

REACTIVATING URBAN MATTERS. PUBLICS, VALUATIONS AND COLLECTIVES IN/AS/THROUGH URBAN INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract:

The way cities are conceptualized and governed has undergone a major shift in the past decade as place-making has evolved into a vital part of urban politics. Urban interventions, both material and normative, have infiltrated novel terrains that attempt to strengthen citizenship. In this political age, we are surrounded by tropes of crisis-induced urgency and calls for action as we grapple with paralysis, exhaustion, and chronic ruin. Sidewalks, cycleways, plazas, buildings, soils, electricity grids, trams, and trees become instruments and objects of political demonstration (Pilo' and Jaffe 2020). The public good is being reactivated, outsourced to policy gurus, and held up by place-making prophets. Meanwhile, urban residents and movements of all kinds are constantly reactivating the resources 'left behind' from decades of emancipatory struggles. With practically every aspect of cities subject to imperatives of continuous innovation and the machinations of networked governance, such pluralistic practices of reactivating matters propose alternative answers to ongoing environmental and political crises that reject paradigms of newness (Papadopoulos, Puig de la Bellacasa, and Myers 2022). Scholars of urban STS have turned their attention to the way in which environments and technologies co-exist by describing and theorizing the socio-technical character of urban assemblages (Farías and Blok 2017). We invite papers that address how the modalities of such material politics and practices are re/framed as an evocation of urban collectivity. What is the implication of reactivating matters for contemporary urban politics, and how does it allow us to think and devise possible heuristics beyond the perpetuated logics of political and environmental crises? As a result, this panel veers away from urban STS modes of inquiry by referring to reactivation as an essentially experimental notion (Stengers 2012), thus expanding our understanding of the role of urban matters in responding to planetary urgencies and exploring the way meanings and matters are inscribed in/as/through urban interventions according to their political and environmental relations.

During this session, papers will explore the material politics of urban re-activations through STS conceptual repertoires with and/or beyond science and technology:

- (1) What matters are reactivated in contemporary cities and societies? How do these put the vocabulary of urban theory into variation?
- (2) How do reactivated matters take on new constellations in urban politics, disrupting the slumber of the mundane and the familiar? What are the people, places, performances, and passages that are reactivated?
- (3) How can we learn from the re-activity of urban matters beyond the standards of place-making? How do these not only disrupt imaginaries of innovation and participation, but how do they also embrace, elicit, and provoke new forms and framings of more-than-human co-existence?

Key words:

Urban Matters, Politics, Reactivations