

Research seminar
"Urgency in urban climate policy: local receptions and translations"

Materials

The seminar is a part of the project "**Competing Urgencies: Translating Climate Neutrality in the European Union**" (EU-URGE)

Project description:

Urban lifestyles, resource consumption and extraction scales underpin anthropogenic climate change. At the same time urban policies and EU programmes frame cities as experimentation and innovation hubs to pursue climate neutrality goals. The project's scientific goal is to explore and interpret how urgency is defined with regard to climate change, how climate change urgency, to which the cities subscribed, competes with other urgencies, and how a sense of urgency is generated, communicated, and realized politically and culturally. We are thus interested in the socio-cultural and political life of climate urgency. Our special focus are Warsaw, Klagenfurt, and Ljubljana which are among the 100 municipalities of the EU Mission to deliver climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030.

Within this overarching research interest, the projects' particular objectives are: (1) to conduct a cultural analysis of urgency, revealing how it relates to the temporal and societal factors, (2) to follow cities' transition to climate neutrality and to analyze mechanisms whereby the EU policies are translated to national and local levels, (3) to compare different national and local conditionings of these translations, (4) to advance the anthropology of climate change. We hope that the resulting innovative knowledge will have an impact on just transitions to a climate-neutral future.

Methodologically, anthropological epistemological lens lies at the projects' core and joint research design is crucial for the project's objectives as it allows comparisons as well as cross-fertilization of academic sensibilities, experience and expertise.

The project is conducted in cooperation between the Department of Cultural Analysis, **University of Klagenfurt**, Austria, **Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts** (ZRC-SAZU), Slovenia, and Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Culture and Arts, **University of Warsaw**, Poland. These institutions support the research throughout the project duration.

"Competing Urgencies: Translating Climate Neutrality in the European Union" or EU-URGE project is funded under Weave programme by the respective national agencies:

Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria,

Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), Slovenia,

National Science Centre (NCN), Poland (UMO-2022/47/1/HS3/01292).



Principal Investigators of EU URGE national teams:

Anna Horolets is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw. She holds both PhD and Habilitation in sociology obtained at Polish Academy of Sciences and University of Warsaw, respectively. She conducted research and authored monographs on the Europeanization processes and on various forms of geographic mobility, including tourism and migration. Her previous research projects focused on migrants' leisure and the visions of the good life. She recently turned to studying urban greenspaces and local receptions of European climate neutrality policies in cities. Anna Horolets is a PI of the EU-URGE project in Poland.

Alexandra Schwell is a Professor of Empirical Cultural Analysis in the Department of Cultural Analysis at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. She is co-editor of "Ethnologia Europaea", the flagship of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore SIEF, and chair of the DGEKW working group "Europeanization_Globalization. Ethnographies of the Political". Her research interests include (in)security, Europeanization, anthropology of the political, border studies, emotion and affect, and ethnographic methods. She has conducted fieldwork with Polish anarchists, German and Polish border guards, Austrian security officials, and football fans. She is currently working on the implementation of climate-neutral policies in urban settings and on blackout precautions. Alexandra Schwell is a PI of EU-URGE project in Austria.

Saša Poljak Istenič is a research associate at the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology ZRC SAZU, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Tourism, University of Maribor (Slovenia), and a guest lecturer at Alpen-Adria University Klagenfurt (Austria). She is engaged in research and applied projects covering topics of urban life, climate change, sustainability, creativity, silence, and heritage. She has received funding from the national research agency (national and multilateral WEAVE projects) and European programs (Horizon, Interreg). She is the editor-in-chief of *Glasnik SED*, member of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee at the Ministry of Culture, and member of the Expert Council of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. She currently prepares a manuscript on methodologies to research urban futures (with V. Gulin Zrnič). Saša Poljak Istenič is a PI of the EU-URGE project in Slovenia.

Keynote lectures: abstracts and bios

Keynote 1:

„How do Things Hold Together When Falling Apart: On Anthropology of/in Late Industrialism” by Asta Vonderau
Chair: Alexandra Schwell

In my talk, I am drawing on Kim Fortun's notion of “late industrialism,” which Fortun understands as a historical period and a specific environmental, political and economic condition within which the world is currently entangled. Combining empirical examples from research in (post)industrial contexts with theoretical perspectives from anthropology and other disciplines, this talk reflects upon how anthropology of/in late industrialism could look like and what questions it should raise. In doing so, my talk will highlight three specific perspectives: to reconsider relations, to follow materialities, and to take into account temporal simultaneities as productive ways for further development of this research program.

Asta Vonderau is professor at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology and co-director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Regional Studies at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, German. She is also co-heading Research Network CityIndustries together with Alexandra Schwell. Asta's research focuses on Anthropology of Governmentality and Policy: Globalization, Europeanization, post-socialist transformation; Anthropology of Energy and Resources: Social and environmental effects of digitization and (de-)industrialization.

She is also interested in developing methodological tools for Public Anthropology and Anthropology in/of data saturated worlds. Her latest publications include the special issue of Public Anthropologist Journal "Collaborations and Contestations in Publicly Engaged Anthropologies", co-edited with Olaf Zenker 2023; an edited volume "Postfossile Zukünfte: Strukturwandel gemeinsam gestalten" [Fossil Free Futures: Making Structural Change Together], co-edited with J. Everts, Ch. Tietje, A. Aliyev, M. Pampus, F. Kolb 2023; and a book chapter "Contested futures of/with energy generation", co-authored with S. Abram, C. Bresciani, H. Lu, K. Müller 2022.

Keynote 2:

„The contribution of urban anthropology to the research into climate neutral cities” by Valentina Gulin Zrnić

Chair: Saša Poljak Istenič

In this lecture, I will single out some concepts, approaches and methods that arise from or are related to the field of urban anthropology, but also intertwined with other areas that are the focus of my research, such as the anthropology of space and place, and the anthropology of the future. I will present the approaches of social production and construction of space as an analytical grid for the research of spatializing culture (Low), which can be important in terms of research on the materialization of urgency and climate neutrality in public spaces. Another framework within which the topic of climate neutral cities could be further elaborated is urban ethics: ethics of possibilities, ethical projects, ethical imagination, which are based on the question of the urban “good life”; and imagination of the relationship to oneself and others in cities (Appadurai, Moore, Ege etc). Finally, I will look back at the potential of urban comparison (contrastive approach, refiguration) (Färber, Knoblauch and Löw etc) and raise the issue about the value of cultural anthropological expertise in applicative and policy making domains.

Valentina Gulin Zrnić is an academic advisor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. Her research interest is focused on urban anthropology, anthropology of the future, politics of space, public events, urban governance and post-socialist cities. She is the author of two award-winning books (in Croatian): “Talk of the neighborhood: meanings of the city and urban localisms in Novi Zagreb” (2009) and “City as encounter: ethnographies of Zagreb’s squares” (2019, with N. Škrbić Alempijević) and co-editor of books dealing with urban gardening, artistic interventions in public space, interdisciplinary research of space and culture, Croatian everyday life, and the practice and ethics of contemporary field research. She is leading projects on urban futures (www.citymaking.eu) and collaborates in artistic, educational and civil society programs that focus on contemporary urban topics.

Keynote 3:

„Drivers of Injustice in Urban Sustainability and Urban Climate Adaptation: The Case of Heat Injustice and Migrant Residents in El Raval, Barcelona” by Panagiota Kotsila

Chair: Maria Małanicz-Przybylska

In this keynote, I will introduce a unique typology of ten core drivers of injustice, prompting us to reconsider what urban sustainability truly entails and how it intersects with justice. Drawing inspiration from critical environmental justice studies, the presentation will underscore the inherent contradictions within urban sustainability and uncover the risks associated with advancing urban sustainability agendas in isolation from systemic drivers of inequity and injustice. I will particularly focus on issues regarding material and livelihood inequalities, exclusive access to the benefits of urban sustainability infrastructure, and power-knowledge asymmetries, as key drivers of injustice in the context of urban sustainability. Within this framework, and focusing particularly on the experience

of urban heat in relation to urban planning and urban climate adaptation, I will look at the case of el Raval, a migrant-rich neighborhood in Barcelona, and share the results of a participatory photography (Photovoice) research project conducted with migrant residents in 2023. In this project, we find labor and housing precarity and limited access to public spaces of heat relief as shaping heat injustice and in turn being driven by neoliberal urbanism trends as well as systemic racism that migrants experience in their day to day lives. Seeing social and spatial margins that migrants often inhabit as places where exclusion and empowerment converse, we advance a notion of vulnerability as an embodiment of intersectional injustices and a positionality from where radical adaptations can emerge. We find such radical adaptations in the form of self-organized spaces and networks of solidarity and resistance in the city, arguing that pathways of just adaptation demand revisiting and redefining adaptation to include the everyday knowledges and practices of marginalized residents, addressing underlying and intersecting drivers of vulnerability.

Panagiota Kotsila is a ‘Ramon y Cajal’ research fellow and the PI of the ERC-CoG IMBRACE (Embracing Immigrant knowledges for just climate adaptation) at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA-UAB), of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. She holds a PhD in Development Studies, University of Bonn, was a Marie-Curie postdoctoral fellow in the ENTITLE-ITN, a mentor in the WEGO-ITN, and a member of the ‘Undisciplined Environments’ collective. Panagiota is leading research on the social determinants and drivers of health vulnerability for migrant communities in European cities. Her previous research has dealt with the macro- and micro- politics of water and sanitation, the bio/necro-politics of public health, the neoliberalisation of urban nature and green gentrification, aspects of care and justice in community gardening, and broader questions of climate, environmental and health justice, among others. Her latest publications include the book “Injustice in Urban Sustainability: Ten Core Drivers” (2023), co-authored with Isabelle Anguelovski, Melissa García-Lamarca, and Filka Sekulova; and the edited volume “Contours of Feminist Political Ecology” (2023), co-edited with Wendy Harcourt, Ana Agostino, Rebecca Elmhirst, and Marlene Gómez.

Roundtable: project overviews and speaker profiles:

Roundtable on climate adaptation related projects in Warsaw.

Moderated by: Anna Horolets

“Embodying Climate Change: Transdisciplinary Research on Urban Overheating” (EmCliC)

Climate change often seems abstract, presented through statistics and complicated models. One cannot easily smell, touch or see it. The research project “Embodying Climate Change: Transdisciplinary Research on Urban Overheating” (EmCliC) brings together natural sciences and social sciences to study how the changing climate affects people today. We study how the physical, weather and climate events are connected with people’s local knowledges and embodied experiences, to demonstrate how we already embody climate change.

Our specific case in EmCliC is urban heat. Climate change leads to hotter, longer and more frequent heatwaves, also in Europe. Heat is exacerbated in cities and with increasing urbanization, heat stress severely affects people’s lives, health and wellbeing. One of the most vulnerable to heat stress groups are adults above 65 years old. EmCliC brings together methods and approaches from social anthropology, sociology, environmental physics, meteorology, climatology, and epidemiology to study the multiple dimensions of urban overheating. We focus on older adults living in two European cities, Warsaw and Madrid. We chose two cities which, due to their varied climates, have historically and culturally experienced and adapted to hot temperatures very differently. In EmCliC,

we aim to analyze climate change and urban heat as simultaneously a biophysical and social phenomenon. In 2020-2024, we conducted ethnographic research with older adults with the use of the sensors, participants workshops, focus groups, representative surveys, policy analysis, city mapping, demographic, climate and epidemiological analysis, to combine and juxtapose different perspectives and data on urban heat.

The research project is funded from the EEA grants 2014–2021 under the Basic Research Program operated by the Polish National Science Centre in cooperation with the Research Council of Norway (grant no 2019/35/J/HS6/03992). More information: www.emclit.com

Zofia Boni is a social anthropologist and sociologist, an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Her research interests combine medical and environmental anthropology. She has conducted ethnographic research on young people's lived experiences of dieting and obesity, older adults' experiences of urban heat and climate change, and the health consequences of environmental change. She studies the experiences of most vulnerable groups in the research contexts dominated by biomedical and biophysical sciences, striving for interdisciplinary analysis. She is the author of a recent monograph, "Feeding Anxieties: The Politics of Children's Food in Poland", and a PI of the project "Embodying Climate Change: Transdisciplinary Research on Urban Overheating" (EmCliC).

"Knowing about climate change adaptation at the local level. A collective case study of urban adaptation plans in Poland"

Facilitating urban climate change adaptation response in Poland has been a compelling experiment aimed at adopting a coherent and ambitious local policy. Since 2015, following the pilot projects conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and the City of Warsaw, a number of Polish cities have committed to developing urban climate change adaptation plans. This research examines the experiences of city administrations and their staff in crafting local response to climate change, including the translation of expert knowledge, the exercise of an administrative freedom of action called discretion, and the facilitation of local environmental debate through various documents. The research approach involves tracing document flows and conducting interviews with officials. Development of urban climate change adaptation policy in Warsaw serves as an overview of revealed tensions between the assumptions of reflexive governance and the capabilities of local bureaucracy in changing dynamics of urban decision-making. Specifically, the legitimacy of the administrative structure to reflect on uncertainties and influence individual decisions. The research was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, within the project "Knowing about climate change adaptation at the local level. A collective case study of urban adaptation plans in Poland" funded by National Science Centre - NCN (No. 2021/40/C/HS6/00101).

Renata Putkowska-Smoter, PhD, is a researcher at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (WULS-SGGW), and a member of the Environmental Sociology Section of the Polish Sociological Association. Her research interests include ambiguity and ambivalence towards nature and environmental protection, and their influence on conflicts and governance at the local and national level. Her current work focuses on urban climate change policy and the perspective of street-level bureaucrats.

Domestic heating transitions must balance environmental and social policy goals, which leads to conflicts between cost, pace, and cleanliness. These conflicts pose a significant challenge in urban areas where energy and housing infrastructure face increasing environmental aspirations. The project „**Procedural justice and fuel poverty in the city**”, financed by the National Science Centre, aimed to identify the mechanisms of urban policy that influence

fuel poverty and their socio-spatial consequences. Specifically, within the project, I examined how the urban institutions adopted and implemented the socio-technological change – energy transition – with particular attention to the needs of people living in social housing with limited agency and resources. Utilising insights from the case study of Warsaw, I evaluated the patterns of domestic coal phase-out in social housing, combining in-depth analysis of unique heating transition data with official census records and qualitative analysis of strategic documents, newspaper articles, city council protocols, and stakeholder interviews. I reconstructed the logic behind the intervention, highlighted the unintended consequences for the city's socio-spatial structure, and suggested social criteria to assess energy retrofits.

Since 2023, the Warsaw City Office has been collaborating with the Institute for Structural Research on the **CARE project (Carbon-neutral and Affordable Retrofits for Everyone in Need)**, supported by the ICA Fund. Under the CARE project, we are developing a sequence for renovating social housing buildings in collaboration with city decision-makers, balancing economic, environmental and social objectives. This involves constructing criteria and indicators based on various administrative data on buildings to address the future challenges of decarbonising housing stock.

Jan Frankowski is an analyst at the Institute for Structural Research, a geographer and sociologist with a decade of experience in private, public, and NGO sectors. Author and co-author of several dozen technical reports for international and Polish research institutions, ministries, NGOs, and local governments, as well as scientific publications on housing, energy transition, and urban policies. Currently, he explores how energy retrofits might reshape urban socio-spatial structures and investigate the adaptive capacity of Polish and Czech housing cooperatives and their inhabitants to adopt renewable technologies (ENBLOC project). In 2023, he obtained a PhD from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences.