

## Cities and the State of Exception (Berlin, 4-6 June 09)

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### Call for Papers

Cities and the State of Exception/State of Emergency  
Ausnahmezustand and the Urban Condition

Fifth Annual Conference of the Transatlantic Graduate Program,  
Berlin - New York  
at the Center for Metropolitan Studies Berlin  
Berlin, June 4-6, 2009

Cities are central sites where persistent tensions between order and chaos, political legitimacy and violence, inside and outside, and sobriety and excess periodically erupt during critical moments of crisis. Framed in terms of the German notion of *Ausnahmezustand*, these moments challenge and realign established relations of power and their concrete manifestations in urban space. The fifth annual conference of the Transatlantic Graduate Program will explore the urban dimensions of *Ausnahmezustand* in its double connotation as both "state of emergency" and "state of exception."

The aim of this conference is to use the concept of *Ausnahmezustand* to illuminate urban conditions and imaginaries and to investigate unveiled mechanisms and structures in order to gain a deeper understanding of how power functions in transforming the urban substance.

In the context of a "state of emergency," *Ausnahmezustand* is widely understood as an official declaration that temporarily suspends existing rights, rules and regulations. In order to deal with an immediate crisis, such as a natural disaster, political emergency, threat of civil war or popular upheaval, which often have their most profound effect on cities, the state suspends or alters rules, norms or practices. The implementation of a state of emergency represents the authority's attempt to regain control of a threatening situation, affirm and legitimate its sovereignty, ensure its monopoly on violence and to reestablish the status quo.

Nevertheless, *Ausnahmezustand* also connotes a "state of exception" where existing norms, rules and regulations are challenged and potentially overthrown, even if only temporarily or locally confined. Thus, it is

equally important to analyze Ausnahmezustand as a "state of exception"? - a multi-directional process that involves multiple actors and sites of power and is therefore not reducible to the application of state force. Instead it may contain a transformative potential to remodel established urban structures, discourses, social relations and the built environment itself.

Themes and questions this conference seeks to explore are:

- How can states of emergency/exception be defined, theorized and conceptualized to understand urban conditions?
- How do political emergencies or natural disasters alter daily life, institutional responses and the make-up of urban environments?
- What are the consequences and impacts of states of exception/emergency on urban political institutions, social relations and cultural practices?
- How are states of emergency/exception embedded and anticipated in the uses and designs of urban infrastructures, architectural paradigms and urban planning? How are scenarios for urban conditions developed to deal with future states of emergency/exception?
- Which actors are involved in evoking, sustaining, challenging and responding to states of emergency/exception in the urban context?
- How do urban states of emergency/exception affect notions of class, gender and ethnicity? How can urban conditions of liminality, social exclusion and otherness be framed in terms of states of emergency/exception?
- How are states of emergency/exception represented in urban space? Are there places and spaces of exception in the city?
- How are states of emergency/exception imagined in the cultural production of urban figures and narratives?

We are interested in conceptual and empirical contributions that deal with the historical and contemporary manifestations of "states of emergency/states of exception" in the urban political, economic, socio-cultural, symbolic and built environment. Since this conference seeks to encourage interdisciplinary discourses, we invite contributions from all junior and senior scholars who wish to contribute to the field of urban research.

Please submit a short CV and a less than 300 word abstract in English to [ausnahmezustand@metropolitanstudies.de](mailto:ausnahmezustand@metropolitanstudies.de) by February 2nd, 2009.

Applicants will be notified via e-mail around February 15th, 2009.

The conference will take place at the Center for Metropolitan Studies, Technical University Berlin, Ernst-Reuter-Platz 7, 10587 Berlin, Germany. The conference language is English.

Unfortunately, the Center for Metropolitan Studies cannot offer travel grants. Travel and accommodation expenses are responsibility of individual

participants. However, we can support you with recommendations and information regarding your stay in Berlin.

Reference:

CFP: Cities and the State of Exception (Berlin, 4-6 June 09). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 19, 2008 (accessed Jan 31, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/31077>>.