and Moser 2023, Moser 2018). These projects, often controversial and unfinished, promise innovations they are hard-pressed to deliver and draw as much attention for their failures as their anticipated futures. Underpopulated, under construction, or ungrounded, they exemplify a certain popular imaginary of possibility while existing in the present as an affective reminder of what could or should have been (Luvaas and Chio 2025).

Nevertheless, these are very real places one can visit, live in, and work in. This panel critically examines the sensory landscapes of these new urban developments in Southeast Asia and the material and political infrastructures that generate and sustain them. Chio explores the work of two artists, Ai Weiwei and Sim Chi Yin, alongside architectural renderings, to expose a key tension that underlies many developments in Asia today. She argues that the glossy urban futures promised by these projects depend upon a design imaginary of a bucolic, rural past and a rural present that must be erased through the process of building. Koh discusses the green sensibility promoted by Singapore through projects like Gardens by the Bay, a showpiece of living architecture that draws tourists to a shifting sandscape of sinkholes and decomposing trees. The spectacle of sustainability, she demonstrates, literally covers over a legacy of environmental destruction. Schwenkel draws from "soundwork" conducted in formally planned, unplanned, and "deplanned" urban environments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar to argue that soundscapes serve as a sensory archive of urban transformation, a sonic, rather than visual, blueprint of what a city has been and may become. Luvaas, finally, offers a photo-ethnographic documentation of what it's like to be on the ground in future Southeast Asian cities right now. Through evocative and intimate portraits of Forest City and Nusantara as they are inhabited today, he shows how the future lingers as a felt presence in the lived moment. In each paper, the future emerges as a lived, somatic-sensory experience, constructed out of, but not defined or limited by, the built environment. It is a felt reality, rather than just an imagined temporality.

Organizer: Jenny Chio, University of Southern California, Brent Luvaas, Drexel University

Chair: Brent Luvaas, Drexel University

Discussant: Joshua Babcock, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presentations: A Pastoral Present for the Urban Future: Land Reclamation, Domestic Architecture, and the Design of an Ideal City in Asia

This paper explores designs of the "ideal city" in Asia through works by two artists: photographer Sim Chi Yin's ongoing project "Shifting Sands" and Ai Weiwei's 2012 film "Ordos 100." Shifting Sands is a multi-year photographic exploration of the transnational market for sand needed for land reclamation and urban infrastructure construction. Ordos 100 documents a project curated by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei in 2008 in which 100 architects were asked to design 100 domestic residences (with no intention to construct) for the new city of Ordos, China. By situating these artists' works alongside ethnographic observations of Southeast Asian eco-cities now in development, I explore how the idea of the "ideal city" in Asia is rooted in the enfolding of a pastoral present within the seemingly inevitable urban future. To solve the problems of climate change and urban decay, such projects aggressively promote "ecological" and "smart" features to a rising Asian middle class with the financial and cultural capital to invest in sustainable affluence. In fantastically photorealistic architectural renderings that combine a futuristic aesthetics of glass and concrete high-rises with lush tropical waterfront landscapes, the near-future of urban Asia exists within a bucolic, verdant present. The temporality of such aesthetics reveals a curious contradiction where an imagined rural past, from which elements of the pastoral are extracted, becomes fundamental to the ideal city in Asia.

Presenter(s): Jenny Chio

Unsettling Hegemonic Grounds: Subsurface Politics in Singapore

Singapore's 'greenness' and reputation as a 'garden city' have become an economic boon and a 'national symbol of identity and pride' (Goh 2014: 245). Yet critics have argued the nature of the city-state's environmentalism is an overly aestheticized, surface-level one that fails to disrupt the logics of colonialism and capitalism (Myers 2015). Paying attention to this tension, this paper considers how the meanings of nature and ecological sustainability are entangled with state-making. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Singapore's 101-hectare nature-park, Gardens by the Bay, that was entirely 'reclaimed' from the sea, I move beyond surface politics of aesthetics to the subsurface of reclaimed land to consider what kinds of textures and material properties make certain kinds of grounds difficult to govern. This paper shows how terraforming takes us deeper than an expected story of speedy capitalism to a more complex and considered genealogy of slow settlement. I consider what must be done to the ground to make it territory (controlled by a sovereign) or environment (known by a certain kind of discipline). By casting the ground as my figure of analysis, I ruminate on what makes the ground in Singapore difficult to frame or organize in these ways.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Koh

Sonic Blueprints on the Future: Rethinking the Planned City through Sound

This paper rethinks the master-planned city through its soundscapes, asking what urban sounds—and their absence—reveal about the aspirations and afterlives of urban planning. By shifting from visual to acoustic analysis, I examine how sonic environments reflect the outcomes and challenges of centralized planning regimes. Drawing on "soundwork" in cities in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar, I use sound to illuminate three interconnected planning iterations: formal planning, unplanning (design interventions), and deplanning (disassembly of planned spaces). These processes involve the rejection or alteration of rigid planning systems, resulting in unplanned growth and fragmentation of built space. The sonic dimensions of these cities—manifested in the echoes of abandoned construction, the cacophony of ad hoc renovations, or the eerie silence of unpopluated districts—underscore the entanglements of power, adaptation, and abandonment. These sonic phenomena index shifts in urban imaginaries and disruptions to planning logics tied to political and economic changes. Rather than view planned cities as deprived of sensory intensity, I argue that sound provides a rich archive of urban transformation—one that captures the tension between design intentions and their dissolution in practice. What emerges is not a critique of planning's "radical indeterminacy," but a rethinking of how people sense and imagine urban futures—through sonic rather than visual blueprints.

Presenter(s): Christina Schwenkel

The Future as an Architecture of Now: Living Today in Tomorrow's Southeast Asian Cities

Forest City, Malaysia promotes itself as a "prime model of future city," a smart, sustainable mega-development of 700,000 people built across four reclaimed islands in the Johor Strait. The pandemic, however, precipitated a slowdown in sales. Today, there is only one island and a population of around 7,000 residents. There are no sidewalks and buildings already show cracks at their base. Nusantara, meanwhile, is the future capital of Indonesia, another "eco-city" that promises to radically re-envision what it means for humans to live with nature. A changing presidential administration and a dearth of foreign investors have made its fate also uncertain. Yet Nusantara, like Forest City, already has residents, including hundreds of workers, vendors, and municipal administrators tasked with making the city inhabitable for others.

This presentation draws from photo-ethnographic fieldwork in Forest City and Nusantara in 2024-2025 to evoke what it's like to live in a city stuck in development limbo. Through vivid, intimate, and often ghostly imagery of two cities that may, or may not, become models of sustainability, it argues that the future is very much present in residents' daily lives, shaping

the sensory experience of moving through and occupying urban spaces. The future is not just temporal, but spatial, a perceptual filter that impacts how residents encounter the cities around them and create meaning out of the inchoate now.

Presenter(s): Brent Luvaas

Presenters: Jenny Chio, University of Southern California, Vanessa Koh, Brown University, Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology, Brent Luvaas, Drexel University

7937 Consumed: Food, Flows, Infrastructures, and Markets

11/21/2025 04:15 PM-11/21/2025 05:45 PM

Sheraton Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Oral Presentation Session ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Consumed: Food, Flows, Infrastructures, and Markets

This panel explores the complex politics behind the things we put into our bodies-food, supplements, medicines. The production, distribution, and consumption of ingestible items shapes uneven geographies of hunger, dispossession, accumulation and waste, while at the same time structuring notions of identity, belonging, and memory. Our panel considers the ways infrastructures, ideological discourses, geopolitics, representations, and material conditions impact the items we physically consume, as well as the meanings we attach to them.

With a range of geographic locations (Pakistan, Bolivia, Argentina, and Antarctica) the panel explores economic, political, legal, and moral valences of that which we ingest and otherwise consume. The Andes are haunted by stories of humans consumed by greedy figures like the pishtaco, who prowls desolate roads draining people of their life-giving fat. Anthropological accounts of zombification have similarly examined how human labor and bodies are ground up by colonialism, capitalism, and labor exploitation to provision others' wealth. By contrast, here we turn our attention to how foodstuffs and supplements enter the bodies of our interlocutors and do other kinds of work. In Pakistan, the urban food markets offer a foothold for poor migrant laborers, but it also opens up zones of speculation for real estate speculators. In Bolivia, wellness brands have marketed health shakes and supplements to publics consumed by fear--of an overburdened state healthcare system and a global pandemic --further blurring the line between lifesaving prophylactics and snake oil. On these same streets, salteña pastries deliver more than chicken and vegetables to Bolivian consumers and enthralled tourists–they also facilitate

the consumption of national narratives related to what makes someone Bolivian and how that positions them on a global scale. In Ushuaia, Argentina, tourists traveling to Antarctica require increased infrastructures to "provision" the growing city with food and other necessary supplies. This demand provides a lens for thinking about how the consumption of food, disposal of waste, housing people, and protecting the environment are enmeshed within global flows and anxieties about consumption.

Understanding the processes related to eating and ingesting as part of larger flows, these papers bring together themes of global circulations, claims to modernity and progress, and failed state efforts to provide those very things. Our papers consider multiple axes of informal markets including food provisioning, criminalization of street vendors, urban infrastructure (real and desired), as well as issues of class identity and consumption. By putting these experiences in conversation, we aim to shed light on the manifold ways that the things humans ingest produce and exacerbate precarity, deepen inequality, drive moral judgements, and feed debates among our interlocutors over how to better provision their- and our-lives.

Organizer: Nell Haynes, Saint Mary's College

Chair: Susan Ellison, Wellesley College

Presentations: Wholesale Food Provisioning and Land Speculation in Karachi Pakistan

Karachi's Subzi Mandi (wholesale produce market) is the first site of employment for upcountry migrants from rural Pakistan, or refugees from as far as Myanmar with few connections in the city. Karachi's municipal government moved the wholesale produce market 30 miles outside the city in 2002 to release congestion, pollution, and to encourage efficient modern distribution systems. The move displayed the (then) military government's resolve to create a modern and efficient food distribution system in the city. However, the move triggered memories of dispossession for the refugee populations of laborers who used their community after being forced out of the city. The merchants pool their own resources to import water tankers and use generators for refrigerators; they installed solar panels and coolers because of a dispute with the city's utility companies over fair billing practices. This paper examines how the making of New Subzi Mandi deepened informal provisioning and land grabbing in the peri-urban sectors of the city.

Presenter(s): Mubbashir Rizvi

The Pandemic Pajpaco: Wellness, Heath, and the Global Flow of Medical Misinformation

The Bolivian character of pajpaco is known for boarding inter-departmental buses or wandering through El Alto's markets to hawk healing potions and other wares. Similar to

the figure of the snake oil salesman, the term pajpaco connotes capacity to convince, even if what they are selling is a sham. In the years leading to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bolivia saw a proliferation of global Multilevel Marketing (MLM) companies, whose vendors promised their nutritional shakes and supplements, backed by appeals to modern nutrition science, would be a bulwark against illness—claims that predate the pandemic and often centered around the failures of the Bolivian healthcare system. Yet MLM products have long been haunted by accusations of fraud. This paper analyzes entanglements between public health and the "wellness industry" amid accusations of quackery, fake science, and toxic treatments as Bolivians sought to survive a terrifying global pandemic. In response to the pandemic, Bolivian legislators promoted chlorine dioxide as a protective agent, with German national Andreas Ludwig Kalcker offering workshops on the benefits of chlorine dioxide (before facing criminal charges in Argentina), even as public health officials decried his cures. This paper thinks with the figure of the pajpaco to reckon with the bogus benefits they may shill and the truths they might speak, particularly amid debates about how to decipher counterfeit cures from life-saving prophylactics amidst COVID-19.

Presenter(s): Susan Ellison

"Un Sabor Patrio": The Salteña as Indigenous Nationalist Symbol in 21st century Bolivia

Since the early 2000s, indigeneity in Bolivia increased in status. Now, greater numbers of Bolivians self-consciously identify as Indigenous, along with increased linguistic and aesthetic presentations of indigeneity circulating publicly. This takes place against a backdrop of Indigenous people's greater constitutional rights and representation in government, and increasing discourses of Indigenous nationalism by leaders. As a result, circulating representations of what is "Bolivian" have become confounded and suffused with representations of indigeneity. This paper explores how pop culture representations of Bolivianness incorporate the specific symbol of the salteña—a hand pie that is closely associated with the Bolivian altiplano. Though salteñas do not originally hail from Bolivia, their image has popped up on t-shirts, tattoos, and graffiti. Using linguistic and visual analysis related to the concept of indirect indexicality, I consider the flows between rural and urban areas, as well as between national and global circuits, that have transformed the salteña into a symbol of Bolivianness. I demonstrate how recent manifestations of Indigenous nationalism work not only through official government discourse, but also quotidian items like this food bought from street carts for the equivalent of $1. In thinking about these ideological notions becoming embedded in everyday consumption, this paper draws connections between nationalism, food, global flows, and belonging.

Presenter(s): Nell Haynes

Provisioning at the End of the World: Ushuaia, Argentina

This paper will consider how Ushuaia's geographic isolation and uneven integration into national and global infrastructures structures its tourism industry aimed at visiting the Antarctic peninsula. The city of Ushuaia was once an isolated penal colony and naval base located at the "End of the World" ("Fin del Mundo") – on the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego province, on the island of the same name. Now, Ushuaia is a city with a population of nearly 100K. Its port is currently the main point of departure for tourists traveling to Antarctica in the summer months (Oct-March). In winter, it is a hub for ski tourism, and also has an industry of duty-free electronics assembly plants. Provisioning this growing city with food, clothing, and housing is not easy. Supplies of food and other consumable goods either come by sea, or travel overland from the mainland of Argentina by crossing into Chile, taking a ferry to the island, and crossing back into Argentina. Ushuaia is a hub for foodstuffs, waste, and people who are traveling to and from Antarctica, and yet often these infrastructural networks are hidden from those who rely on them. This paper will consider the implications of these networks for the tourism industry.

Presenter(s): Clare Sammells

Presenters: Mubbashir Rizvi, American University, Susan Ellison, Wellesley College, Nell Haynes, Saint Mary's College, Clare Sammells, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

7153 Social Movements as Agents of Urban Change. Experiences from the Global South

11/21/2025 04:15 PM-11/21/2025 05:45 PM

Sheraton Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Oral Presentation Session; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Social Movements as Agents of Urban Change. Experiences from the Global South

Since Castells' conception of Urban Social Movements in the 1970s, Marxist scholars conceptualized urban environments as arenas of confrontation and struggle. They argued that meaningful and substantive change in urban life and policy could only emerge through conflict. Urban Social Movements act as a contentious and collective force that legitimizes and represents the needs for which citizens mobilize. Rather than being purely disruptive, conflict oftentimes becomes a proactive and generative process, fostering alliances and opening negotiation channels with state institutions through policymaking. Beyond critique and demands, civil society advances concrete alternatives for urban planning and change.

Urban politics articulate citizens' interests and participation in decision-making through formal institutions, such as participatory mechanisms, partisanship, or electoral processes. Yet, they also encompass relationships and networks that extend across different groups and actors operating beyond formal entities or conventional political fields.

An example of how movements advance demands beyond the political sphere and formal processes is their engagement within the bureaucratic field. As Nicholls (2024) argues, this field is a crucial arena for urban struggles; the relationships between civil society and public administration play a key role in channeling demands by movements. Bradlow (2022) suggests that social mobilization can be translated into local policy under two conditions: "embeddedness" of local governments and civil society (e.g., social movements), and "cohesion" - the capacity of local governments to internally coordinate initiatives to drive policy change. Public servants' actions then function as ongoing mechanisms through which civil society strategically operates, enabling the shaping of policies and influencing structural dynamics.

In effect, urban social movements' successes result from continuous negotiations and struggles with local governments and institutions. It is through daily legal and symbolic practices that social organizations challenge the exclusionary rights associated with private and state-owned property, and assert inclusive rights for all. Although place-based initiatives remain small-scale alternatives, they play a crucial role in fostering participatory landscapes. They enable community-driven social services and care, rooted in local specificities while strengthening social networks and deepening bonds. Moreover, they serve as catalysts for systemic and structural change by enabling movements to challenge existing frameworks through direct action.

This panel explores the continuous negotiations of urban social movements with local governments and institutions and the repertoires of action that advanced their causes. For populations faced with dire poverty and lack of access to services and basic resources, urban social movements play a particularly important role in cities of the Global South.

Organizer: Magdalena Haakenstad , Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes

Chair: Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes

Discussant: Robert Albro, American University

Presentations: From Brothel to Community Center: Social Movements and the State in a Tolerance Zone in Bogotá

Why are some public policies successful and others are not? This apparently simple question is at the heart of our research project about the public Care Policy in Bogotá. Through multi-method interdisciplinary research, we identified the main actors behind the policy and established a timeline of how it came about. We found that social movements were key to its conception and fruition, particularly local feminist grassroots movements that continuously lobbied to be heard. In this presentation, we focus on the conversion of El Castillo, a former brothel in Bogotá's tolerance zone (where sex work and drug use are tolerated), into one of the Care Policy's community centers. Examining this transformation, we argue that El Castillo has become a sanctuary space for vulnerable populations due to community involvement in the process. The local population was vital in shaping the site's inclusive character and ensuring its continued functionality beyond state intervention—in interviews described as a "70% community – 30% state" relationship. Grassroots efforts have turned El Castillo into a dynamic arena where local collectives and residents negotiate their relationships and the meaning and future of the space. The case illustrates how grassroots movements engaged with the bureaucratic field to successfully negotiate the project. Safe and empowering urban spaces for marginalized communities are only possible through such sustained partnerships between civil society and the state.

Presenter(s): Friederike Fleischer

Co-author(s): María José Álvarez-Rivadulla, Lorenzo Garcia, Adriana Hurtado-Tarazona

Urban Operators: Gondola Lifts and Social Technicians at the City's Edge

During the past two decades, gondola lift systems have traveled from the ski resorts of the Alps to the urban peripheries of the Andes and beyond. From Medellín to Caracas and Bogotá to La Paz, aerial cable cars have emerged as new transit systems for the "informal city," and as key technologies of urban governance and aesthetic transformation in the city's margins. Consolidating previous frameworks of "slum upgrading," "urban acupuncture," and "social urbanism," cable car urbanism has aimed to harness histories of autoconstruction and community organizing to transform the city's periphery from the inside out. Through ethnographic research in Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá, my paper explores the urban gondola lift and its associated spaces and amenities as ambivalent interfaces between state actors and social movements. I focus on the figure of the urban operator: the firm contracted by the city government to run and maintain Transmicable - the Ciudad Bolívar's cable car. In addition to technical matters related to the mechanical operation of the infrastructure, the urban operator includes a "social management [gestión social]" team in charge of community outreach, social programs, and promoting the social appropriation of the cable car in local communities. I examine how urban operators' work as technicians of social life opens ambiguous political spaces and horizons for urban

change in which both cooptation from above and mobilization from below are put into motion.

Presenter(s): Federico Perez Fernandez

Urban Struggles and Food Security: The Case of Solidarity Kitchens in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Solidarity kitchens have emerged in Brazil as a grassroots response to rising hunger and food insecurity, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the dismantling of social policies. These initiatives, coordinated by several social movements, respond to deepening urban inequalities through collective food provision and political organization. Drawing on reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with activists, volunteers, and organizers, as well as participant observation in solidarity kitchens in Belo Horizonte, the research is grounded in collaborative knowledge production between academic and community-based researchers engaged in these practices. It explores how solidarity kitchens function as everyday arenas of political agency and social reproduction in peripheral urban areas. Recently, the process of institutionalization of these initiatives through the National Program of Solidarity Kitchen has introduced new dynamics in their relation with the state, prompting negotiations around bureaucracy, sanitary regulations, autonomy, legitimacy, and policy integration. This paper situates these processes within broader debates on urban social movements, and food sovereignty in the Global South. By tracing these shifts, the presentation highlights how solidarity kitchens illuminate broader processes of urban political transformation in the Global South.

Presenter(s): Solimar Carnavalli Rocha

Co-author(s): Elis Borde, WALESKA CAIAFFA

Eating Politics: Reframing Urban Food Insecurity Through the Lens of Urban Social Movements in the Global South

This paper explores how urban food insecurity has become integral to the mobilization strategies of social movements in a major Brazilian metropolis. Employing participatory-action research with two significant social movements—the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Movement for Struggle in Neighborhoods, Villages, and Favelas (MLB)—the study identifies food insecurity as a priority agenda amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to a context of federal governmental neglect, these movements implemented both local and national initiatives, including food distribution networks, and the establishment of solidarity kitchens.

Utilizing the concept of framing as an analytical tool, the paper elucidates how the food issue has become central to the identity and practices of these movements.This analytical lens highlights how food security is being reframed not only as a political agenda but also through embodied, everyday practices of movement participants. Consequently, this study broadens the understanding of urban activism by exploring how the boundaries and significance of food security are continuously being redefined.

This redefinition enriches a wider ecosystem of public experience—understood as the network of actors involved in the ongoing construction of food security as a pressing public concern—thereby challenging traditional state-centered approaches and suggesting alternative modes of governance within urban contexts.

Presenter(s): Elis Borde

Co-author(s): Lucas Barbi, WALESKA CAIAFFA

Kiltra Resistance: Doing Autonomous Politics with Street Dogs in Post-uprising Chile

After the 2019 uprising in Chile, kiltros, rioting street dogs, created public controversies—vilified as sources of violence by some, while celebrated as rebels, saints and reincarnations of late protesters by others. Expanding from a focus on direct actions, symbols and headlines, the article targets the everyday life of kiltro resistance over the ethnographic case of an anarchist squat in Chile's capital, Los Pies. Unlike the kiltros from fast and effervescent riots, the kiltro resistance of squatting dogs and humans coalesces around fostering intimate and kin-like relationships of long-term alliance, horizontality and mutuality striving to reach beyond the master/owner subordinate framework. Attuning to each other as such, these squatters, we argue, form a more-than-human variation of an affinity group and recalibrate the focus of their struggle to a more doglike defence of the territory and home. In kiltro resistance, dogs emerge as compañerxs (comrades) rather than mere companions.

Presenter(s): Bob Kurik

Reclaiming Public Land and Infrastructure: Social Movements as Drivers of Equitable and Sustainable Urban Change

Radical transitions toward equity require marginalized communities and social movements to directly lead dialog with local urban planners, policymakers, and other decision-makers. Based on three case studies from Bogotá, Belo Horizonte, and Belfast, we critically discuss strategies that social movements and community-based organizations have been using to implement urban changes addressing collective issues such as food insecurity, social housing needs, lack of social cohesion in post-conflict areas, and unfair gender-based care

burden. While the described initiatives could be seen as "stable" as they are (or strive to be) written into urban policy, it is the everyday hard work of activists, street-level bureaucrats, academics, and other actors that make these cases of sustainable and equitable urban development resist many neoliberal processes simultaneously happening in the studied cities. The findings presented in this paper are part of an international research project, Change Stories. The project uses ethnographic methods of data collection in case study cities and the constant comparative method for comparisons of the cases. Based on specific spatial manifestations of these dynamic negotiations (El Castillo Care Block in Bogotá, a production unit Vila Pinho in Belo Horizonte, and the community garden Grow in Belfast), we will discuss the important role of local communities and social movements in appropriating, enacting and sustaining public urban policies.

Presenter(s): Magdalena Haakenstad

Co-author(s): Helen Pineo

Presenters: Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes, Federico Perez Fernandez, Solimar Carnavalli Rocha, Elis Borde, Bob Kurik, Magdalena Haakenstad

4466 Insurgent materials: spectral encounters with urban matter

11/22/2025 10:15 AM-11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Sheraton Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Roundtable/Town Hall; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Insurgent materials: spectral encounters with urban matter

The roundtable examines the spectral force of material insurgencies. While scholarship has shown how concrete (Choplin 2023) or water (Anand 2017) shape tangible urban worlds that anchor and stratify social relationships, few studies investigate the role of matter in producing confrontations with an immaterial and disembodied world. Inspired by recent fieldwork in and across cities, contributors interrogate how matter – sediment, vapor, or mold – connect people with the unseen, unaccounted, and uncanny and produce encounters "that stir ethical consideration and potential intervention" (Shapiro 2015,369).

How do chemicals, liquids, and other non-organic things determine how cities come to exist in the mind and imagination of inhabitants? We ask roundtable participants to engage with seminal scholarship in urban anthropology and geography (Augé 2008; Appadurai 2000; Roy 2013; Swyngedouw 2018) to examine the role of material uprisings as moments in which other realities that lurk under the surface of the visible world come to light (De

Boeck and Plissart 2014). We invite reflections into how these moments make and destabilize residents' and communities' claims to urban space and infrastructure. Spectral traces across the city reveal past acts, such as incidents of colonial violence, displacement, or environmental destruction. Toxic plumes, floods, or outages can be described as urban haunting, that is, when matter imposes its own temporality on urban design and infrastructure. These hauntings can serve as "a mode of reading the city" (Best and Ramirez 2021) that refuses the burial of alternative histories under modern ideals of development. At the same time, their fleeting materiality evokes imaginaries of futures that may or may not be actualized, opening up alternative planes for political action.

Contributors are encouraged to conjure up spectral urban situations via auditive, visual, or other means. They may discuss how ethnographic attention to matter can help transform the immaterial into tangible evidence of that which has been silent. They can engage with the spectrality of matter in the context of topics as varied as housing, climate adaptation, or waste management to show how insurgent material not only undercuts and disrupts human building projects and infrastructure designs, but also mediates the experience of being haunted.

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Organizer: Lukas Ley, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Discussant: Amy Leia McLachlan, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Presenters: Jingru (Cyan) Cheng , Tarini Bedi , Bruce O'Neill, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Katherine Dawson , Olga Bostan

4477 The Left Behind: spectres of the past and promises for the future

11/22/2025 10:15 AM-11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Marriott Bonaparte

Roundtable/Town Hall; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

The Left Behind: spectres of the past and promises for the future

The term 'left behind' has appeared in public and policy speak over recent years placing certain communities and territories at the crossroads of celebrated pasts and uncertain presents/futures. In popular discourse, left behind is imagined as a constituency of otherness, whereby disenchantment with the status quo is a consequence of the economic and material decline that has accompanied shifts in the economic order as we know it. It is a condition of inhabitation that is threaded through the ruins of once eminent industries, which now appear as a blot on the streetscapes of numerous post-industrial cities across the world, as well as rural terrains now at a standstill when juxtaposed against the modern over-developed world. In contemporary politics the category 'left behind' has been used to mobilise the affections of certain dispossessed communities, whose subsequent inclination toward populist politics renders them vulnerable to political designs of welfare retrenchment and austerity.

Firmly grounded in ethnographic inquiry, in this roundtable, we seek to interrogate some of the antinomies around the concept of left behind through considering its adoption in dramaturgical discourses of stigma, as well as co-option in the phantasmic promises of populist politics. The table brings together six presenters with ethnographic contributions that examine the lived experiences of individuals and communities situated in spaces marked by marginalization, abandonment, or symbolic decline. Spanning diverse sites-from rural China to the Greek island of Chios, from Brittany in France, and migrating Estonian youth, to peripheral regions in Denmark-these contributions illuminate how people navigate and contest dominant visions of modernity, belonging, and development. Presenters address topics such as the embrace of neo-rural utopias by disillusioned Chinese urbanites and their paradoxical alignment with state agendas; the resistance of Greek villagers to EU-funded migrant infrastructure through localized narratives of neglect; the reframing of productivist farmers in Brittany as marginalized actors within environmental debates; and the role of nostalgia and care in sustaining place-based belonging in Danish localities experiencing symbolic erosion. Together, these perspectives interrogate the complex intersections of space, agency, and affect in shaping what it means to be-and to respond to being-left behind. By drawing on a rich set of ethnographic contexts across Europe and beyond, the roundtable offers a comparative lens through

which to critically examine the political, social, and emotional contours of "left behindness" today.

Organizer: Olga Jubany, Universitat de Barcelona

Discussant: Camila del Mármol , Ajmal Hussain, University of Warwick

Presenters: Xueyan Shao , Amelia Veitch, Yale University, Romm Lewkowicz, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Terje Toomistu , Hanne Louise Jensen, Aalborg University, Anja Jørgensen, Aalborg University

3689 Violence in the Postcolonial City: Exploring Infrastructures, Mobilities and Threatened Lives

11/22/2025 02:30 PM-11/22/2025 04:00 PM

Marriott Galerie 4

Oral Presentation Session; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Violence in the Postcolonial City: Exploring Infrastructures, Mobilities and Threatened Lives

Urban infrastructures are material structures or networks that allow for the circulation of capital, goods, services, people, and information. The importance of infrastructures in permitting the flows upon which everyday life depends makes them both an object of power, but also vulnerable to stoppages and delays. Although the link between infrastructures and different forms of social and structural violence have been widely studied, most of these studies tend to focus on the role of infrastructures in reproducing social inequalities, or on the struggle over the control of infrastructures by different (political) actors. Less attention has been paid to the way that people's everyday experiences, narratives, and affects related to violence and criminality shape the circulation of a variety of objects, bodies and information. Aiming to address this question, this panel looks at violence through the analytical and methodological lens of infrastructures. Rather than studying the harm produced by infrastructures, or conflicts over the control of these, we propose to look at the ways everyday violence is inscribed onto infrastructural networks. The papers in this panel explore a variety of infrastructures that are complexly entangled with violent processes; water systems in the Colombian Pacific, oil pipes and mobilities infrastructure in Mexico, urban geographies in Turkey, railways in Mongolia, and streets and housing in the Colombian Andes. Our contributions explore the "coloniality of infrastructures", thinking of infrastructures as material and epistemic sedimentations of regimes of power. We understand that the rhythms and forms

of urban violence reflect the legacies of colonial, modernist and neoliberal urban planning and extractivism. Empirically, this means that we seek to understand how a diversity of actors operating at different scales enhance, respond to, appropriate, and resist narratives and practices of violence in order to facilitate or block infrastructural flows. Our panel evinces the ways in which the materiality of everyday life in cities is affected by concerns related to safety, security, and danger.

Organizer: Sebastián Ramírez, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Felipe Fernández

Presentations: Crude Afterlives: Violence, Memory, and Oil Infrastructures in Poza Rica, Mexico

This paper examines the entanglement of extractive infrastructures and everyday violence in the oil town of Poza Rica, Veracruz. Rather than treating infrastructure as a functional network for the circulation of goods and services, I explore how abandoned and decaying oil systems materialize and mediate social life in a region marked by the long afterlives of extractivism. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted between 2019 and 2020, I focus on a moment when two seemingly unrelated events converged: the operations of the Fifth National Brigade in the Search for Disappeared Persons—part of a broader response to Mexico's forensic crisis—and a renewed state-led initiative to revalorize the oil industry as a pillar of national progress. These overlapping processes—one shaped by grief and loss, the other by resource nationalism—reveal how subterranean spaces and aging infrastructures are mobilized, imagined, and contested in contemporary Mexico. I argue that the ruins of extractive development register forms of violence that are not only historical but ongoing—embedded in everyday life and made legible through practices of mourning, care, and survival. By tracing the affective and political afterlives of oil infrastructure, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how violence becomes inscribed onto material landscapes—and how these landscapes, in turn, shape the circulation of bodies, memories, and claims to justice.

Presenter(s): Monica Salas Landa

Topographies of Childhood: Criminalization, Justice, and Violence in the Urban Architecture of Turkish Authoritarianism

Since coming to power in 2002, Turkey's authoritarian Justice and Development Party (JDP) has increasingly resorted to criminal prosecutions and mass incarceration as tools to contain social unrest and political opposition—a process that various scholars aptly describe as "lawfare." Key to Turkey's lawfare is the separation of "innocent"—notably, Turkish—children deemed worthy of social protection, from other racialized children—

Kurdish, Syrian, and Roma—who are marked as threats to security and order. This division is reinforced by the compartmentalization of urban space into multiple zones of exception, which become incongruent zones of governance as well as living spaces in which children make sense and use of law, space, violence, and childhood ideologies in distinct ways in their daily repertoires. Drawing on two years of ethnographic research in Antep, a multiethnic southeastern city along Turkey's border to Syria, this paper explores how children develop vernacular understandings of justice that cut across the legal-punitive infrastructure of the authoritarian regime, and activate or challenge various forms of violence structuring their daily lives. Specifically, it examines how children construct networks of care and survival that traverse fragmented urban geographies, thereby reconfiguring the terms of everyday life under authoritarian governance.

Presenter(s): Hazal Hurman

(Infra)Structural violence. State and Water Supply in the Port City of Buenaventura, Colombia

This paper examines the interweaving and overlapping of the phenomena of violence and water infrastructures in the port city of Buenaventura, in southwestern Colombia. This city is marked by high rates of violence, poverty and inequality. Further, the infrastructure systems for the allocation of public goods such as water and electricity are highly precarious. By addressing the ways in which the state deprives larger parts of the population from water as a public good, this paper argues that the Colombian state inflicts 'infrastructural violence' on the marginalized population of Buenaventura. At the same time, it analyzes the ways in which everyday crime threatens and alters the improvised material practices deployed by the population to store water. Furthermore, this paper scrutinizes the mechanisms used by social movements and 'ordinary people' to cope with 'infrastructural violence'. Based on extensive fieldwork material gathered between 2018 and 2020, this research contributes research on infrastructure, urban poverty, and violence.

Presenter(s): Felipe Fernández

Para-Law of the Land: Social Cleansing and Sovereign Rule in Colombia's Urban Margins

Every year, thousands of people in poor neighborhoods in Colombia are the targets of social cleansing campaigns: efforts by neo-paramilitary groups, and neighbors to establish a species of security through the killing of those deemed threats to the social order. Social cleanses are announced through pamphlets that identify those threatened by name in lists posted in streets, stores, and homes of the neighborhoods. This paper examines how social cleansing campaigns – particularly the pamphlets that announce them – define the

geography of a poor neighborhood outside of Bogotá. I explore how the distribution of the pamphlets in space circumscribes a jurisdiction of governance by describing the sorts of activities, persons, and relationships that are permissible under its parallel law. In describing some acts as punishable with death, and certain people as expendable, social cleanses also prop certain groups as legitimate purveyors of order and their activities, such as drug trafficking, extortion, forced displacement, and murder, as appropriate to their role. Social cleansing campaigns establish a novel sovereign bargain borne from the state's strategic retrenchment in urban margins, the enduring failure of peace accords and subsequent proliferation of armed actors who inherit wartime resources, strategies, and discourses, and the general population's willingness to enjoy their apparent protection and their desire to take their place among the unthreatened.

Presenter(s): Sebastián Ramírez

Urban mobility infrastructures and violence in the urban periphery:

predatory accumulation regime.

The crisis of violence in contemporary Mexico has become perhaps the main concern in public life. At the metropolitan scale, the multifarious predatory crimes produce a widespread insecurity which shapes and affects the urban experiences embedded in people's quotidian life. In Mexico City, the criminal violence located within the mobility infrastructures is particularly relevant because it informs some strategies that people deploy to cope with the relentless fears, raising at once possibilities and constraints on how they experience and signify their "right to the city". But the public transportation system, specially in the urban periphery, encompasses other forms of structural or "slow violence": overcrowding and unappropriated conditions of buses and vans, long-time distances and most expensive travels, and exploitative labor relations that reveal another facet of the predatory accumulation regime that governs the mobility in Mexico City. I examine in this paper how these different types of violence converge, making the urban mobility infrastructures a product as well as a fundamental basis for certain accumulation regime whose violent elements reproduce the social and territorial inequalities. I suggest that urban mobility infrastructures comprise the material objects and networks that move millions of people every day and, fundamentally, the social interactions expressed through both collaborative and predatory exchanges that together sustain and defy this regime.

Presenter(s): Arturo Díaz Cruz

The Infrastructure of Subordination: Mongolian and Russian Relations from Post-Soviet to Putinized

This paper documents the infrastructure configuring Mongolia's relationship to Russia as a subordinate "younger brother." Since the hegemonic supermajority of the Mongolian People's Party starting in 2016, the MPP's presidential victory in 2021, the COVID-19 crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Mongolia has become further entangled with Russia politically, socially, and economically and more distanced from the rest of the world. The paper concerns developments in movements of people and things across the border, along the Russian-majority owned Trans-Mongolian railway, and through centers of accumulation including the Mongolian capital, Mongolia's two industrialized cities, and the monastery of Amarbayasglant first established in northern Mongolia in the early 18th Century.

Presenter(s): Marissa Smith

Presenters:Monica Salas Landa, Lafayette College, Hazal Hurman, Princeton University, Felipe Fernández, Sebastián Ramírez, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Arturo Díaz Cruz, Marissa Smith

3615 Politics of Spatial Absence: Ghosts and 'Places Out of Joint'

11/23/2025 08:30 AM-11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Marriott Bacchus

Oral Presentation Session ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Politics of Spatial Absence: Ghosts and 'Places Out of Joint'

Ghosts are the spatial remainder of the past. They call attention to unresolved histories, repressed memories, and unfinished struggles. This panel explores how memory and political meaning emerge from absent or disrupted spaces-sites whose spatial continuity has been fractured.

Drawing on ethnographic engagements from different sites, such as Diyarbakir/Amed in Kurdistan (in Turkey's border), New Cairo in Egypt, Sointula Island in Canada, and Shorebird flyways in the Americas, we explore the complexity of places that hold both past and present memories of what was destroyed and desires that were never fulfilled. Despite their different geographies and histories, each paper argues that these sites contain residues and traces of the aftermath of being 'spaces out of joint.' Here, we expand on Derrida's essay 'The Time is Out of Joint' (1995) to explore what might be considered 'disjointed spaces' with their spatial continuity interrupted and the everyday haunted by what has been lost, denied, or forcibly removed.

Ghosts demand accountability for what has been lost and what has yet to be reckoned with. We seek to identify those ghosts who refuse to stay invisible by asking: how do spectral presences unsettle the institutionalized historical narrative?

The papers in this panel explore how the politics of absence and erasure shape lived experience, memory, and belonging. We foreground embodied, relational, and situated approaches and methods in which the spectral is not only a condition of the past but also a force that reshapes the political possibilities of the present. We follow material traces to challenge the power of institutionalized memory in favor of those who carry memories in fragments and the landscapes in which they are embedded.

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Organizer: Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Chair: Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Discussant: Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center

Presentations: The Debris of Memory in Surici, Amed

Near the Tigris River, next to a Kurdish burial site, on the outskirts of the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, sits a mound of rubble that was once an entire district of a city. This mountain of memories contains the demolished architectural remains of the historic city center of Surici, Diyarbakir.

In the 1990s Surici, Diyarbakir became a place of refuge for Kurdish citizens who were displaced from their villages. In 2015-16, this historic district became the site of a massive military operation coupled with a post-conflict demolition that destroyed entire neighborhoods, again forcibly displacing an estimated 24,000 people from their homes.

After the destruction of Surici, the rubble of the city was transported to a deserted area east of the Tigris River, next to a Kurdish burial ground. With it, urban memory became a pile of rubble–a forgotten monument of destroyed memory. In this paper, I analyze how the remnants of a ruined city becomes a topographical form —an inevitable trace of displacement and loss of cultural and urban memory. As Gaston R. Gordillo (2014) states in Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction "...spatial constellations are made up not only of inhabited places but also of the nodes of rubble they are enmeshed with" (20). The destruction of Surici is a sobering example of the intertwined relationship between 'inhabited places' and 'the nodes of rubble'.

Presenter(s): Idil Onen

Infrastructural Violence and the Politics of Spatial Rupture in Greater Cairo

This paper explores how Cairo's newly constructed highways generate a politics of spatial disruption and spectral presence. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with upper-middle-class Cairenes who traverse the recently constructed extension of the Middle Ring Road connecting satellite cities to the urban core, I examine how infrastructural development fractures spatial and temporal continuity, creating disjointed spaces that are both materially new and haunted by what they erase. As highways carve through older neighborhoods, they displace not only physical structures but also the layered histories and social geographies embedded within them. My paper examines how space conditions the subjectivities of my interlocutors, and is experienced and moved through by them. Their daily journeys are shaped by the specter of violence of urban transformation that is visible yet unspoken. At the same time, they experience these routes as conduits of mobility and modernity, connecting them from their homes in a gated compound to a business complex or a shopping center. In conversation with Derrida's conception of time as disjointed and haunted, I illustrate how these highways function as spaces where the past persists in fragmented, unsettling ways. This paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how infrastructural development becomes a terrain for negotiating memory, belonging, and the contested politics of urban futures.

Presenter(s): Nehal Amer

Shorebirds, Memory, and Affective Knowledge Transfer in the Americas Flyways

Migratory shorebirds journey thousands of miles every spring and fall across the Americas, connecting actors and territories along what ornithologists have termed, "flyways." While a third of shorebird species in the Americas have experienced population declines of over 70% since 1980, remaining populations continue to return to key migratory stopover sites despite the widespread disrupted spatialities of coastal habitat for leisure or industry. In

this paper, I argue that shorebirds' globalized, transboundary ecologies contribute to the transfer of knowledge across the Western Hemisphere, specifically regions with high-density shorebird habitats. Drawing on archival research and semi-structured interviews with shorebird biologists working in the United States and Honduras, I interpret the study and conservation of migratory shorebirds along their flyways in the Americas as a form of affective knowledge transfer with a focus on local ecological memory and erasure. From the Honduran-mangroves-turned-shrimp-farms to The Rockaways of New York City, shorebirds like the American Oystercatcher become traces of pre-industrial histories and ecologies. These birds, their flyways, the embedded stopover sites they depend upon, and the professionals who study and protect them create novel formations of memory and affect, making their configurations a promising zone of inquiry for studies of science, space, and mobility.

Presenter(s): Jesse McLaughlin

Ghostly Matters of a Utopian Settlement

Sointula is a small utopian settlement established in Canada in December 1901 on Malcolm Island on the Indigenous Kwakwa̱ka̱la land. Sointula, from Finnish, means a 'Place of Harmony' and refers to principles of 19th-century utopian socialism that originated with the ideas and experiments of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. It was built by Finnish coal miners who worked in dangerous and exploitative conditions around Vancouver Island and other Finns seeking refuge from Russian rule in Finland. Everyone had an equal salary, and emphasized women's rights and the creation of communal infrastructure for social reproduction. Like many utopian projects, it was considered a 'failure' due to financial difficulties and mismanagement (Lindström, 2000). Following bankruptcy, key leaders left Sointula with a significant group of followers. Still, the rest of the community persisted, upholding some of the utopian principles, including self-government, strong social ties, care, and cooperative everyday practices. How does this short utopian past haunt Sointula's present? What part of history is getting reproduced, and what remains (un)intentionally "forgetful"? (Leinonen, 2022). How do the narratives of "utopian dreams" and "unique history," along with the ultimate "failure of the experiment," contribute to the disavowal of the Indigenous presence or even ghostly Indigenous matters that haunt the everyday? Following Derrida's hauntology (1994), in this paper, I look at the complexities and

Presenter(s): Irina Shirobokova

Discussion

Presenters:Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Nehal Amer, Jesse McLaughlin, CUNY Graduate Center, Center for Human Environments, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

3946 Confronting 'Fantasmas': Resilience in Urban Brazil

11/23/2025 10:15 AM-11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Marriott Bacchus

Oral Presentation Session ; Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Confronting 'Fantasmas': Resilience in Urban Brazil

'Fantasmas' (ghosts) linger in Brazilian society from centuries long ago. Colonization and oppression have left a stain darker than the red dye of the Brazil tree, from which the space is given its current name, as it was the first resource stolen from the natives. Soon after, it is estimated that 5.5 million Africans were enslaved and brought to this area. Fast-forward 525 years to urban areas haunted by systemic violence, drug-trafficking, racism, misogyny, and lack of resources, which are all a result of this exploitation. How are communities confronting these ghosts of the past in forms of resilience?

*In the social periphery of the Mata Atlântica in Rio de Janeiro, communities are uniting to map community-based resources, environmental threats, and provide local solutions to sustain long-term monitoring of climate threats as these communities have a noted history as sites of drug trafficking, forced displacement, gender-based violence, coastal erosion, deforestation, and landslides.

*In Rio de Janeiro, the role of cultural protective factors (such as family and community support, storytelling, and cultural pride and resistance), raising critical consciousness, and community organizing in healing from collective wounds in spaces of poverty, social exclusion, multi-level violence, and discrimination. This trauma is passed down through generations and impacts identity, mental health, family relationships, and community conduct and resilience.

*Up the coast in Salvador, progress and shortcomings of Black resistance versus Afro-Brazilian exoticism is highlighted, as manipulation of 'blocos afro' and Black Bahian culture and music for purposes of promoting the city as an Afro-diasporic capital of the Americas while these communities continue to suffer from severe racial inequities, police violence, and lack of basic education and health care needs.

*In another capital in Belo Horizonte, sounded protest in the form of whistling provides direction and empowerment for a group of all-women drummers and a sense of solidarity to women in the area while echoing past acts of gendered violence.

*And further south in São Paulo, the Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira created by enslaved peoples offers a form of social inclusion and community to people who are victims of structural violence alongside drug-trafficking, violence, crime, murder, and the "hidden slavery" of the system. However, the community is not without it's own shadows. In 2021, it was publicly reported that the leaders of the capoeira group in my research community were accused of violent crimes against children and adolescents.

When confronted, some ghosts disappear, while others will continue to haunt for generations to come....

Organizer: Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Chair: Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Presentations: Resilient Roots: Creating a Hub for the Mata Atlântica's Periphery

This paper examines possibilities for a sustainable collaborative resilience network composed of four marginalized communities along Brazil's Mata Atlântica. I discuss a hypothetical program that unites civil society members from Rio de Janeiro's favelas (informal communities or shantytowns), Afro-Brazilian quilombos (communities descendant from enslaved peoples), indigenous aldeias (villages), LGBTQIA2S+ and feminist organizations, and eroding coastal communities in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia. These communities have a noted history as sites of drug trafficking, forced displacement, gender-based violence, coastal erosion, deforestation, and landslides. We propose a three-year training of 20 youth activists from Rio's favelas to map community-based resources, environmental threats, and local solutions through the use of augmented reality, 360-degree virtual reality imagery, as well as heat, air, and water sensors. By the end of the project, the team will produce empirically validated reports for each community that assess the potential for artificial intelligence/machine learning to sustain long-term monitoring of climate threats on the social periphery of the Mata Atlântica. Research will be presented at a 2027 coastal resilience summit as well as in smaller community-based meetings.

Presenter(s): Jason Scott

Living Memory: How the Past Haunts the Present in Brazilian Favelas

This paper explores and analyzes the dynamics of generational and collective trauma among residents of Brazilian favelas, marginalized urban communities that are still

haunted by the legacy of centuries of colonization and slavery. Based on ethnographic fieldwork spanning more than a decade and drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship including anthropology, psychology, public health, and history, this study examines how persistent exposure to poverty, social exclusion, multi-level violence, and discrimination creates a shared experience of trauma that compounds individual suffering. This trauma is passed down through generations and impacts identity, mental health, family relationships, and community conduct and resilience. This research highlights the role of cultural protective factors (such as family and community support, storytelling, and cultural pride and resistance), raising critical consciousness, and community organizing in healing from collective wounds.

Presenter(s): Jessica Glass

Salvador Capital Afro: Fifty Years of Blocos Afro in Bahia, Brazil

The 2024 Carnival in Salvador was a monumental year for blocos afro. A bloco afro is a Carnival organization consisting of percussionists, dancers, singers, musicians, neighborhood residents and fans who celebrate an Afrocentric theme during Carnival and organize events and community services throughout the year in Salvador, Brazil. This paper examines the city of Salvador's manipulation of blocos afro and Black Bahian culture and music for purposes of promoting the city as an Afro-diasporic capital of the Americas. All the while, these very Black communities continue to suffer from severe racial inequities, police violence, and lack of basic education and health care needs (Pinho 2021). Christin Smith (2016) notes this paradox in describing the exoticism of Salvador as an "Afro-Paradise," and the city government's role in promoting this reputation. However, ethnomusicologist Larry Crook (1993) first noted this dilemma among blocos afro in questioning whether the commercial globalization of blocos afro in the 1990s—especially after Olodum's collaborations with Paul Simon and Michael Jackson—partially eclipsed the initial intentions of Afro-Brazilian consciousness and Black resistance. Many developments have occurred since then. In 2024, the city finally gave deserved credit and financial investment to blocos afro, officially recognizing their critical role in Salvador's Carnival popular music—generally known as axé music. Through original audiovisual footage and analysis of m

Presenter(s): Cody Case

Echoes of Violence and Whistling in Solidarity: Listening to Women's Sounded Resistance in a Brazilian City

How do our listening practices as ethnographers change our understanding of events? Which sounds get prioritized or ignored? Which sounds echo in our ears long after we've

left the field? How do our interpretations of these sounds deepen as we situate ourselves among our informants? Based on my participant-observation fieldwork during the International Women's Day March in Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil, I will examine how sounded protest in the form of whistling provides direction and empowerment for a group of all-women drummers and a sense of solidarity to women in the area while echoing past acts of gendered violence. This ethnomusicological case study will explore these questions and generate more.

Presenter(s): Abby Rehard

A Dance of Shadows: Capoeira Beyond the Game

The Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira creates a form of social inclusion and community to people who are victims of structural violence. But this essay isn't about that. Many discussed drug-trafficking, violence, crime, murder, and the "hidden slavery" of the system. In 2021, it was publicly reported that the leaders of the capoeira group in my research community were accused of sex crimes against children and adolescents. Aside from those in this report, there are other cases of sexual abuse in the capoeira community at large, with other capoeira mestres imprisoned for such crimes. During this process, I did not know how to process any of it and stayed up at night questioning if I was being the good anthropologist. I continued to remind myself that in anthropology we do no harm to the communities where we work. But what if the individuals in the community state they are being harmed? I started to consider that in not doing harm to some I was doing harm to others- those women and children whose voices are silenced by the structural violence that the system allows. Regardless, it was overwhelming, and I am not sure I had the tools or support. But perhaps that's reflective of the lives of so many humans on this planet attempting to survive in the vulnerable systems of structural violence that impacts us all on different levels.

Presenter(s): Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Atafona and the waves of affliction: liminality and communitas on the Brazilian coast

Atafona is a beach on the northern coast of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where, in the early 20th century, a regional elite built their summer homes. About 60 years ago, the sea began to advance over the built-up area, putting at risk the houses that, for generations, had been the scene of summer sociability. In this paper, I present the process of erosion of the houses and discuss the summer sociability experienced in Atafona, in contrast to the sociability experienced during the rest of the year in the city of Campos dos Goytacazes. From this, I recover the concepts of liminality, by Victor Turner, and of communitas, as discussed by Victor and Edith Turner, to think of Atafona as a resort of affliction in a

landscape of ruins, where the joy of summer communions was crossed by the uncertainties of the advancing sea.

Presenter(s): Carlos Abraão Moura Valpassos

Presenters: Jason Scott, Virginia Commonwealth University, Jessica Glass, Emory University, Cody Case, Abby Rehard, Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter, Carlos Abraão Moura Valpassos