



Annual Conference of the
AESOP Thematic Group of Ethics, Values and Planning

Breaking through ‘conformality’ in urban and regional studies

New date: 14-15 September 2023, Dortmund (Germany)

The conference takes its inspiration from *The Grievance Studies Affair* (2017/2018), a controversial experiment in which three researchers, using pseudonyms, published bizarre articles without scientific evidence but conforming to conventional, broadly accepted moral views. The team demonstrated that it is easier to get published in peer-reviewed scientific journals if one’s articles adhere to (and reinforce) certain mainstream viewpoints. The project’s findings exemplify what, in the literature, is referred to as *conformality* (Lisciandra et al., 2013). This concept expresses the tendency of groups and communities to acritically lean on consensus viewpoints, judgements and values. Even in academic debates, it is increasingly common to be accused of being ‘naive’, ‘insensitive’ or ‘part of the problem’ if one demonstrates scepticism towards certain ideas or issues.

Conformality raises particular concerns in science as it can severely compromise and hinder the development of constructive perspectives. While one can interpret conformality as useful, even if only for purely functional reasons (such as not reinventing the wheel), it is crucial to recognise that an excess of conformality can reduce fair confrontation and obstruct innovative ideas and solutions. Planning theory, urban studies and human geography are not exempt from this risk, and debates on circular economy, commons, commodification, densification, touristification, segregation, gentrification, digitalisation, informality, inequality, participation, neoliberalism, post-colonialism, peripheries-peripherality, post-growth, privatisation, sustainability, social justice and the just city—to name only a few—are all susceptible to conformality.

In this context, the conference welcomes contributions that critically discuss conformality in urban studies and invites scholars to investigate this issue from their own perspectives and experiences.

- To what extent does conformality affect your research?
- Why does the community align on certain values?

- To what extent is conformorality a problem (or an opportunity)?
- What other ideas/views does conformorality hinder? How can we overcome it?

Deadline for abstract submissions

Authors are invited to submit an abstract of a maximum of **250 words** by **4 June 2023** using a [Google Form](#). Authors will be notified of decisions on their abstracts by the end of May 2023.

Themed special issue

Authors of certain selected abstracts will be offered the chance to contribute to a themed special issue of a peer-reviewed journal. The organisers will provide further information at that time.

Venue

ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development (Dortmund)

Registration fee

€ 50.00

Contacts

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Inspirational references

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