



TECHNISCHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
DARMSTADT

## Call for Papers

Darmstadt University of Technology  
Graduate School "Topology of Technology"&  
Graduate School of Urban Studies

### Workshop

„All Politics is Local“? Analyzing Power in Contemporary Urban History

Darmstadt June 26 – 27, 2009

Deadline for proposals: March 15, 2009

The locale in general and cities in particular are places of specific political practices and discourses that legitimize and impact power relations and decisions as well as political change. These dynamics might differ noticeably from one country to another but also from one city to another, implying that there are local power structures, traditions of self-perception or peculiar occurrences that shape the paths along which political practices and discourse are being developed. However, it is also easy to point out general schemes and abstract ideals of urban organization and conduct that seem to be circulating and implemented in many, yet diverse localities.

The duality between particularity and universality often asserted in urban history can be resolved by examining how local practices and discourses differ from and interact with other levels of political organization. In this context, a more pronounced feeling of being personally affected as well as the assumption of being able to intervene appear to be decisive. Especially during the latter half of the 20th century this aspect of local political practices and discourses has evolved into a prominent interpretation, often referred to as the rise of a new kind of "civil society". On the other hand, it has been argued that the dominant concept of the "welfare state" has broadened the influence of national policy during the latter half of the 20th century, thus leveling the characteristics of local politics.

In sensitizing research for the issues debated, it seems to be promising to reassess the conception of actors and power structures. Local power relations can be addressed in at least two different ways. First, power can be analyzed as a resource that may be "owned" by concrete persons and actors. This approach is centered on actors and decisions and refers to the local political environment as a backdrop in front of which decisions are legitimized. A second way to analyze power in urban history can be described as the rather impersonal approach, focusing on small and smallest forces, the modes of knowledge production, shapings of the body, and identity politics. This approach stresses a more decentralized understanding of power. The tension between these two vantage points may lead to a valuable interpretation of local power relations and political practices and discourses.

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Datum  
18.2.2009

The key task of this workshop will be to discuss how power may be analytically addressed in regard to urban history of the second half of the 20th century. The invitation is also extended to scholars from disciplines other than history. We welcome contributions that widen perspectives for contemporary urban history both in the terms of concrete fieldwork as well as general methodological interest. The workshop should provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss different approaches and conceptualizations based on the empirical work of the participants. Therefore we specifically want to invite scholars who are working on or have recently finished their dissertation to present their research projects within the given thematic framework.

We ask for contributions that address the levels of and forms in which local power relations and structures can be analyzed appropriately. Is it, especially in a local context, useful to focus on concrete actors and formalized decision-making processes? Or is it more fruitful to talk about power in a more abstract way? Are there temporal and spatial focuses in which the usage of one certain concept of power seems to be more appropriate than in others? This in turn leads back to the question: What is the character of local peculiarities and similarities, and what is their weight? Are local power structures shaped by practical constraint and opportunity, are they overwhelmed by general ideals or ideologies, or is there a balance of both if we concentrate on specifically local kinds of knowledge and power?

The Workshop will take place in Darmstadt from Friday, June 26 till Saturday, June 27, 2009. It is hosted by the Graduate School of Urban Studies and by the Graduate School "Topology of Technology" at the University of Technology Darmstadt.

Proposals including an abstract of one page and a CV must be sent by March 15 to Susanne Schregel: [schregel@phil.tu-darmstadt.de](mailto:schregel@phil.tu-darmstadt.de). We expect participants to prepare a concise paper of about three to five pages as a basis for discussion, to be handed in by May 15. The papers will then be circulated among all participants. The conveners will provide accommodation for accepted paper givers and will partially cover travelling costs.

For further information and inquiries please visit <http://www.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/index.php?id=2616>, or contact Susanne Schregel: [schregel@phil.tu-darmstadt.de](mailto:schregel@phil.tu-darmstadt.de).