

# TAKSIM, TAHRIR, OCCUPY & CO

#safety # security #political engagement #public space  
# visualisation # representation

A series of debates on interdependencies between urban space, society and international politics in times of crisis

2015

with ANCB Research Partner **Dr. Nadine Godehardt, Stiftung  
Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)**, Berlin

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## INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

**Incidents on everyday urban spaces increasingly raise global attention. Civil resistance and protest movements frequently occupy public squares, financial and governmental districts or central city parks. People demonstrate against their national governments or join into spontaneously organized protests in support of (inter-)national issues. Images of demonstrations on Tahrir Square in Egypt (2011), Taksim Square in Turkey (2013), the Maidan in Ukraine (2013-4), of Occupy Wall Street (2011), the Sunflower-Movement in Taipei (2014), the Umbrella-Revolution in Hong Kong (2014) or the Pegida-Movement in Dresden (2015) strongly influence the global understanding of specific (inter-)national actors and crises situations. Everyday urban places are in the process of becoming icons of international politics that are interpreted very differently depending on the chosen viewpoint (European, Russian, Chinese, Media, Politics, etc.). They reveal new forms of political articulation that underscore the intertwining of everyday and international politics.**

**In a series of debates, participants from various backgrounds discussed the interdependency of urban space, society, security, (inter-)national politics and the economy – focussing on the visualization and new political meanings of urban space that go along with political protests and demonstrations.**

## PAST EVENTS

### Visuality and Urban Space

At the second event we concentrated on specific ways of political articulation, particularly regarding the visualization of urban spaces during civil resistance incidents and protests. After all, protest movements in everyday urban spaces are directly visualized through photographs, video clips as well as artwork (protest logos, street art etc.) that is usually produced by the demonstrators. The digital sharing of these visuals on social media 'virtualizes' and instantly 'internationalizes' these spaces. Consequently, the protests in Egypt, Istanbul or Hong Kong are not only visible but also accessible for everyone everywhere. Thus, we have protest communities on the ground and growing digital communities that not only facilitate the immediate production and transportation of news (in form of visual imagery and others) from distant places to our home (and to our national governments) but also lay the ground for interaction among protesters as well as between protesters and non-protesters. Further questions: Is it possible to identify spatial characteristics that provide spaces with the potential to transform from 'everyday' to 'icon of international politics'? How does the distribution of these visual representations in social media influence style of protests and demonstrations? And to what extent is the discussion about the control of digital information affected?

**26 November 2015**

### Political Meaning of Urban Space

This first Public Debate assembled speakers with different backgrounds (Architecture, Urban Planning, Political Theory, Geography, International Relations, etc.) who conceptually explored the political meaning of urban space. Key task was to highlight how incidents in everyday urban spaces actually affect (inter-)national politics. In this regard, we particularly focussed on civil resistance and protest movements that frequently occupy streets, public squares, financial and governmental districts or central city parks. Further up for discussion: To what extent has the increasing number of protests in urban spaces changed their significance in international politics? And what are the implications that result for local urban planning and urban design?

**8 October 2015**

## BACKGROUND

The understanding of the international in international politics usually represents inter-state relations in which the modern nation-state acts as the crucial and familiar container of 'where politics takes place'. Hence, R.B.J. Walker (1993, 126) rightly highlights, "In the international context, the state has come to be viewed almost geographically or spatially. In extreme form it has been subsumed into the cruder determinisms of geopolitics." Moreover, most experts, policy advisors and journalists heavily rely on what national state actors (governments, ministries, etc.) say or do when they analyse current issues in international politics. News of political events are usually broadcasted to us through 'official voices'. In this regard, the international has been further limited to "the realm of exceptional events conducted by states and statesmen, or their proxies (Guillaume 2011, 459)."

In light of recent developments in world politics such as the increasing meaning of urban space for protest movements, the dominant view of the international is going to be continuously challenged. The rise of the everyday in international politics constitute problems that – in many ways – surprise us. In other words, it points us to new problems that we cannot fully grasp because we still rely on the traditional conceptual tools and ideas within the study of international politics.

## DOCUMENTATION

- Videos recording documenting the public debates

Part of the ANCB Theme

### **ACTORS AND AGENCY: Co-producing the Built Future**

**Although their triggers may be global, the defining economic, socio-political and environmental challenges of today are manifest locally rather than at the scale of the nation state. This localisation makes the challenges conceptually tangible and their responses imaginable, as both policies and concrete projects for spaces. Hence, urban discourse promotes political city autonomy on the one hand, and participation beyond a mere meeting of top-down and bottom-up on the other, as the most effective and appropriate response framework for these challenges and for urban development in general.**

Such an 'opening-up' of decision-making will not only require the encouragement of engagement – from newcomers and transient inhabitants as much as from those long-committed to a place but also expert facilitation and synthesis of this engagement into co-produced visions for the future of that place.

*This theme explores the accompanying spatial design and planning toolkit, with which to co-envision, co-decide and co-produce the future of the city, and overcome the established 'expert-lay' divide in decision-making about places and cities. Not alone the divide between government authorities and citizens, but importantly, also the divide between design and planning professionals and city inhabitants. Which tools can replace the static, abstract, and mistrusted masterplan, which participation instruments can carry the process of commissioning public buildings and spaces or awarding industry contracts, which set of urban indicators assists decision-making and awarding of contracts? Can architects and planners be educated as facilitators and co-conceivers of such new tools and processes? How can room for experimentation (and failure) be afforded – in terms of time, space and budget?*

## PARTICIPANTS

**26 November 2015** **Visuality and Urban Space** **Dr. Muriel Asseburg**, SWP, Berlin; **Christopher de la Garza**, Corporate Designer, Hemispheres Graphic Novel, Potsdam; **Dr. Andrea Despot**, Deputy Head of the European Academy, Berlin; **Dan Garrett**, PhD candidate, City University of Hong Kong, political scientist, visual sociologist and former career US national security professional; **Christoph Geisler**, Deputy Director, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin; **Dr. Nadine Godehardt**, Deputy Head of Research Division Asia, SWP, Berlin; **Prof. Peter Mörtenböck**, Professor for Visual Culture, Goldsmiths College, London; **Dr. Rune Saugmann**, University of Tampere; **Dr. David Shim**, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations and International Organization, University of Groningen; **Roman Wilhelm**, Graphic Designer, Berlin

**8 October 2015** **Political Meaning of Urban Space** **Dr. Regina Bittner**, Head of Department Academy & Deputy Director, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation; **Prof. Jaap de Wilde**, Professor of International Relations and Security Studies, University of Groningen; **Dr. Nadine Godehardt**, Deputy Head of Research Division Asia, SWP, Berlin; **Dr. Tali Hatuka**, Head of the Laboratory for Contemporary Urban Design, Tel Aviv University; **Dr. Oliver Lembcke**, Chair of the Political System of Germany, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena; **Prof. Ali Madanipour**, Professor of Urban Design, Director of Global Urban Research Unit, Newcastle University; **Prof. Michael Mönninger**, Professor of Aesthetics and Art History, Braunschweig University of Art; **Prof. Volker Perthes**, Director, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin; **Dr. David Shim**, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations and International Organization, University of Groningen; **Dr. Simon Teune**, Institute for Protest and Social Movement Studies, Berlin; **Prof. Georg Vrachliotis**, Professor for the Theory of Architecture, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology; **Roman Wilhelm**, Graphic Designer, Berlin

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## About ANCB The Aedes Metropolitan Laboratory

ANCB The Aedes Metropolitan Laboratory is a unique cultural and educational platform focusing on the future of our cities. Building upon three decades of expertise in the communication of architecture culture - through exhibiting and publishing the work of internationally acclaimed and pioneering architects and urban planners - Aedes Architecture Forum established, in 2009, an additional urban research and workshop programme - ANCB.

It is from these foundations that ANCB positions itself as the hub at the centre of an extensive international and interdisciplinary research network, based on a structure of cultural exchange and knowledge transfer. ANCB is uniquely placed to bring together key figures from different fields to debate the most pertinent urban questions of international concern and to search for new potential to improve global urban living conditions. Through interdisciplinary idea exchanges and workshops with international university partners, ANCB brings together social, cultural and technical research with governance processes, industry products and the proposals of the urban design and planning professions, generating the cross-sector collaborations necessary to offer innovative insights, positions and visions.

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