

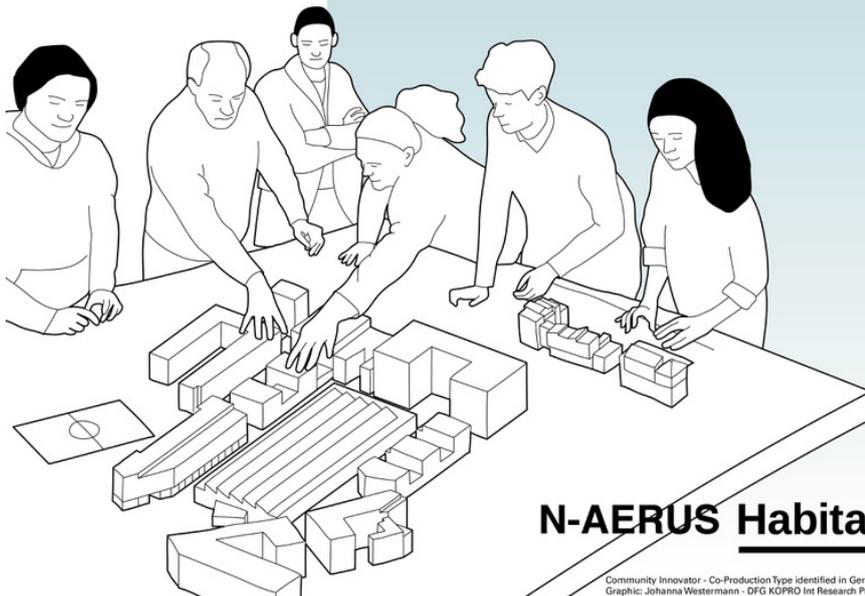
Conference
Thursday, 4th - Saturday, 6th February 2021

N-AERUS 2021: How to plan in a world of uncertainty?

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N-AERUS 2021 20TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HOW TO PLAN IN A WORLD OF
UNCERTAINTY?



N-AERUS Habitat Unit 

Community Innovator - Co-Production Type Identified in Germany:
Graphic: Johanna Westermann - DFG KOPRO Int Research Project 2020

N-AERUS warmly invites you to join the 20th Conference "How to plan in a world of uncertainty?" in cooperation with the Habitat Unit, taking place at the TU Berlin

We are confronting a global crisis fueled by environmental conditions compromised by anthropogenic activities and mirrored worldwide by the planetary extension of urbanization processes. As a consequence, urban research, planning, and design are called to play a relevant role in evaluating possible courses of action and ways out through

Habitat Unit

imaginative power. The current circumstances, however, impose to seek lines of action in conditions of great instability impacting life, society, economy, and space. Such instability is not simply contingent but predictably intended to increase in the future.

Thus, in addition to celebrating its anniversary two decades after its first congress, the 20th N-AERUS conference seeks to find answers to these complex yet indispensable questions:

- How to develop the capacity to respond to unknown situations? What is discovered, learnt and cultivated in the most precarious of contexts?
- Can architecture, urban design, and planning, although otherwise deeply invested in the logic of growth and development, serve as means for and with all, or are they unavoidably complicit?

The conference hence calls for direct and collaborative planning experiences and practices demonstrating unforeseen and innovative "preparedness" to situations of uncertainty beyond the North-South divide. By bringing them to the fore as well as by putting them in contact with each other, the aim is to strengthen a further collective capacity-building process of planning modes able to cope with uncertainty. We are particularly interested in contributions showing distinctive traits of knowledge and actions in dealing with situations of unpredictability and collecting examples of practices/strategies on how to bridge the gap between different spheres of solidarity, knowledge, and production.

The conference hosted by the Institut für Architektur, Fakultät VI, Planen, Bauen, Umwelt, TU Berlin and jointly organized by N-AERUS and the Habitat Unit will take place Thursday, 4th – Saturday, 6th February 2021.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, international travel restrictions and the possibility of a continued lockdown, the conference will be exclusively virtual and consists of a variety of digital presentation and dialogue formats.

* Join the Conference via registration and obtain the Zoom Link: naerus2021@gmail.com

** The conference is publicly available to follow via Youtubelink: <https://www.youtube.com/c/InstitutfürArchitekturTUBerlin/videos>

***Get the conference description [here](#).

Session #1 Learning

[Education, Experimental teaching, Systems integration]

Formal planning education was fundamental to the ways our cities develop. Except for purely technical skills, the issue of beliefs and planning dogmas have had a profound influence on the routines of future professionals. Consequently, next to progressive planning solutions, many of the approaches applied in the last fifty years, rather than supporting human wellbeing, perpetuated multiply crises which we have to face nowadays. For instance, the uncritical focus on car-centric cities resulted in dramatic health consequences and broader environmental crisis. Similarly, the forced knowledge transfer from power-centres to the global South perpetuated social inequalities through mainstreaming of ill-fitted planning tools. Nevertheless, planning education in many contexts still depends on technocratic solutions developed in the ivory tower of the university and promotes theories and concepts which are alien to local urban realities.

Given the realities on the ground, there is a growing consensus that sustainability challenges and the state of 'permanent crisis' across the world can be better addressed in collaboration with stakeholders outside of the academy and based on the idea of co-production. This extends beyond conventional participatory modalities or formal educational approaches, where external stakeholders are consulted regarding specific solutions proposed by power-holders. Consequently, planners and educators need to develop skills which allow them to facilitate the planning process with completely new audiences and support activities which are led by these 'non-professional' stakeholders. In these contexts, they should be able to operate across different sectors and be ready to engage in experimental activities.

– This session is particularly interested in papers concerning projects and teaching formats that move outside of the academy to understand the multiple horizontal urban engagements between residents, community-based, and non-governmental organisations, different levels of state/city actors and professionals of the built environment, various age groups including children and seniors as well as various marginalised groups typically omitted in the formal education context.

– It seeks to investigate how this reframed collaboration can help in addressing today world's uncertainties and prepare us better for handling the emergencies which are yet to come. At the same time, it wants to document experimental approaches, new techniques, settings and coalitions which can contribute to reshaped educational offerings leading to the formation of inclusive planning systems.

Session #2 Experimenting

[Environment, Climate Crisis, Livelihoods, Waste Management, Transport]

While the current pandemic led to devastating health and economic consequences, it also illustrated that the change of individual human behavior for the greater social good is possible (at least in the short run and in the context of emergency). Somehow paradoxically, the decrease in mobility had also led to a partial reduction in anthropogenic air pollution, which in itself is identified as one of the world's deadliest health risks (Lelieveld et al., 2020). At the same time, the enforced reductions in human mobility resulted in economic issues and further marginalization of the most vulnerable groups. This signals that the greatest challenge (but also potential) in achieving just development models is not only the technology or capital but the ability to steer the transformation in a socially acceptable manner which leaves no one behind. The current crisis clearly illustrates that, this transition will be much easier for some groups than for other ones due to long-standing socio-economic inequalities and that the process can be easily entangled with political and ideological agendas. This begs the questions: are there any lessons to be learned from the current situation for the post-pandemic world? Can the permanent environmental crisis and social awareness surrounding it be effectively tackled before it directly affects the majority of us?

– This session invites papers, which discuss approaches tackling the issues related to the permanent climate emergency. We seek to explore urban transformation approaches and projects developed on an interface between different sectors and generating co-benefits, which can stimulate more sustainable pathways towards the management and development of our cities.

– Papers concerning a wide range of sectors are invited including transportation, housing, waste management, energy, and urban economy. We are particularly interested in practice-oriented solutions, which respond to the climate emergency but at the same time ensure inclusive adaptation measures reflective of social and economic costs of such a transformation.

Session #3 Co-Operation

[Planning, Research, Design]

We are particularly interested in contributions showing distinctive traits of co-produced knowledge and actions in coping with the situation of uncertainty as well as those exploring initiatives in urban environments that employ collaborative methodologies for the common. How can architecture, urban design, and planning, practices otherwise deeply invested in the logic of growth and development, act as an object for and with all? Co-operation practices have grown in the last decades to be important drivers of urban development. Co-production is mention

as a key element in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, the New Urban Agenda in Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for all (www.habitat3.org) acknowledge that sustainable integrative urban development needs to be understood holistically, with a focus on different local circumstances and urban situations through different actor constellations and co-benefits.

The collaborative and participatory process navigates towards a collective approach in research, design and planning. Initially, the beneficiary inputs in service provision emerged co-production at the forefront, today relates to institutional co-production and co-production of knowledge in different urban projects. The essential aspect merged the approach of collective responsibility that considers space as a common good.

– Following the growth of the concept, this session is concerned with the potentials of co-production for urban development since knowledge co-production contributes significantly to the change of competence models in urban development projects (Watson, 2014).

– Co-designing is seen as a means to address the ‘relevance gap’, particularly concerning actions necessary to address common issues (Durose et al., 2012). While co-production has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of research by linking it to community preferences and needs, enabling communities to contribute to outcomes and realistic solutions (Ostrom, 1996).

Session #4 Inhabiting

[Housing, Policies, Growing, Equity]

Even before the COVID-19 crisis hammered home the vast economic and social differences affecting urban populations around the world, it was clear that inequality would be one of the biggest challenges facing global cities in the 21st century. There are few facets of urban life, development and design that are not affected by one’s access to public services and resources. While interfaces between research and policymaking exist as a complex web of relations connecting stakeholders and actors who translate their knowledge into specific policies and practices at all scales.

Access to public goods and services benefits the poor and strengthens growth and productivity. However, there is a need for more knowledge on the links between public goods and services and equitable growth and how to support such processes locally and globally. It is important to recognize that equity can be best achieved when various stakeholders participate collaboratively. Important in this constellation are interfaces, common ground as between researchers and policymakers e.g. such as the research-policy interface. We ask the

questions:

- What do research-policy interfaces actually look like, and what roles do researchers have in them?
- Are these interactions further shaped by the regional context in which they take place?
- To what extent do external dynamics and/or interest-driven actions influence the mechanisms connecting research and policy-making for equitable economic growth?

We encourage researchers from the network regions to discuss specific challenges their regions face and how these influence the role of local research in that context, and to assess and catalogue of different strategies for strengthening linkages between researchers and policymakers and reflect on the impact stronger linkages can have.

Session #5 Moving

[Human mobility, Patterns/Practices, Environmental migration and Eviction/Displacement]

The current pandemic situation is the clear outcome of unsustainable urbanization models which have caused the paralysis of the same urban regions, with interrupted or reduced flows of people, forced displacement of populations, rules, and measures to contain and control movements, social distancing, and self-isolation. The concept and reality of the city as space where “we come together” is shaken to its foundation.

For the first time in the urban age, we are collectively experiencing eco-apartheid, and it clearly goes to the detriment of the most vulnerable populations. Ecological crises solicit planning to develop different urbanization models drawn on more just, inclusive, and sustainable mobility patterns and modes, in which stasis and mobility can finally be conscious choices rather than constraints. The present session responds to the need of fostering a fresh understanding of the complex, multi-faceted interaction between ecological issues, mobility, and urbanization starting from thinking of the consequences of increasingly stringent borders and the effects of global and local policy on environmental migration.

Now that even the developed world has been simultaneously assaulted by a natural catastrophe, developing complex pieces of knowledge and policies that can reorientation the relationship between a full range of mobilities and the urbanization of nature. The session is interested in contributions addressing the topics of climate migration, eco-apartheid, natural threads and connected human mobility, and the controversial use of technology in ecological disasters.

Background

We are confronting a global crisis fuelled by environmental conditions compromised by anthropogenic activities and mirrored worldwide by the planetary extension of urbanization processes. As a consequence, urban research, planning, and design are called to play a relevant role in evaluating possible courses of action and ways out through imaginative power. The current circumstances, however, impose to seek lines of action in conditions of great instability impacting life, society, economy, and space. Such instability is not simply contingent but predictably intended to increase in the future.

As anticipated by Donald Schön in “Beyond the stable state” as early as 1971, globalization and the now evident limits of development demonstrates how the state of stability is lost.

The question “How to plan in a world of uncertainty?” has become particularly urgent. An updated epistemology of our professional practice is needed, oriented towards more flexible, adaptive, procedural, and designed modes. Planning approaches such as strategic planning and contingency planning appear to be more suitable to use the intelligence through which individuals and groups produce “negative ability” (Lanzara 1993), that is the ability to accept and experience uncertainty, disorientation, and to know how to grasp possibilities for action to field in the moment of disaster. This posture echoes Hirschman’s practice-oriented theory of possibilism soliciting to search for latent resources even in difficult situations. Such a theoretical approach drawn on critical analysis of World Bank development projects in the southern hemisphere pushes to work on the possible rather than the probable to collectively organizing reactions, planning responses, and reconstructed in ways that do not recreate the fragile situations that led to the upheaval.

Where else to search for the answers to the question “How to plan in a world of uncertainty?” that in those contexts historically forced to cope with fragility, precariousness, and uncertainty, i.e. the many “south” of the world?

Where problems are concentrated, that capacity of reaction in catastrophic situations named as “preparedness” (Lakoff, 2007; 2017) can be more surprisingly found. A critical analysis of the unexpected preparedness capacity of southern contexts could contribute to “planning for uncertainty”, not an oxymoron, but an approach that acknowledges the realities and urgency of creating change in the face of complex crisis to design subversive scenarios of the dysfunctional systems that caused the crisis itself.

Two decades after its first congress, N-AERUS chooses to celebrate its anniversary and to retrace its own history by confronting itself with a complex, yet indispensable issue:

- How to build the capacity of response to unknown situations, starting from what discovered, learnt, and cultivated in the most precarious contexts? Such a question reverberates what Isabelle Stengers does in her book in “Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism” by calling into question the dominant perspective of development, which “identified with progress (...) continues to impose itself as the only conceivable horizon.”
- Can architecture, urban design, and planning, practices otherwise deeply invested in the logic of growth and development, act as an object for and with all, or are they unavoidably complicit?

It is not so much a question of planning the solution, but of developing the ability to invent a solution suited to the particular form in which the problem can manifest itself. While crises are a disruptive force, they do question the validity of existing systems and developmental patterns and support the creation of new solutions. Planning should, therefore, learn to use these “fractures” to promote radical change for a more sustainable future. To begin addressing such questions, it seems crucial to imagine differently, approaches as of what Anna Tsing calls “collaborative survival” – co-inhabited with various other species – and Donna Haraway calls “response-ability”. Both definitions referring to the capacity of responding responsibly and with care for the worlds, we co-inhabit on a wounded terrain.

The conference hence calls for direct and collaborative planning experiences and practices demonstrating unforeseen and innovative “preparedness” to situations of uncertainty in the various souths of the world, beyond the North-South divide. The aim is both to highlight them and to put them in contact to strengthen a further collective capacity-building process to planning modes able to cope with uncertainty. We are particularly interested in contributions showing distinctive traits of knowledge and actions in coping with the situation of uncertainty and collecting examples of practices/strategies on how to bridge the gap between different spheres of solidarity, knowledge, and production.

Submissions for individual papers related to the following session themes are welcomed.