

INTERPRETIVE POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 2021

Panel Title:

P4 - Relational Place-Making of Public Space

Panel Convenors:

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Place-making – the set of political, social and material practices by which people (re-)make spaces – is an important yet under-explored element of political theory (Pierce, Martin & Murphy, 2010). Recently, scholars have started to reflect upon the relationship between place-making and public space by drawing upon a relational, or process-oriented (Van Melik & Spierings, 2020), understanding of place. This panel invites theoretical and empirical studies that engage with the relationship between place-making and public space from this perspective.

From a political point of view, **public space** is often understood as a physical realm where individuals see and are seen by others as they engage in public affairs. In her book *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt (1963) links this space with “public freedom”. For contemporary critical theory, Arendt’s thought remains challenging. Critics have shown that public spaces are not only defined by free interactions and democratic expressions, but instead are co-constituted and constrained by broader urban dynamics such as gentrification, territorial stigma, and more recently, spatial health measures linked to Covid-19.

Place-making is thus embedded in political-economic forces that extend beyond the physical boundaries of any public space. Scholarship focused on this nexus acknowledges the relation between the structural production of space, on the one hand, and the practices of lived space, on the other. However, it often fails to explicate the relationships through which these forces are applied. A **relational** sense of place (Massey, 2005) offers politically oriented scholars a theoretical tool to extend the connection between public space and place-making by grounding both concepts in networks of multiple and interconnected places. This relational perspective challenges scholars to identify the relations between actors, policy agendas, institutions and discourses *behind* the production of public space. We invite contributors to submit abstracts on relevant themes, including (but not limited to):

- The multi-connected nature of place-making networks behind the construction of policies and discourses affecting public space;
- Unequal power relations in place-making networks along gender, race and class divisions (Thompson Summers & Howell, 2019)
- The circulation, mutation and implementation of public space policies across cities and regions (McCann & Ward, 2012)
- The contestation and reclamation of public space policies and discourses in place-making networks;

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- Implications of a relational perspective on place-making and public space for comparative research between poorer and wealthier urban and regional contexts (McFarlane & Robinson, 2012);
- The variegated nature of place-making networks in times of Covid-19 (Van Eck, Van Melik & Schapendonk, 2020).

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