

14. Urban imagination and technology of data visualisation in urban studies

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Format: Traditional (call for abstracts and individual presentations of around 15 minutes)

The aim of the session is to analyse the intersections of urban imagination, technology, and politics of data visualisation (in the form of graphs, animations, infographics, interactive maps) in the field of urban studies. Scientific visualisation, once a tool for the closed communities of advanced commercial application and academic research, has now become part of popular culture and urban policy-making. Data visualisation – in the form of maps, graphs, interactive web formats, and more – have become the canvases of artists, urban planners, and scientists alike to show changes in time and space. The range of information and the sources it comes from makes data and visualisation part of the imagination about cities and global change. Visualisation is not a “data abbreviation” but a new text, a translation of data into images. It is about more than just imagining/presenting data: a graph, a graphic becomes a source of information and a basis for urban politics and decision making. We would like to take a closer look at data visualisation as not only an indicator of socio-spatial processes, but also as ‘new urban narrative’, constellations of images shaping understanding of global urban change. New visual technologies make it possible to depict the processes taking place over time - both in the perspective of one day (e.g. spatial mobility) and cumulative data showing the variability of phenomena in decades (e.g. demographic changes). Visual data in urban studies may work in the same way as a tourist brochure or as an architectural visualisation, which activates the imagination and convinces the investor of the validity of the expenditure.

We would like session participants to consider one or more of the following example questions in their contributions: How do science, urban politics and urban imagination (and poetics) intersect? In which way do visualisations create the images of the city and urban narratives? How is our urban imagination is shaped by GIS and geolocation tools? What kind of (global) urban change do visualisations present? How are they disseminated? For which target groups are they created?

We welcome contributions from research in areas including, but not limited to: Scientific visualisation methods, Urban art, Data dashboard design and management, Data-driven policy-making, Geographic information science and policy.