



Zurich Human Geography Colloquium

Program Fall Semester 2021

Urban Futures



Dr Elia Apostolopoulou
University of Cambridge

Biodiversity offsetting, urbanization and social justice: Defending the right to nature

Public lecture: Tue, 28 September, 4-5PM, Online

Workshop: Wed, 29 September, 9-12AM, Online

Zoom-Link for the lecture:

<https://uzh.zoom.us/j/61359283134?pwd=UE1oazh1dCtYQ0tBQVZJRmtNNUIxZz09>

For details on the workshop please write to annina.michel@geo.uzh.ch before 22 September



Prof Eugene McCann, Simon Fraser University & Visiting Professor, National University of Singapore

Experts, publics, & place: A contribution to the conceptualization of urban public space

Public lecture: Tue, 23 November, 4-5PM, Online

Zoom-Link:

<https://uzh.zoom.us/j/68015167076?pwd=SnppUWpoNk5ReEF3ZldrkhXUGd4dz09>



Prof Sanjay Srivastava, British Academy Global Professor, University College London

Duplicious satellites and the theft of a lane: GIS mapping, the state and citizens at an informal settlement in Delhi

Public lecture: Tue, 14 December, 4-5PM, room Y25-H79

Workshop: Wed, 15 December, 9AM-12PM, room Y25-L40

For details on the workshop please write to julie.ren@geo.uzh.ch before 20 November



Tue, 28 September 2021 | **Dr Elia Apostolopoulou**

Biodiversity offsetting, urbanization and social justice: Defending the right to nature

In this lecture we will explore the profound implications of biodiversity offsetting for the relationships between nature, society and space and its links to environmental, spatial and social inequality. Drawing on people's resistance against its implementation in places across England, we will discuss how the production of equivalent natures, the core promise of offsetting, reframes socio-natures both discursively and materially transforming places and livelihoods.

This lecture is empirically grounded on my long-term research on offsetting. Theoretically it draws on theories and concepts from human geography, political ecology, and political economy. By shedding light on its contested geographies, it offers a fundamental retheorization of offsetting and a critique of the restructuring of planning and conservation policies in the post-2008 era with the goal to demonstrate how offsetting, and more broadly revanchist neoliberal policies, are increasingly used to support capitalist urban growth producing socially, environmentally and geographically uneven outcomes.

The proliferation of social struggles against the combined effects of urbanization and offsetting, along with other emerging social-environmental protests configure that, against hegemonic narratives about the end of history, the production of nature and space becomes one of the key political issues of the "Anthropocene". It puts forward the need for defending the right to nature as a collective right based on a political and activist position that is future orientated, seeking the transformation of both social relations and relations between society, nature and space.

Elia Apostolopoulou is a human geographer and a political ecologist. She is a senior research fellow in the University of Cambridge and an editor in *Dialogues in Human Geography*. Her work focuses on various aspects related to the uneven production of nature and space within and beyond cities.

Tue, 23 November 2021 | **Prof Eugene McCann**

Experts, publics, & place: A contribution to the conceptualization of urban public space

While geographers and other urban scholars have long discussed the character and politics of public space, its conceptualization is by no means settled. The last few years have seen ongoing discussions of what public space means for contemporary urbanism. In this paper, I try to make a further contribution to the literature. I will use two quite different examples from two of my current research projects to build my argument.

One involves the politics of harm reduction drug policy in Dublin, Ireland, where advocates for the establishment of a supervised drug injecting facility mobilized a model from elsewhere to change national law and, they hope, mitigate the problem of drug use in public spaces.

The second example analyzes the role of a global architecture firm in circulating a particular model of public space design, often called 'placemaking,' that is intended to help city governments to better plan, create, and manage streets, alleys, plazas, etc. While these cases differ in their details, I will argue that, considered together, they raise useful questions about the role of expertise (broadly defined), publics, and the 'power-geometries' of globalized places in the politics of public space.

Eugene McCann is Professor of Geography at Simon Fraser University and Visiting Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore (2021-2022). He researches policy mobilities, harm reduction, public space, development, governance, and planning and is managing editor of *EPC: Politics & Space*.



Tue, 14 December 2021 | Prof Sanjay Srivastava

Duplicitous satellites and the theft of a lane: GIS mapping, the state and citizens at an informal settlement in Delhi

The recent 'digital turn' in Indian urban planning relates to the idea that technology will overcome structural issues and lead to 'efficient' and 'clean' governance. This presentation explores contexts where top-down discourses of technologically-as-planning are confronted by the everyday life of a city characterised by deep social and economic hierarchies and aspiration for a decent life. It focusses on the 'Unauthorised Colony' of Sonia Vihar in north-east Delhi and a dispute over the non-inclusion of a small lane in a satellite map produced by the Delhi government. Satellite mapping is part of the process of providing official status to localities that are otherwise treated as 'informal' and illegal and hence crucial to gaining a foothold in the city. Sonia Vihar's residents claimed, however, that the maps were intended to deprive them of security of tenure through technological and state chicanery.

Through fieldwork among the urban poor, technologists, bureaucracies and land mafias, the presentation explores the actions of the key stakeholders that produce the quotidian politics of urban space. It describes entanglement of technologies, marginality, an apparently 'neo-liberal' state and the emerging politics of 'anti-politics' that it seeks to deploy in dealing with the urban poor.

Sanjay Srivastava is an anthropologist and his research interests include urbanism, consumer cultures and ethnographies of the state in India. His book *The Post-National City. Masculinity, Nation, Neighbourhood, Street and the Home in the Indian Urban Imagination* will be published in 2022 by Cambridge University Press.