Reshaping European cities? – Exploring policies, practices and everyday realities concerning 'Airbnbification'

Workshop, November 24-25, 2017: University of Salzburg, Austria

Organizers: Angela Hof and Christian Smigiel, Department of Geography and Geology

Digital platforms for urban tourism have not only given much more visibility to urban tourism itself but are also fueling its impact on urban policies, neighbourhoods and everyday lives. Housing rentals, for example through Airbnb, change the relationship between tourists and locals, guests and hosts and add a new dimension to the commodification of residential housing, leading to unanticipated and rapid transformations of entire neighborhoods. It is timely to recognize that urban tourism is useful as a lens to explore broader processes of urban change. In the recent debate, symptoms like increasing housing prices, an increasing focus on the exchange value for an increasing percentage of housing stock driven by digital platforms for short-term rentals are receiving much attention. However, we are convinced that it is time to move beyond the phenomenon of housing rentals and the buzzword sharing economy and to address the combination of urban politics, urban tourism and everyday (urban) realities that are reshaping and reshaped by this specific aspect of urban tourism. The digital platform is the interface between agents that barter for residential accommodation that has previously not been traded as a tourist commodity. These aspects have received relatively little systematic attention and analysis. We are missing comparative perspectives (e.g. cross-city comparison), in-depth studies on Airbnb and gentrification, displacement, and agency across social groups that engage and are affected by increasing Airbnb rental activities.

Therefore, we invite papers that discuss and address (although not limited to) the following three broader topics:

Cities, urban politics and housing rentals / Airbnb

Housing shortage, increasing housing prices as well as a general intensification of urban tourism has recently led to public debates regarding Airbnb especially in cities like Barcelona, Berlin, London, Paris, but also in Vienna or even Salzburg. Although being initially reluctant to tackle this phenomenon since urban tourism is an important source of revenue for many city budgets, a growing number of city administrations in Europe and beyond have started to adapt policy measures in order to regulate Airbnb activities (McNeill, 2016; Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2017). While there is a common agreement among policy makers to restrict unlicensed Airbnb rentals, intentions and objectives of these measures and instruments are rather heterogeneous and unexplored. Therefore we are keen to attract empirical as well as conceptual papers that address the following questions:

- How do policies, rules and regulations work in particular cities?
- How are these policies related to other urban political strategies?
- What kind of actors or (urban) coalitions are pushing for an intensification of regulation?

Gentrification, neighbourhood change and housing rentals / Airbnb

Increasing gentrification is argued to be one of the most visible socio-spatial outcomes of rapidly growing Airbnb rental activities. In fact, a few empirical studies in different cities indicate that landlords gain higher profits from short-term renting (Hörz, 2016). Consequently, rents and housing prices have increased dramatically in some urban areas affected by Airbnb renting (Cole, 2016). Although tourism-related gentrification is not a new phenomenon there is still a lack of studies that actually scrutinize socio-spatial outcomes of displacement (Opillard, 2017). Does Airbnb-renting lead to an enlargement of upper- or middle-class neighbourhoods? What are the effects for neighbourhood infrastructure? Furthermore, we invite papers that discuss and address (although not limited to) the following questions:

- Which social groups are affected by increasing Airbnb rental activities?
- How do Airbnb renting activities affect the general housing market structure?
- How is the urban fabric materially reshaped by short-term housing rentals?

Everyday urban realities – between commodification, micro-entrepreneurship and resistance

We agree with Colomb and Novy (2017, 5) that "urban tourism as a source of contention and dispute has thus far received relatively little systematic attention and analysis." Local resistance to increases in urban tourist numbers is in contrast to the so-called sharing economy that emphasizes social benefits for all and embraces novel opportunities for micro-entrepreneurship through agents that have not engaged on the supply side of urban tourist accommodation before. This makes it necessary to have deeper insights from the micro-scale as well to link these practices to broader societal processes of commodification and participation in different local contexts. This is the agent-based or micro-scale aspect of potential socio-spatial transformations through holiday rentals. Therefore we invite papers that discuss and address (although not limited to) the following questions:

- Who offers owner-occupied or rented housing in Airbnb rental activities and why?
- What forms of resistances do exist and what do they contest?
- What kind of micro-entrepreneurship is going to be produced?

Please send a *short abstract* of no more than 200 words and an *abstract* of 500 words to ws2017.geographie@sbg.ac.at by no later than **June 30th, 2017.** We envisage a workshop fee of €20.

Keynote speakers:

Johannes Novy (Cardiff University/Spatial Planning)
Felix Holzmanndorfer (City of Salzburg/Department for building regulation)
Michael Hörz (Data Journalist/Berlin; to be confirmed)

References

Cole L. (2016) How Airbnb is reshaping our cities. *Cities*. (accessed 2017/03/06).
Colomb, C. and Novy, J. (Eds.) (2017): Protest and resistance in the tourist city. London: Routledge (Contemporary geographies of leisure, tourism and mobility).
Gravari-Barbas M and Jacquot S. (2017) No conflict? Discources and management of tourims-related tensions in Paris. In: Novy J and Colomb C (eds) *Protest and Resistance in the tourist city.* Routledge, 31-52.
Hörz M. (2016) Datenjournalistische Nutzung üblicher und unüblicher urbaner Daten. *Stadtforschung und Statistik*: 35-42.
McNeill D. (2016) Governing a city of unicorns: technology capital and the urban politics of San Francisco. *Urban Geography* 37: 494-513.

Opillard F. (2017) From San Francisco's 'Tech Boom 2.0' to Valparaiso's UNESCO World Heritage Site. In: Novy J and Colomb C (eds) *Protest and Resistance in the tourist city.* Routledge, 129-151.