

**Collaborative Research Center 1265 “Re-Figuration of Spaces”
International Conference 2022**

**“My City is a Battleground: Intersectionality and Urban Violence”
Berlin, 20th – 22nd of October**

Concept Note:

The Collaborative Research Center (CRC 1265) has a particular interest in how spatial and social conflicts interplay and how these conflicts connect with the intersectional tensions that accompany processes of urban spatial refiguration. Taking its inspiration from decades of research on social inequality, class struggles, migration, violence as well as from intersectional feminist work, the CRC’s fourth international conference will turn its attention to how conflicts manifest intersectionally in and through urban space. It will further ask when, how and why conflicts in cities turn violent, what forms of violence they may take and when, how and why they may *not* turn violent.

According to Norbert Elias, unequal power balances between different social groups influence processes of refiguration as well as the way conflicts manifest (non)violently. Over the last three decades, research on social inequality has increasingly stressed that diverse dimensions of inequality (such as class, race and gender) intersect and that the precise manner in which they intersect, and whether one dimension becomes dominant, is an empirical rather than a theoretical question. Further, intersectionality has long become a centerpiece of feminist scholarly engagement and numerous policy texts. The concept, grounded in feminist theorizing by Crenshaw (1989) and Yuval-Davis among many others, has been used to indicate how social divisions are “irreducible to one another” (Yuval-Davis, 2015: 94).

This conference seeks to mobilize approaches to social inequality and intersectionality for the analysis of urban spatial conflicts. It recognizes that urban violence works in relation to complex subjectivities and that spatial environments play a pivotal role in shaping how dimensions of social inequality intertwine. While translocational positionality “recognises the importance of the context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales and the contradictory processes in play” (Anthias, 2002: 107), space can often remain a secondary consideration in some intersectional analyses. Thus, the conference will work to spatialise these intersections, as well as addressing the lacuna regarding theories of social conflict as seldom spatial in nature. This line of inquiry then draws attention to the fundamental centrality of space and corporeality to social processes and societal membership (see Holston and Appadurai, 1999).

Intersections of social inequality and violence in urban space are not ephemeral phenomena, but situated and unfolding across particular urban spaces. Intersectional analyses span different registers of precarity or vulnerability, flagging up specific conflictual constellations that range from exclusion from or tenuous claims on the right to city spaces to experiences of physical violence. Here violence could assume the form of grievous corporeal harm as well as perhaps subtler, yet also insidious forms of damage that include symbolic or material violence

resulting in social exclusion. This focus will allow us to unpick violence's different temporal scales and levels of visibility. Mapping the micro-processes resulting from and in specific power balances can moreover work to highlight the instability and flux of these intersections. Therefore, the conference will explore how cities or urban spaces themselves can enact violence against bodies carrying overlapping marks of the social world, whereby class, race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, age or disability – amongst others – intersect to produce different outcomes and power balances.

The CRC 1265's international conference "My City is a Battleground: Intersectionality and Urban Violence" intends to contribute to the current conversation by training a spotlight on the link between *lived urban materialities* and *embodied social inequalities and their intersectionality*. We will bring together approaches to social inequality and foreground their links to spatial analyses of various conflict constellations in order to explore the way the materiality of the city in its physical structures and spatial forms comes to enact intersectional inequalities and violence. Some questions this conference will pose include:

- How does urban materiality affect power balances, social inequalities, their intersections and social exclusions? How and on what level do these social positions become ingrained, or even naturalized, in the city and its physical structures? Inside the home or at work? In public space/on the streets? In specific neighborhoods or the whole city?
- Can the city itself be regarded as a (violent) physical and material force intended to damage, hurt or kill?
- When do spatial conflicts become violent and how does this turning point relate to power balances between different social groups?
- How might intersectional positions be rearranged or upended through conflictual encounters in urban space?
- How do the material, the discursive and the emotive intersect in instances of urban spatial conflict?
- What are the normative frameworks and systems of governance that create and sustain violence in the city? And conversely, how and when are urban conflicts suppressed or rendered invisible?

We thereby hope to gain a deeper understanding of (urban) social conflicts, notions of spatial injustice as well as different forms of violence in the city, including those produced by capitalism and heteronormativity, or classed, gendered and racialized exclusion, to name a few dimensions. Furthermore, the conference will examine the role of urban planning in reproducing or confronting conflictual dynamics and its potential to democratize access to space. Lastly, we intend to address activist engagements and social movements dealing with urban spatial conflicts. This will open possibilities to build transdisciplinary alliances to address the multiple vulnerabilities produced by intersectional violence.