

soziologische vorträge

Herausforderungen Nachhaltigkeit in Theorie und Praxis Challenges of Sustainability in Theory and Practice

Wintersemester 2021/2022

Part I

Maria Kaika (University of Amsterdam)

“Don’t Call me Resilient Again! From Ecology as Radical Imaginary to Sustainability as Immunology”

The Urbanization of nature, a relentless global metabolic process of socio-ecological transformation that started in earnest with the industrial revolution is a deeply violent act that involves capital investment, power relations, technology, geographical imaginaries, and above all, exploitation of human and non-human actors and resources. I discuss the ways in which, from the 19th century onwards, Urban Planning Design Architecture and Urban Theory have been trying to mitigate the effects of the Urbanization of Nature and restore harmony between cities, natures and human societies. But also the ways in which these very same efforts that try to mitigate the violence of urbanization are themselves violent acts implicating the exploitation of environments and human and non-human actors across the world. From the design of Garden Cities to Smart Cities, and the pursuit of sustainability and resilience indicators, these practices can act at best as Immunology: they vaccinate communities and environments alike, so that they will be able to endure more injustice and destruction in the future. I argue that acknowledging this violence can be the beginning of instituting new radical socio-ecological imaginaries. As an increasing number of communities and people across the world refuse to be vaccinated with smart technologies and indicators, changing our interlocutors and focusing on dissent and conflict instead of consensus building, can offer new methods and alternative research questions and design practices that can better address global socio-environmental inequality.

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zum Livestream (Kenncode 454426)

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Koordination: L. Arzberger, E. Dowling, Y. Kazepov, M. Parzer, I. Rieder
eine Initiative der Arbeitsgruppe Nachhaltigkeit am Institut für Soziologie Institut für Soziologie

Part II

Erik Swyngedouw (University of Manchester)

Life and Death in the Urbicene: The Depoliticized Politics of Anthropogenic Urbanization

In my contribution, I shall mobilize ‘the Anthropocene’ — or better the Urbicene — as the popularized term to denote a new geological era during which humans have arguably acquired planetary geo-physical agency. Earth Scientists, who coined the term ‘Anthropocene’, now overwhelmingly understand the earth as a complex, non-linear, and indeterminate system with multiple feedback loops and heterogeneous dynamics in which (some) human activities are an integral part of these terraforming processes. Planetary urbanization is of course the geographical imprint of this Anthropogenic forcing. Therefore, the Urbicene might indeed be a more appropriate term to capture the socio-material form the Anthropocene takes. Nurturing the process of planetary urbanization was and is indeed predicated on intensifying proliferations of metabolic vehicles, in the form of infrastructural techno-natural intermediaries that etch the transformation of non-human ‘stuff’ in myriad socio-ecological metabolic cyborgian relations that re-order human/non-human assemblages in radically uneven ways and with profound socio-ecological implications.

Indeed, a global urban intellectual and professional technocracy has spurred a frantic search for a ‘smart’ socio-ecological urbanity and seeks out the socio-ecological qualities of sustainable eco-development, retrofitting, eco-sensitive architecture, adaptive and resilient urban governance, the making of new inter-species eco-topes, the commodification of environmental ‘services’, and innovative – but fundamentally market-conforming – eco-design. These techno-managerial dispositifs that search for eco-prophylactic remedies for the predicament we are in have entered the standard vocabulary of both governmental and private actors, and have now been consensually established as the frontier of architectural, planning, and urban design theory and practice, presumably capable of saving both city and planet, while assuring that civilization as we know it can continue for a little longer. Under the banner of radical techno-managerial restructuring, what Ingolfur Blühdorn calls the sustainability of ‘unsustainability, the focus is now squarely on how to sustain capitalist urbanity so that nothing really has to change!



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