

Call for Papers

Urban Loss

Historical and geographical perspectives on experiences and narratives of loss in the transformations of the modern city

20-21 March 2025 in Jena

Growth and progress were the key motifs of modernity and characterised discourses and narratives about urban development. The critique of this narrative has recently been renewed by pointing to the specific experiences of loss in modernity (RECKWITZ 2024). This opens up new historical and geographical perspectives on the European modern cities (MARRIS 1986; KÖRNER 2000; OSWALT 2006; DESILVEY & EDENSOR 2013; MADDRELL 2016; JEDAN ET AL. 2020; SCHULTE 2020; MENA & PICO 2020). In cities, collective and individual experiences of loss accumulate and manifest themselves. On the one hand, cities are subject to **material transformations** of their built substance, which either take place disruptively through wars, (ecological) disasters or authoritarian urban redevelopment, or in an incremental process of creative destruction through economically or politically motivated renewal. On the other hand, cities have been and continue to be **crystallisation points for social transformations** - e.g. for current socio-ecological transformation efforts and the associated upheavals, phase-outs and disruptions. In many cases, new societal visions and novel practices are being explored in cities, which goes hand in hand with ongoing negotiations of change(s). However, the losses inevitably associated with these dynamics are experienced, remembered and dealt with very differently in cities. Consequently, cities become **social arenas for the discursive negotiation and narrative elaboration of experiences of loss** that arise as a result of demographic, social, political and ecological transformations and whose narrations and memories find spatial expression in the city.

Against this background, analysing how experiences of loss are dealt with and processed in their spatial narratives (e.g. mourning, nostalgia, protest, etc.) becomes an essential element for understanding (late) modern urban development. A view of conditions of urban loss illuminates both the heterogeneous losses *in* the city as well as the historical and contemporary processes of a loss *of* the city - i.e. urban substance and/or urbanity. Both aspects of loss characterise urban social fabrics, identities, processes of conflict and negotiation and their spatial, urban and architectural forms of expression.

Contributions are invited from the fields of urban geography and sociology, urban and architectural history, urban development studies, as well as history and cultural studies that present empirical examples and conceptual considerations. We are looking for contributions that discuss the social, cultural and economic effects of experiences of loss and their narrative/visual/performative representation as well as contributions that situate experiences and practices of dealing with loss in the (late) modern city. The aim is to discuss how urban societies and cultures change as a result of the experience of material or immaterial losses and what role specific ways of dealing with loss such as compensation, displacement, reconstruction or commemoration play in this process.

The contributions are intended to strengthen our understanding of past, present and future ways of dealing with anticipated or actual experiences of loss, changing visions of the future or an increasingly crumbling narrative of progress. A focus on urban conditions of loss provides fundamental insights into the diverse ways in which crises and the challenges of social transformation are addressed in and through different urban trajectories and spaces of experience, and how urban histories and futures are negotiated beyond typical narratives of progress and growth. This also promises new perspectives on current urban development debates, such as

questions of how society deals with socio-ecological transformation and the resulting experiences of loss, or questions of the articulation of loss in cities in the context of politics of commemoration.

Contributions to one or more of the following topics are particularly welcome

- What kind of *experiences, places and practices of loss in the city*, or loss of urban substance and/or urbanity, emerge in relation to what kind of social conflicts, and what significance do these losses have for urban social coexistence and for the negotiation of urban identities and futures?
- How can we understand the *social differentiation* and the *contested nature* of experiences of loss, e.g. with regard to questions of recognition?
- What are the *forms of expression* of urban experiences of loss and what individual and collective changes in the perception of urban space result from loss? How are these experiences made effective in and through (which) *socio-cultural practices ('doing loss')*?
- Which political, social and cultural factors *make urban societies resilient to experiences of loss*? Which factors exacerbate the perception of loss or the concrete effects of loss?
- What can be learned from contextualised *historiographies of losses* in the city or losses of urban substance and/or urbanity *for tackling current social and cultural losses*? How are experiences of loss remembered (musealisation, forgetting/repression, integration into existing narratives)?

We kindly ask you to send **abstracts (1-2 pages)** to simon.runkel@uni-jena.de, manuel.schramm@phil.tu-chemnitz.de and jan.winkler@geo.uni-halle.de **by 20 December 2024**.

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