

Assembling cities and projects: Mixed empirical methodologies for planning research

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The workshop engages planning's constitutive tension toward multiple disciplinary domains by looking in particular at actor-network theory and assemblage thinking. The main purpose is to outline a relational understanding of the socio-materiality of urban life and transforming places so as to provide new theoretical and practical insights for planners, designers and policy makers (rather than theorists and methodologists alone). From a methodological standpoint, the workshop approaches the city as more than a mere collection of humans, institutions and built forms. Rather, it focuses on the city as a collaboration – or assemblage – of humans, material objects, nature, and technologies. Crucial to the assemblage are both the norms and regulations that mediate the relationships among human and non-human actors, as well as the everyday city (a socio-technical entanglement where planning values and norms become practical matters). In this framework, urban projects are interpreted as situated practices of collective city-making rather than the enactment of predetermined rules and designs. The workshop draws on multiple examples and provides a set of mixed methods to help young researchers dealing with the empirical while critically investigating the city and its evolution.

Keywords

Actor-Network Theory; Assemblage; Mixed-Method Approach

Suggested Readings

Beauregard R.A. (2015). We blame the building! The architecture of distributed responsibility.

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