



Irritations and Unforeseen Consequences of the Urban

30 June–2 July 2021

An online conference hosted by the Urban Environments Initiative

Call for Papers

Deadline: 19 April 2021

The Urban Environments Initiative (UEI) is welcoming submissions for its online conference “*Irritations and Unforeseen Consequences of the Urban*.” Over the past two years, the UEI has brought together scholars from a range of international institutions to critically engage and exchange expertise on various aspects of the urban, and this from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints. For the first time, we will be holding a conference that will have UEI members present their work while inviting external participants to present their work as well. The three-day conference will be held via Zoom from 30 June to 2 July and will run tentatively from 14:45–18:15 (CET) each day.

The conference is organized around three themes that focus on different aspects of “*Irritations and Unforeseen Consequences of the Urban*”:

Theme 1 **Who’s Urban “Nature”?**

The Politics of Aesthetics, Urban Ecologies, the Unintended and the Unwanted

Theme 2 **Making Urban Environments**

Planning, Agents, Voices, and Absences/Gaps, Livelihoods and Extinction, Power, In-/justice

Theme 3 **Openness to or Foreclosure of Futures**

The Ethics and Politics of Expectation and Modulation

The conference invites paper submissions that relate to one of the three themes mentioned above. Please submit a 250-word abstract in addition to a 150-word bio. Successful applicants will be contacted shortly after the submission deadline.

Please send your submissions to urbanenvironments@rcc.lmu.de by 19 April 2021. If you require any additional information, please contact us at urbanenvironments@rcc.lmu.de. To learn more about the UEI and for a description of each theme, continue reading below.

About the UEI:

The UEI is a collaborative research network between the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), the Technische Universität München (TUM), the University of Cambridge, and New York University, and includes members from a variety of other international institutions as well. It is coordinated in Munich by Eveline Dürr (LMU) and Regine Keller (TUM) in association with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC). The UEI’s primary objective is to bring together researchers of different backgrounds working on urban environmental issues and related topics from a variety of locales across the world (to more [see here](#)).

About the themes:

1. Whose Urban “Nature”? *The Politics of Aesthetics, Urban Ecologies, the Unintended and the Unwanted*

This theme addresses different concepts of what urban “Nature” is and the ways in which different actors advocate for these multiple understandings—for what purposes and to what effect? Often, the taken-for-granted idea of “Nature” and what it constitutes translates into forms of in- and exclusion. For instance, consider the selection of species that are welcome in urban

green spaces and those that are not based on conceptions of “Nature” that favor the “green” and “beautiful” over the ecologically valuable (but to the human taste less appealing). We also invite contributions that turn to questions of un-/intended consequences of a particular understanding or promotion of urban “Nature.”

2. Making Urban Environments *Planning, Agents, Voices, and Absentees, Livelihoods and Extinction, Power, In-/justice*

In this section, “making” is understood in the broadest possible sense, including not only the obvious top-down practices of designing and building by professional practitioners, politicians, and experts, but also everyday practices of humans and nonhumans creating their particular place within the wider context of an urban environment. It includes top-down as well as bottom-up processes of urban planning and making, resistance to them, or struggles to make a place at all. We want to scrutinize how and by whom are decisions in urban planning made? Whose voices are heard, who is absent or not represented, who has the power to influence? Who does not? In this regard, theme two also speaks to the broader issues of in- and exclusion, in-/justice, and power.

3. Openness to or Foreclosure of Futures *The Ethics and Politics of Expectation and Modulation*

Planning, by default, demands forecasting the future by means of modulation; that is, a projection of the likeliest future. But what happens when this future refuses to realize? Apart from the fact that it is often impossible to make “correct” predictions, modulations do not simply express what is anticipated but what is actually desired—and vice versa. In this regard, modulation actively reduces the range of future possibilities or possible futures because it is guided by particular expectations and ambitions, and thus by politics. Once more, this raises questions of in- and exclusion, in-/justice, access to processes of decision-making etc. What does it mean if we, instead of forecasting, are open to various possibilities and re-imaginaries, open to emerging regimes and forms of politics, knowledge, citizenship, etc.? How open can the future be for us in the present; where lie the limits of openness?

