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University of  
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College for Social  
Sciences and  
Humanities, Essen  
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**AURORA**



# SYMPOSIUM

## SCRIPTING FUTURES FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# Conference Organization

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# Welcome to Essen

## Scripting Futures for Urban Sustainability

Final Symposium of the University Alliance Ruhr City Scripts Graduate Research Group (2018 – 2024) funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and Kick-Off for the Healthy Cities Initiative launched by the Aurora Educational Hubs Culture & Health & Well-Being.

The new millennium is the first “urban millennium” both in terms of the percentage of people living in cities and towns and in terms of the importance of urban settings for economic growth and social interactions. At the same time, too many urban dwellers lack access to public, green spaces, public transportation, education or health care, to name just a few of the issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goal 11 of the *United Nations’ Agenda 2030* (U.N., *Transforming Our World*, 2015).

This specific sustainable development goal calls on academic research and education to help “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.” It lists cultural production, education, sports, mental and physical health among the factors that improve the livability of cities. As scholars, students, and professionals in the fields of literature, culture, society, and medicine we ask ourselves: what does it take to intervene in urban change, especially if this intervention comes at the very point at which a concrete city becomes a better or a worse place for its human and non-human inhabitants?

There is a new sense that literature and the arts might play a bigger role than previously understood. As Simone d’Antonio, a member of the EU-funded project URBACT suggests, “[s]torytelling is a key tool for improving any urban planning process, both for engaging residents in different dimensions of the spatial regeneration as for helping professionals in better understanding users’ needs.” (<https://urbact.eu/articles/storytelling-urban-change-narrative-thriving-streets> 2022). But how and in what ways does storytelling become crucial to these concise interventions into historical, social, and economic dynamics?

This two-day symposium brings together researchers, students, and professionals from the humanities, the social sciences, and the medical school. It will pursue two interconnected goals: Regarding the proclaimed power of storytelling, we will present some of the key findings of the City Scripts graduate research group ([www.cityscripts.de](http://www.cityscripts.de)) concerning the urban impact of a limited set of stories that have been told about postindustrial cities in the United States and Germany. We will take the example of the so-called “legacy cities” (Mallach / Brachman 2013) in our neighborhoods, asking in particular, how these cities have dealt with histories of extractive economies of coal and steel. These examples will allow us to explicate the contradictory roles that storytelling plays in all attempts to ‘flip the script’ of any given neighborhood. Secondly, the symposium explores the potential of concrete changes in urban health management, urban sports, and planning practice to actually “script” the direction of future social transformation (see Sulimma / Buchenau / Gurr 2023). What are the opportunities and stakes of telling convincing stories about health, sports, and urban planning? Will they allow a fair and equitable contribution to concrete urban change?

We are grateful for the generous support of this symposium by the Volkswagen Foundation and the Society of Friends and Supporters (Förderverein) of the UDE.

Barbara Buchenau

Essen, June 6, 2024

**Thursday, June 6, 2024, Campus Essen, University of Duisburg-Essen / College for Social Sciences and Humanities**

10:15 – 11:45, UDE, Campus Essen, Room: R11 T00 D05:

- Welcome Address by Barbara Buchenau, Director, City Scripts Graduate Research Group, University Alliance Ruhr, and Lead of Work Package 2 on Transdisciplinary Research-Driven Education, Aurora universities, UDE, Germany: “Scriptive Space, Scripting Place: Towards a Transdisciplinary Inquiry into Transformative Storytelling in the Ruhr Region, the US and Across Europe.”
- Thomas Heise, Associate Professor of English, Penn State University (Abington), U.S.A.; Author of *The Gentrification Plot: New York and the Postindustrial Crime Novel* (Columbia 2022) and *Urban Underworlds: A Geography of Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture* (Rutgers 2011): “‘Things Don’t Go Away’: Personal and Collective Memory in Teju Cole’s *Open City*.”
- Anke Hinney, Vice Dean for Early Career Support and Diversity, Essen University Hospital, Professor for Molecular Genetics of Obesity and Eating Disorder with Focus on Genderspecific Aspects at the Department of Child- and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany: “Gender Sensitivity in Urban Medical Care.”

12.00

Lunch in UDE’s Campus Essen Mensa (table reserved for 20 people), time to walk / stroll through town to the college in Lindenallee 39

14:00 – 15:45: College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Lindenallee 39, Essen

- Elisabeth Haefs, Academic Coordinator, Research Network “Cultures of Compromise”, WWU Münster / UDE/ RUB, Germany: “From Dissertation Project to Manuscript to Book. *The Journey of Cultivation Builds Community*, forthcoming from WVT.”
- Pavlína Flajšarová, Vice-Dean for International Relations / Associate Professor, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts / Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic: “Czech Garden City of Zlin and Literature.”
- Jens Martin Gurr, Professor of British and Anglophone Literature and Culture, UDE, Germany; Co-Director, City Scripts Graduate Research Group: “Whose ‘Smart City’? Critical Questions on a Travelling Concept.”
- Francesco Casalbordino, Arch. Ph.D., Post-doc Researcher/ Lecturer, DiARC Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy: “Designing Concepts and Myths: the Role of Visual Narratives in Planning and Design Processes.”

15:45 – 16:15

Coffee Break

16:15 – 18:00: College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Lindenallee 39, Essen

- Courtney Moffet-Bateau, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, Wayne State University, U.S.A.: “Automobility and the Legacy of Black Music from Detroit.”
- Jiří Flajšar, Faculty of Pedagogy, Institute of Foreign Languages, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic: “American Suburbs and American Suburban Poetry.”
- Lieven Ameel, Co-Editor, Palgrave Series in Literary Urban Studies, Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature, Tampere University, Finland: “Talking To You? – Narrative Prompts for Building Dialogue in Civic Space.”
- Erin James, Professor, Department of English, Director of the MA English, Chair of the Sustainability Certificates Committee, Affiliate Faculty of Environmental Science, University of Idaho, U.S.A.: “The Confluence Lab; or New Perspectives on Storytelling in and for the Environment.”

**Thursday, June 6, 2024, Campus Essen, University of Duisburg-Essen / College for Social Sciences and Humanities**

18:15 – 19:45: College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Lindenallee 39, Essen

Reception and Book Launch of

- Buchenau/Gurr/Sulimma, eds., *City Scripts: Narratives for Postindustrial Cities*, Ohio State University Press, 2023.
- Ameen/Gurr/Buchenau, *Narrative in Urban Planning: A Practical Field Guide*, transcript, 2023.

Inquiry for Responses by Erin James, University of Idaho (tbc), Dana Sitnikov and Pia Schümmelfeder, MA American Studies Program, UDE



**Friday, June 7, 2024, College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Lindentallee 39, Essen**

09:15 – 10:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Florian Deckers, Postdoctoral Researcher, North American Studies, UDE, Germany: “Visual Neighborhood Narratives: Cultural Production as a Means of Participation and Cause for Contestation.”</li> <li>• Małgorzata Sugiera, Professor of Performativity Studies, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland: “Cities and Their People: Urban Subjectivity in N.K. Jemisin’s New York.”</li> <li>• Robert Gioielli, Associate Professor of Environmental Humanities, Director, Environmental Humanities Laboratory, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden: “‘Crime Infested Inner Cities’: Race, Narratives of Disorder and Urban Sustainability in Modern America.”</li> </ul>
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15 – 13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juliane Borosch, Doctoral Researcher, North American Studies, UDE, Germany: “Scripting Futures for (Post)Industrial Landmarks.”</li> <li>• Victoria Harms, Senior Lecturer, Department of History, Johns Hopkins University, U.S.A.: “Sports – A Force for Good? The Rhine Ruhr Valley as a Case Study.”</li> <li>• Simone Raskob, City Hall Essen, Environment, Infrastructure, Sports, Germany: Rhine Ruhr World University Games (tbc)</li> <li>• Kornelia Freitag, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Professor of American Studies, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany: “Academic City Script: The European University of Cities in Post-industrial Transition.”</li> </ul>
13:00 – 14:15	Lunch Break
14:15 – 16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poster presentations and Panel debate on Flipping Urban Scripts of Being Unwell / Well by Students from the UDE, UPEC and Johns Hopkins University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Evelin Edel, American Studies MA Program, UDE: “‘A Seemingly Peaceful Get-Together in Times of War’ – the FISU Summer World University Games Come to the Rhine Ruhr Region.”</li> <li>– Susanne Cloeren and Tina Walberger, American Studies MA Program, UDE: Structural Change or Transformative Process: The Recovery of the Emscher River (SDG 6)</li> <li>– Lara Wolbeck, American Studies MA Program, UDE: Interviews with MA students of history, Johns Hopkins University</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Participants in the Hopkins summer abroad program “Sports – A Force for Good? The Rhine Ruhr Valley as Case Study,” supported generously by the Dean for Undergraduate Studies at Johns Hopkins University and a grant from the DAAD with funding from the Foreign Office:  Sebastian Alderman, Elyjah Bassford, Samhitha Boppana, Unubold Buyannemekh, Gerardo Fontes, Kevin Huang, Yensabro Kanashiro, Kyle Pearson, Yujin Zhou and Ismailcan Usta (TA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Amira Prison, American Studies MA Program, UDE: Podcast on the symposium</li> </ul>
16:00 – 16:15	Coffee Break

**Friday, June 7, 2024, College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Lindenallee 39, Essen**

16:15 – 17:45

- Katharina Wood, Joint Innovation Hub, Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, Heilbronn, Germany: “People, Planet, Profit: Leading the Way to Sustainability? The Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, as a Case.”
- Chris Katzenberg, Interim Program Manager, Superdiversity in Education, Organisations and Society (SEOS), Ruhr University Bochum / UNIC (Universities in Industrial Cities Alliance), Germany: “‘The Gentleman Whose Profession is Fundraising’: Scripting Inclusion, Diversity, and Philanthropic Selves in Urban Education.”
- Simone Raskob, City Hall Essen, Environment, Infrastructure, Sports, Germany: Challenges for Sustainable Urban Development in Essen (tbc)

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17:45 – 18:15

Coffee Break

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18:15 – 19:30

Keynote and Reception: Marcus Zepf, Professor of Urbanism, Co-Director E-City (<https://e-city.fr>), Chercheur au laboratoire Lab’Urba, Ecole d’urbanisme de Paris (EUP), Université Paris-Est Créteil (UPEC), France: “Adaptable and Healthy Cities: Permanent Autopoietic Process.”

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## Speakers



# Biography

Lieven Ammel has widely published on experiences of space, narrative planning, and urban futures. His most recent books include *The Narrative Turn in Planning* (2020), *Narrative in Urban Planning* (with Jens Gurr and Barbara Buchenau; 2023) and the edited volume *Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies* (2022). His current research focuses on work within the energy humanities and on narrative interventions in civic space.



**Lieven Ammel**

Co-Editor, Palgrave Series in Literary Urban Studies, Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature, Tampere University, Finland

# Abstract

“Talking To You? – Narrative Prompts for Building Dialogue in Civic Space.” Direct address or *apostrophe* is an age-old rhetoric device, used widely in literature and public poetry to engage readers or passers-by. This presentation looks at how direct address is used within the context of twenty-first-century urban civic space to act as prompts with which to invite and build active forms of dialogue. Direct address – in societally engaged literature but also in urban policy narratives – is often explicitly designed in ways that allow the word to intervene in the world, and to work towards more sustainable or more equitable environments.

# Biography

Juliane Borosch dissertation project – as part of the UA Ruhr graduate research group “Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions” – investigates landmarks of the former industrial city at the conjunction of creative and sustainable urban development in a transnational comparison of Detroit and the Ruhr area. Between May 2021 and May 2022, Juliane Borosch was a visiting scholar in the Department of Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, USA and a visiting resident scholar at the Humanities Center, also at Wayne State University. She holds a combined BA in History and Anglophone Studies and a combined MA in American Studies and Literature and Media Practice both from the University of Duisburg-Essen.



**Juliane Borosch**

Doctoral Researcher, North  
American Studies, UDE, Germany

# Abstract

"Scripting Futures for (Post)Industrial Landmarks." Building on examples from Detroit and the Ruhr area, this talk discusses different scenarios of (re-)development for landmarks of the former industrial city. Borosch here defines landmarks as visible signature features of the built and (un)natural environment. Landmarks of the former industrial city need development or refiguration because of their status as 'former-' or 'post-', as relics of an era supposedly gone-by. They are characterized by their loss of function. Different stakeholders therefore write, campaign for, and invest in different scenarios for the future uses of these sites – frequently using creative means to promote sustainable developments.

# Biography

Barbara Buchenau most recent publications include *Narrative in Urban Planning: A Practical Field Guide* (co-authored with Lieven Ameel and Jens Martin Gurr, 2023) and *City Scripts: Narratives of Postindustrial Urban Futures* (co-edited with Jens Martin Gurr and Maria Sulimma for OSUP, 2023). She served as UDE's Vice-Rector of Social Responsibility, Diversity and International Affairs (2018 – 2022), and has directed the inter-university graduate research group *Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions* at the University Alliance Ruhr (Volkswagen Foundation 2018 – 2024). She is a member of the Aurora European University Alliance, has been the lead of work package 3 on *Learning for Societal Impact* (Erasmus+ 2020-2023) and is currently leading work package 2 on Transdisciplinary European Research-Driven Educational Hubs (Erasmus+ 2023-2027).



**Barbara Buchenau**  
Professor of North American  
Studies at the University of  
Duisburg-Essen, Germany

# Abstract

“Scriptive Space, Scripting Place: Towards a Transdisciplinary Inquiry into Transformative Storytelling in the Ruhr Region, the US and Across Europe.” Narrative energies are hard to harness in industrial legacy settings In the United States, Europe and our very own setting, the Rhine / Ruhr region alike. And yet the opposing fields of urban planning and political activism increasingly use storytelling in their designs for ostensibly better, healthier urban futures. Planning as much as activism thoroughly depends on the ability to invent plausible stories of cohesion, of connectedness, and of a (redemptive) future. But what are the ways in which scripts of postindustrial cities can indeed be flipped by storytelling? And how do scripts yank together the past, the present, and the future to promise a redemption of a specific urban setting? Does this promise of redemption work for all of the parties involved in a conflict over healthy urban settings or does it further divisions? In this talk, Barbara Buchenau presents the findings of the city scripts graduate research group concerning the interconnections between the specialized fields of literature, urban management, and urban political activism. Storytelling – its characters, themes, settings – shapes how each of these fields imagines our cities and the life in them, thus legitimizing histories, future plans, and current evaluations of the urban. What makes narratives coherent, probable, persuasive, even necessary – but also potentially harmful, manipulative and divisive? How can narratives help build more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive, healthy communities?

# Biography

Francesco Casalbordino is Architect, post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II. Since 2017 he has been carrying out tutoring activities in design studios and master's degree theses. In 2022, he obtained a Ph.D. in Architecture with a dissertation titled "Images of the Terrestrial: The Project of Worldliness in the Global City", exploring the relationship between globalization and architecture. Other research interests concern prison spaces and their transformation. His actual research is focused on reading and designing in post-industrial landscapes of extraction and logistics.



**Francesco Casalbordino**

Arch. Ph.D., Post-doc Researcher  
| Lecturer, DiARC Dipartimento  
di Architettura, Università degli  
Studi di Napoli "Federico II", Italy

# Abstract

Pictures can easily represent life situations, both real and artificially recreated, while technical drawings hardly describe the way people dwell. The constant increase in architectural images can be considered part of the general change in society, defined by W.J.T. Mitchell as the "pictorial turn." The worldwide diffusion of pictures contributes to the democratization of progress and living standards, but it also encourages the homogenization of buildings and urban spaces across the globe, leading to a loss of unique places. If we move beyond the dialectic between the global and the local, we can observe how these images construct narratives that gather global elements in each place, creating a collective imagination capable of transforming specific locations starting from global influences. This contribution aims to delve into the power of visual narratives to cross borders, thus creating mythologies and collective imaginaries that influence planning and design processes. Using an approach derived from visual culture studies, this process will be analyzed by presenting some pictorial narratives rooted in American Modernism of the Sixties and Seventies, which have influenced the collective imagination of the modern American home, spreading this model to other parts of the world. Similarly, we will analyze urban practices that use visualization as the main communication tool, leading to the development of almost mythical urban models in the contemporary era that transcend specific locations.

# Biography

Florian Deckers is a post-doctoral researcher in the North American Studies program of the Department of Anglophone Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen and was a part of the graduate research group “Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions”. His dissertation “Raising Latinx Voices” investigates contemporary approaches of Latinx artists in New York that rescript the urban space as well as the identity of the fastest growing minority in the US. Florian holds a combined BA in German Language and Literature and Anglophone Studies and a combined MA in American Studies and Literature and Media Practice. In 2018, he completed the MA program with his thesis on transnational automobile advertising in Germany and the US and its reconstruction as well as commodification of national images.



**Florian Deckers**

Postdoctoral Researcher, North American Studies, UDE, Germany

# Abstract

“Visual Neighborhood Narratives: Cultural Production as a Means of Participation and Cause for Contestation” explores how Latinx artists living in New York City shape the narratives of their neighborhoods through public wall art. With a literary urban studies approach, graffiti in Bushwick as well as community murals in Spanish Harlem are read as contributing factors that demarcate those Latinx hubs as cities-within-the-city. In a constantly shifting demographic setting these inscriptions into the urban fabric not only contribute to the place’s identity, they also incite a wide array of reactions ranging from support to adamant contestation.

# Biography

Jiří Flajšar teaches American literature, culture, and history at Palacký University. He is the author of four books on American poetry, many book chapters and journal articles on Anglophone literatures and cultures, and editor of several volumes of criticism. His current research deals with the ethnic and racial minorities in American suburban literature and film.



**Jiří Flajšar**

Faculty of Pedagogy, Institute of Foreign Languages, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic

# Abstract

“Reflecting American Suburbs in American Poetry.” Within the last century, the socio-cultural development of the United States has been much defined by suburbanization, that is by the massive architectural and demographic growth of suburbs. The paper explains the construction of suburban identity in American poetry of the last hundred years. The paper surveys the seven major themes in American suburban poetry to argue for the importance of this literary tradition.



# Biography

Pavína Flajšarová, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. In 1999–2000, she was a Fulbright visiting researcher at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Her current scholarly interest is British ethnic and diasporic literature. At the same time, she serves as the vice-dean of international relations at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic. She has lead many international cooperation projects, e.g. dealing with innovative teaching and research in cultural studies, or on digital humanities which developed novel collaborative online book entitled „next book“, and last but not least, this project on the reflection of sub/urbanisation in the EU and American context.



**Pavína Flajšarová**  
Vice-Dean for International  
Relations / Associate Professor,  
Department of English and  
American Studies, Faculty of Arts  
/ Palacky University Olomouc,  
Czech Republic

# Abstract

The Czech garden city of Zlin stands as a testament to the innovative urban planning concepts that emerged in the early 20th century, in particular the concepts advocated in Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. This paper explores the evolution of the garden city movement in Zlin, Czech Republic, from its inception to its integration into the fabric of the city. By delving into the historical context and architectural features of the garden city in Zlin, this paper sheds light on its impact on the urban landscape and community life. Furthermore, this paper examines the intersection between the garden city of Zlin and literature, exploring how this unique urban concept has inspired and influenced literary works. Through an analysis of literary representations of the garden city, this study uncovers how writers have engaged with the ideals and realities of urban planning and manufacturing in Zlin. By exploring the literary responses to the garden city, this paper offers insights into the cultural significance of this urban phenomenon and its lasting legacy in both urban design and literary expression.

# Biography

Kornelia Freitag holds the chair of American Studies at Ruhr University Bochum. She has been publishing on U.S. literature and culture with a focus on linguistic experiment, transnational and urban texts. Her major area of research is poetry. She has been serving as Vice Rector for Academic Affairs at her home university since 2015. Since then, she has been actively involved in the European University Association's Learning & Teaching Initiative. She is currently chairing the Ruhr University team of the European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition (UNIC).



**Kornelia Freitag**

Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs,  
Professor of American Studies,  
Ruhr University Bochum,  
Germany

# Abstract

“Academic City Script: The European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition”. The European **University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition (UNIC)** is one of 50 European University Alliances that formed and are funded as part of this “flagship initiative of the European strategy for universities”. The talk will introduce to UNIC and the ways in which its goals, actions, and structural measures aim at partaking in scripting cities. It will show UNIC’s city script as intersecting with its “academic” scripts. Finally, it will present some irritations that arise from a change of perspective from Urban Studies theories to practical work with cities.

# Biography

Rob Gioielli is also director of the Environmental Humanities Laboratory. He is an urban environmental historian whose work focuses on race, sustainability, and environmental justice. He is the author of *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis: Baltimore, St. Louis, Chicago* (Temple UP, 2014) and is currently working on book project tentatively titled “Race, Sprawl and Sustainability: An Environmental History of White Flight,” under contract with the University of Washington Press.



**Rob Gioielli**

Associate Professor of  
Environmental Humanities,  
Director, Environmental  
Humanities Laboratory, KTH  
Royal Institute of Technology,  
Sweden

# Abstract

“‘Crime Infested Inner Cities’: Race, Narratives of Disorder and Urban Sustainability in Modern America.” Beginning in the 1970s, narratives about crime, and especially violent crime, began to dominate how many (especially white and suburban) Americans thought about central cities. This fear and concomitant racialization of crime played a major role in escalating the War on Drugs, the rapid expansion of the carceral state, and the rapid adoption of other overly punitive and racist criminal justice policies that are a central cause of the country’s contemporary social inequalities. But what has been less examined and understood is how the now decades long moral and racial panic over crime reshaped the conceptualization and use of urban space and infrastructure (especially housing, transit and parks) to reinforce and encourage the spread of energy intensive suburban sprawl. This made American cities more carbon dependent and exacerbated existing environmental inequalities, and also firmly intertwined any efforts to increase urban sustainability with the toxic politics of race and crime.

# Biography

Jens Martin Gurr has been Professor of British and Anglophone Literature and Culture at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, since 2007. He is the author or co-author of six monographs, including *Charting Literary Urban Studies: Texts as Models of and for the City* (Routledge, 2021), and (with Julia Hoydis and Roman Bartosch), *Climate Change Literacy* (Cambridge University Press [Elements series], 2023). His book *Understanding Public Debates: What Literary Studies Can Do (An Argument and Six Case Studies)* will come out with Routledge in May 2024. He is currently working on a monograph *Historicizing the Enlightenment Controversy: Literary (Self-)Reflections 1720-1800 (England, Germany, France)*. Jens Gurr is a member of the UDE University Council and of the Board of Trustees of the Volkswagen Foundation. In research, teaching and administration, a consistent concern has been to define and strengthen the role of the humanities in academia and in society generally.



**Jens Martin Gurr**  
Professor of British and  
Anglophone Literature and  
Culture, UDE, Germany

# Abstract

“Whose ‘Smart City’? Critical Questions on a Travelling Concept.” The paper will critically comment on the notion of the “smart city” as a travelling concept in urban development, a concept which - in glaring contrast to promises of sustainability, livability, health, comfort and security - has so far arguably proven to be little more than a buzz word. The paper will discuss both a number of corporate marketing campaigns by leading players in the field AND the promises and the reality of a number of key “smart city” initiatives globally. In keeping with recent research on smart city initiatives, I will conclude that it is largely the more positive connotations of the “smart city” script - less associated with “degrowth”, “renunciation” and “doing without” than, say, the “sustainability script” - that have allowed the concept to gain the wide currency it still enjoys.

# Biography

Elisabeth Haefs is a former member of the graduate research group “Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions”, where she explored narratives about community gardening that circulate in urban planning documents from the US and Germany. Her further research interests include British and Postcolonial Studies as well as the field of Literature and Science. Currently, she is a postdoc for science communication and coordination as part of the research project “Cultures of Compromise” (University of Duisburg-Essen, University of Münster, Ruhr University Bochum).



## Elisabeth Haefs

Academic Coordinator, Research Network “Cultures of Compromise”, WWU Münster / UDE/ RUB, Germany

# Abstract

Elisabeth Haefs will share insights on the publication process that comes after writing the dissertation manuscript. Her book *Cultivation Builds Community: Narrative in Urban Planning for Community Gardens* will be published this summer with WVT (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier).

The book develops methods to analyse how urban planning texts narrate urban practices; it sets out to answer the question why community gardening projects can become exclusive and disadvantageous to urban communities and how such processes are entwined with narrative structure. The book applies this narrative analysis to texts from the cities of Portland (OR) and Essen (Germany). *Cultivation Builds Community* therefore uses an interdisciplinary approach to urban planning texts for municipal community gardening programmes, focusing on implied exclusions, inclusions, and the ubiquitous promise of community building. Through its persuasive nature and its benign appearance, this promise simultaneously obscures a lack of clarity as to *how* the community can be built, and who might be excluded in the process. In consequence, plans for gardens can go unquestioned and their impacts left unmonitored.

Formal community gardening programmes are increasingly used in municipalities' approaches to tackling social inequality as well as environmental issues. While these programmes are generally well-researched, a closer look at how this form of planning for gardening in an 'inclusive green city' works on a narrative level is overdue. This monograph is the first book-length study to address the narrative structure of community gardening texts in urban planning, and the first book to address this narrative topic in a transatlantic context, considering the respective situations of community gardening in the US and Germany.

# Biography

Victoria Harms is a senior lecturer in the Department of History at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). She teaches classes on sports history, the Cold War, and Europe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She has published articles on Hungary under Viktor Orbán, intellectual history, and US sports, and served as faculty advisor on a research team that curated the exhibition “‘Revolution in Our Lifetime.’ The Black Panther Party and Political Organizing in Baltimore, 1968-1973,” on display at the Peale, April 12-July 7, 2024. She is the author of *The Making of Dissidents. Hungary’s Democratic Opposition and its Western Friends, 1973-1998*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2024. In 2023, she was awarded a selective Alexander Grass Humanities Institute fellowship to support work on her current book manuscript, *The Great Deflection. The 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles and Ronald Reagan’s America*.



**Victoria Harms**

Senior Lecturer, Department of History, Johns Hopkins University, U.S.A.

# Abstract

“Sports – A Force for Good? The Rhine Ruhr Valley as a Case Study.” In this presentation Harms will introduce the key topic for an excursion of students in a History Master program at Johns Hopkins University. What is it that can be learned from the many examples in which public sports events in urban settings brought together athletes from countries that in deep, unresolved conflict with each other? The FISU World University Games, to be hosted by the Rhine Ruhr region in 2025 is one of the examples under investigation by the students.



# Biography

## Thomas Heise

Associate Professor of English,  
Penn State University (Abington),  
U.S.A.

Thomas Heise is the author of four books, most recently *The Gentrification Plot: New York and the Postindustrial Crime Novel*, which is part of Columbia University Press's Literature Now Series. He is also the author of *Urban Underworlds: A Geography of Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture*, which was published in the American Literatures Initiative. In addition to two academic monographs, he has published the lyrical novel *Moth*, which was nominated for the Foreword Book of the Year and the poetry collection *Horror Vacui*, whose title work won the *Gulf Coast Prize in Poetry*. A former Associate Professor of American Literature at McGill University, Thomas Heise is now an Associate Professor of American Literature and Creative Writing at Pennsylvania State University, Abington College. He lives in New York City.

# Abstract

Since its publication in 2011, Teju Cole's award-winning and critically acclaimed novel *Open City* has been read repeatedly through the lens of literary cosmopolitanism. However, in Cole's own eyes "*Open City* is very much about rape." "[T]his aspect of the book has been overlooked," he asserts. Thomas Heise's talk interrogates how this blind spot urges readers to adopt a more critical memory culture. The talk situates Cole's novel within the context of what Andreas Huyssen calls the contemporary period's "hypertrophy of memory" arising from globalization's "threat of socially produced amnesia." Finally, the talk will seek to think through the apparent contradiction between the unreliability of *Open City*'s cosmopolitan narrator (and accused rapist) and the novel's larger project of rewriting collective memory to attend to the past and present injustices of racism and deterritorialization.

# Biography

Anke Hinney is a biologist (studied in Bielefeld, Brighton and Tübingen) and associate professor (W2, permanent) of molecular genetics of obesity and eating disorders including sex and gender-specific aspects (since 2012) and the acting director at the Institute of sex- and gender sensitive medicine at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Since 2020 she is the vice dean for young scientists and diversity at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Duisburg-Essen. She is the head of the Commission for Research and Young Scientists, Faculty of Medicine, UDE and Member of the: (1) Gender Equality Commission, (2) Preparatory Habilitation Commission, (3) Women's & Gender Research Network NRW (advisory board) and (4) Center for Medical Biotechnology (ZMB). She supervised more than 70 Bachelor, Master, MD, PhD and habilitation candidates. Main Research projects: DFG, EU, BMBF (joint program with ANR, DHGP, NGFN1, 2, NGFNplus) , UMEA Clinician Scientists (DFG), UMEA2 advanced CS (BMBF), UMESciA (EKFS); H-Index 66 (Web of Science), 293 PubMed citations.



**Anke Hinney**

Vice Dean for Early Career Support and Diversity, Essen University Hospital, Germany

# Abstract

“Gender Sensitivity in Urban Medical Care.” The relevance of gender medicine, or more precisely sex and gender-sensitive medicine, has become increasingly evident during the last decade. The topic is a central area in medical research and patient care. Women and men can suffer from different diseases or these manifest in different ways. This is mainly due to the different genetic and hormonal constitutions, which affect anatomy and physiology. Resulting in different disease probabilities, pathophysiologies, disease symptoms and courses. In addition, sociocultural and biological factors influence the disease process differently in men and women. However, sex and gender differences in medical care as well as in research and teaching are still insufficiently considered. The current state of the art will be presented.

# Biography

Erin James is Professor of English at the University of Idaho, where she is also Affiliate Faculty of Environmental Science and Chair of the Sustainability Certificates Committee. Her books include *Narrative in the Anthropocene* (Ohio State University Press 2022) and *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* (University of Nebraska Press 2015). Both books were finalists for the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment's (ASLE) Ecocriticism Book Award, and the latter won the International Society for the Study of Narrative's (ISSN) 2017 Perkins Prize for best book in narrative scholarship. She has also published essays in *DIEGESIS*, *SubStance*, the *Journal of Narrative Theory* and *Poetics Today*, as well as *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, which she co-edited with Eric Morel (Ohio State University Press 2020). She is a former President of the ISSN and is Co-Founder and Co-Director of The Confluence Lab ([theconfluencelab.org](http://theconfluencelab.org)).



## Erin James

Professor, Department of English,  
Director of the MA English, Chair  
of the Sustainability Certificates  
Committee, Affiliate Faculty of  
Environmental Science,  
University of Idaho, U.S.A.

# Abstract

“The Confluence Lab; or New Perspectives on Storytelling in and for the Environment.” This talk will introduce you to the methodologies and projects of The Confluence Lab, an initiative based at the University of Idaho that uses the tools of the arts and humanities to study—and address—divisive environmental issues in rural communities. Using the recent *Stories of Fire* project as a case study, I outline the Lab’s “syndisciplinary” approach, offer up insight into working with local communities in non-extractive ways, and consider uses of storytelling as a means of producing just futures.

# Biography

Chris Katzenberger is interim program manager of the international, interdisciplinary master's degree "Superdiversity in Education, Organizations and Society" (SEOS) at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany. Coordinated in Bochum, this degree is jointly offered by 8 European universities, which form the university alliance "European University of Post-Industrial Cities" (UNIC). He studied English / American Studies, history, and education in Bochum. From 2018 to 2022, he was an Assistant Professor in American Studies at RUB and, until 2024, a PhD-level researcher in the graduate research group "City Scripts." He is currently completing his dissertation project, which traces the trajectories and transformations of "Collective Impact," an influential American model or "script" for inclusion at the intersection of nonprofit work, urban education, and social reform from a Transatlantic perspective. Most recently, he is the author of an article on "Podcasting Educational Dissent: *Nice White Parents*, Segregated Schools, and the Limits of Progressive Political Education" (Winter, forthcoming).



**Chris Katzenberger**  
Interim Program Manager,  
Superdiversity in Education,  
Organisations and Society  
(SEOS), Ruhr University Bochum /  
UNIC (Universities in Industrial  
Cities Alliance), Germany

# Abstract

"The Gentleman Whose Profession is Fundraising': Scripting Inclusion, Diversity, and Philanthropic Selves in Urban Education." In efforts to transform American cities and urban education to fight various forms of exclusion, philanthropic and non-profit actors have long played an important role. They have shaped influential interventions and continue to attempt to script American urban futures for social inclusion. This talk will address how such institutionalized collective actors have scripted urban education for diversity and equity in the last years. Education emerges as a key facet in blueprinting the futures of the American city, though one still underestimated in many studies of urban development. I will analyze the *selve* philanthropic and non-profit organizations construct, in mediated *self-descriptions*, to constitute themselves as agents in these change processes. To do so, I will study one important textual form their scripted/scripting interventions in the city take, the non-profit mission statement, looking at recent examples from New York City.

To contrast with these instances of *self-positioning*, I will also investigate how such non-profit actors and their role in urban transformations can become constructed by *other* urbanites, here in the New York Times' popular podcast *Nice White Parents* (2020). This non-fictional show presents the ongoing (de-)segregation of one of New York's school districts through the eyes of its locals. In one episode, it prominently scripts the self of a 3<sup>rd</sup>-sector professional who comes to intervene in a local public school, representing him from the perspective of those that were there before. This will help foreground some of the larger ambiguities that frame non-profit interventions for social inclusion in US urban education today.

# Biography

Susanne Moebus is a full professor at the University Hospital of Essen where she heads the newly founded Institute for Urban Public Health (InUPH). She has a PhD in Biology as well as a master's degree in Public Health/Epidemiology. She is principal investigator of several epidemiological cohort studies. The Institute's research interests address the beneficial and adverse effects of the urban environment on population health, e.g. climate change and health, urban caustics quality, and waste water-based epidemiology. Currently, she became co-chair of the 'Health and Resilience' Expert Council at the German Chancellery



**Susanne Moebus**  
Professor at the University  
Hospital of Essen, Essen.

# Biography

**Courtney Moffet-Bateau**  
PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher,  
Wayne State University, U.S.A.

Courtney Moffet-Bateau PhD teaches African American studies at Wayne State University and has lectured at the Humboldt University in Berlin and the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Her research areas include Black literary aesthetics and visual cultures. Her book *Disappearing Blackness: Black Creative Writing in the Age of the Program Era* is forthcoming.

## Abstract

“Automobility and the Legacy of Black Music from Detroit.” This presentation considers how the rise and fall of automobility has impacted the production of Black creative sounds in Detroit and its reception with global audiences. In the 1960s, Berry Gordy, founder of Motown, utilized his factory experience at Ford to create a unique sound so Black artists could crossover with white audiences. Detroit Motown artists like Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Martha and the Vandellas, and many others underwent Gordy’s “assembly line” of production, learning new choreographed ways of speaking, dancing, singing, and even walking, which could make them Motown stars with crossover audiences. By the 1980s, Detroit techno artists, living and creating within the midst of an industrial wasteland, rejected the traditional formulas established by Motown artists but still reached crossover audiences. By embracing the robotic electrical sounds of Kraftwerk and blending elements of jazz, and funk, Detroit artists – like the musical collective Underground Resistance (with “Mad” Mike Banks and Jeff Mills), Juan Atkins, and Carl Craig, utilized synthesizers, sequenced drum arrangements and polyrhythms to counteract, the blind belief in technology, which had previously presented itself as the beacon of hope for social mobility in Black music and social life. Therefore, this presentation asks what does Detroit Black sound reveal about cultures of automobility more generally and how did the rise and tragic fall of the automobile industry in Detroit impact these specific genres of Black music.



# Biography

Since 2005, Simone Raskob has been with the city of Essen and serves as the Deputy Mayor for Environment, Traffic, and Sports. She holds a degree in Landscape Management from the Technical University of Munich and worked as a landscape architect in Kolding, Denmark, from 1986 to 1988. In the following four years, she took on the project management of the Pforzheim State Garden Show in 1992. Until early 1995, she was involved with the International Building Exhibition Emscher Park, while also serving as the Managing Director of Ökozentrum NRW GmbH & Co. KG in Hamm. She was then called to Göttingen, where she was responsible for the Department of Planning and Construction as City Planning Councilor and simultaneously served as Managing Director of the Society for Economic Development and Urban Development until mid-2001. Following this, she managed both Wasserstadt GmbH in Berlin and Société de Développement AGORA s.à.r.l. et Cie, Secs in Luxembourg until mid-2005. For the city of Essen, Simone Raskob also served as the project manager of the “Green Capital of Europe – Essen 2017.”



**Simone Raskob**

City Hall Essen, Environment,  
Infrastructure, Sports, Germany

# Abstract

“The Rhine Ruhr World University Games” (tbc). In this brief presentation, the member of the Essen city hall will present the case of the Rhine Ruhr region’s nomination for the FISU World University Summer Games as an example of inter-communal collaboration and administration.

# Biography

Małgorzata Sugiera was a Research Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, DAAD, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna, the American Andrew Mellon Foundation, and the International Research Center “Interweaving Performance Cultures” at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Currently, she participates in a six-months Senior Fellowship at the College for Social Science and Humanities in the frame of the University Alliance Ruhr in Essen, carrying out a research project “Performing Waste: To Re-Member Pasts and Speculate Futures”. Her research concentrates on performativity theories, environmental and decolonial studies, particularly in the context of the history of science. She published twelve single-authored books, the most recent of which are *Nieludzie. Donosy ze sztucznych natur* (Non-humans. Reports from Nonnatural Natures, 2015) and, together with Mateusz Borowski, *Sztuczne natury. Performanse technonauki i sztuki* (Artificial Natures: Performances of Technoscience and Arts, 2016).



**Małgorzata Sugiera**  
Professor of Performativity  
Studies, Jagiellonian University,  
Cracow, Poland

# Abstract

“Cities and Their People: Urban Subjectivity in N.K. Jemisin New York”: Reading N.K. Jemisin’s recent novel duology *The Great Cities*, the paper looks into critical changes from an anthropic to a postanthropic city on the example of her speculative New York and its emergent human and more-than-human entanglements. As it argues, urban subjects share a sociality not only with the animal and geological but also with the technological forces and their territorial exorganic functions. Thus, to propose a new concept of urban subjectivity, operational in the context of today’s (not only scripted) cities, the paper draws on Kathrin Yusoff’s distributed geologic subjectivity as a new conceptualization of ecological arrangements, capable of dismantling the boundaries between a living entity and its (supposedly non-living) environment.

# Biography

Katharina Wood is a dissertation candidate in Transnational and Transatlantic American Studies at the University Alliance Ruhr and holds a 1st state exam in Politics and Economics/English from the University of Marburg. She works as a sustainability expert for the Joint Innovation Hub Heilbronn at the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research. Since 2019, she has been researching sustainability models in the construction industry with regard to resilience, circularity and social sustainability as part of her doctoral thesis at TU Dortmund University. At Fraunhofer ISI, she is working on the interfaces between sustainability, regional development, digitalization and artificial intelligence.



**Katharina Wood**

Joint Innovation Hub, Fraunhofer  
Institute for Systems and  
Innovation Research ISI,  
Heilbronn, Germany

# Abstract

“People, Planet, Profit: Leading the Way to Sustainability? The Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, as a Case.” Sociologist and historian Mary McDonald describes the Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, through geographer David Harvey’s term ‘spectacular architecture.’ The stadium offers a unique and celebrated architecture including an eight-panel extendable roof that is shaped like the petals of a flower. According to the designers and architects at HOK, the roof was inspired by the oculus in ancient Rome’s Pantheon. Arthur Blank – the philanthropist behind the idea for the stadium – intended to create an “architectural icon” with a “unique fan experience.” The façade imitates and continues the roof’s angular form. The project was finalized in 2017 with a cost of more than 1.5 billion dollars. It is the result of a public-private partnership between business owner and philanthropist Arthur Blank and the city of Atlanta. Viewed through the perspective of ecological sustainability, the stadium far exceeds state-of-the-art practices in stadium building and organization with its LEED Platinum certification. It is the second sports stadium in the world to receive the platinum plaque. Regarding social sustainability, the project must be contextualized in a much more complex way. McDonald writes about the “contested character of sustainability” (3) often tying in with neoliberal practices that benefit the wealthy rather than the less-economically affluent. The stadium has faced counterprotests arguing that the tax money should be used for education, infrastructure, or to weaken socio-economic inequalities. In a five-year participatory action research, community organizer Kate Dierick and communications scholar Christopher LeDantec conducted interviews about the protest and interacted with predominantly African American communities next to the stadium through participant observation. The construction of sports stadia often promises development that will positively affect the local communities through new jobs, economic investments, infrastructure etc. Nevertheless, sports facilities often cater more to their primary function as an event space and are not always conceptualized to benefit the local communities holistically in the long term.

# Biography

Marcus Zepf is full professor in urban planning at Paris School of Urban Planning (EUP), faculty of Université Paris Est-Créteil (UPEC) and researcher at the Lab'Urba research laboratory. He was co-director of EUP between 2019 and 2023 and director of the Institute of Urbanism - Grenoble (IUG) at Pierre Mendès University France (UPMF) during the period of 2010 - 2015. His expertise embraces different approaches of contemporary urban transitions:

- "Urban uncertainties and climate change" investigate the increasing uncertainty within the context of climate change and the impact of urban transitions. The scientific debate on the new urban and territorial planning tools seeks to explore ways to flexible and dynamic processes to establish continuous interactions between technical innovation and social practices. Making planning more effective and responsive to socio-economic and socio-environmental changes needs to integrate the unknown into open planning processes with the capacity to re-invent planning instruments and aims (Autopoietic Permanent Planning Processes).
- "Local Democracy & Urban Projects" - Concentration approaches are current in the field of territorial and urban planning. They often aim to increase the democratic legitimacy of planning processes. This democratic legitimacy sometimes comes up against the complexity of the actors' games and the lack of a shared language between the participants.
- "Public Spaces and urban policies" research on Public Spaces relates to the three dimensions (spatial, social and political) and analyses the link between urban design, social practices and urban governance. During COVID these links have become even more relevant and have led to new concepts in planning.
- "Urban environment and health", During COVID he conceived a research program with researchers in public health and environment called "E-City". The program aims at collecting and analyzing health-environment data from inhabitants of several communes in the eastern part of Paris Metropolis.



**Marcus Zepf**

Professor of Urbanism, Co-Director E-City  
Chercheur au laboratoire  
Lab'Urba, Ecole d'urbanisme de  
Paris (EUP), Université Paris Est  
Créteil (UPEC), France

# Abstract

“Adaptable and Healthy Cities: Permanent Autopoietic Process.” Planning practices and instruments are undergoing temporary and structural adaptations in the context of socio-environmental transitions and global risks. Tactical urbanism and experimentations outside of the “traditional planning processes” have become important measures, reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health, well-being, and urban planning are inevitably linked. Urban planning, since its origin, has traditionally addressed issues related to urban health and well-being. However, the multiple crises intertwined with the climate in post-pandemic times. The energy crisis as well as threats to peace in the world, new migration trends, and widespread urbanization, are worsening the human conditions for urban health and well-being. The classical project-based approach in urban planning has reached its limits to more adaptive and experimental processes with evolutive forms of governance. Post-pandemic lessons highlight the role of political visions and pro-active adaptability strategies based on inclusiveness and co-creation with local communities. Adaptable, inclusive, and experimental planning practices are transforming urban planning towards a “Permanent Autopoietic Process” where long term visioning plays an important role for discussion and sensibilization impacting actual planning issues. *Autopoiesis* in urban planning translates the capacity to redefine objectives and to reinvent practices facing global changes and dealing with uncertainties. Permanent inclusive planning processes with strong potential for adaptivity and preparedness, can help to renew planning practices and education, considering uncertainties as an opportunity rather than a risk.

**Marcus Zepf**

Professor of Urbanism, Co-Director E-City

Chercheur au laboratoire Lab’Urba, Ecole d’urbanisme de Paris (EUP), Université Paris Est Créteil (UPEC), France

