

List of Thesis Topic Proposals (02/2024)

We supervise theses (in German and English) of Bachelor and Master students who are interested in topics of urban change, planning, and governance as well as mobility, infrastructures, and housing.

The geographical focus is open. However, we are particularly happy to supervise work that deals with places in and/or issues from the global south.

Our interdisciplinary orientation enables and promotes the application of different methods. Most theses at IPS combine theoretical and empirical material. However, purely literature-based theses are also possible if new knowledge emerges from them. Empirical material can also be obtained from secondary data and digital/virtual interviews and does not necessarily require field research at home or abroad.

Funding opportunities for research stays

Unfortunately, we are not able to financially support student research stays. However, in order to enable students to conduct field research abroad as part of their theses, there are several external funding opportunities. Examples of a scholarship programme and database are:

- [Martin Schmeißer Foundation](#)¹
- [DAAD Scholarship Database](#)²

We are happy to support students in the application process and provide guidance. We also advise you to contact the [scholarship advisory service of the TU Dortmund University](#)³ at an early stage to discuss further funding options.

In the following, our staff members present their own research foci and give concrete suggestions for theses.

¹ Link: <https://international.tu-dortmund.de/outgoings/abschlussarbeit/martin-schmeisser-stiftung>

² Link: www2.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/en/21148-stipendiendatenbank

³ Link: <https://international.tu-dortmund.de/outgoings/abschlussarbeit>

Dr. Raffael Beier raffael.beier@tu-dortmund.de

I supervise theses in English and German that are based on the topics of my own research, especially in relation to issues of housing, urban inequalities, displacement, and resettlement as well as urban segregation, stigmatization, and image construction. Although my own research is largely related to cities in the global south, I am open to exciting topics in European cities - especially if perspectives and theories from the global south are used for this purpose. I am happy to advise on the identification of topics.

Research topic 1: Large-scale housing programs and resettlements

Large-scale housing programs have regained importance since the turn of the millennium to fight informal housing, and they are often the driving force behind relocations and the founding of new cities. I am particularly interested in perspectives of people who move (or are moved) into, live in, or move out of state-subsidized housing. Questions might be:

- To what extent do housing programs contribute to improving the housing conditions of marginalized groups?
- How do residents adapt to standardized and peripheral housing?
- Where do residents move on to when they leave subsidized housing?

Research topic 2: Urban inequalities, migration, and displacement

It is becoming increasingly difficult for marginalized population groups to settle permanently in one place. Reasons for this are the disproportionately high increase in housing costs compared to wages, urban redevelopment measures that lead to gentrification and displacement, and informal, temporary and flexible employment relationships. In the case of migrants, racist discrimination may also play a crucial role. However, the consequences in relation to the residential location choices of those affected have not yet been adequately researched. In particular, the following questions need to be addressed:

- Where do displaced residents move to and why and how do they experience displacement?
- How do migrants find affordable and tenure secure housing? Which strategies do they employ?
- How can displacement be effectively prevented?

Research topic 3: Stigmatization, image, and segregation

The stigmatization of socio-spatially highly segregated neighborhoods and its consequences is a well-known phenomenon, which needs to be researched more intensively, especially from the perspective of residents and in the global south. The following questions could be addressed:

- How does stigmatization affect housing location choices?
- How are stigmatizing stereotypes reproduced on an everyday level and how do social media play a role in this?
- To what extent do postcolonial hierarchies contribute to stigmatization?

Simon Bohlen, M.Sc. bohlen.simon@tu-dortmund.de

I am pleased to offer supervision for theses in both German and English, whether they align with my research interests or explore topics beyond them. My primary research focus revolves around the nexus between heterogeneous water infrastructures, socio-political processes and power asymmetries. I am happy to assist you in developing a potential research question.

Research topic 1: Segregation and State-led Gentrification

Socially mixed neighborhoods represent a significant and widely pursued planning and policy objective in numerous Western European and North American countries. Nonetheless, are there inherent negative consequences associated with this ideal? The pursuit of social mixing within the existing housing stock often intertwines with the displacement of the primary residents intended for integration. More research is needed on the effects and extent of state-led gentrification.

- What role does the state play in gentrification management?
- Is social mixing an appropriate ideal to mitigate social disadvantage?
- What is the relationship between building upgrades and displacement?

Research topic 2: Heterogeneous infrastructures

In the global South, but not exclusively there, urban infrastructures are characterized by heterogeneity and the presence of overlapping systems, and thus do not conform to the hegemonic concept of universal and homogeneous infrastructures. Infrastructures, beyond the network, were often viewed through a lens of deficiency or the need for improvement. However, contemporary research takes a different perspective, contending that it is precisely this diversity within infrastructures that creates spaces of possibility and resilience. Analyzing urban infrastructures reveals power dynamics and urban inequality. This prompts questions such as:

- What specific mechanisms and interactions enable heterogeneous urban infrastructures to function?
- What political, economic, and social factors influence the recognition and regulation of heterogeneous infrastructures?
- To what extent does political power result from the provision of infrastructures?

Research topic 3: Informal settlements and insurgent planning

Alternative approaches to urban planning are actively shaping urban space, and in doing so they find themselves in a conflictual relationship with conventional planning. They raise questions about the integration and interaction of these approaches with formal planning and emphasize the importance of participation and conflict in urban planning processes. The consideration of alternative planning highlights the diversity of approaches to the design and development of urban spaces. This raises potential questions:

- What opportunities arise for traditional planning through the integration of alternative approaches?
- To what extent can traditional planning take up and further develop already lived (informal) spatial productions?

Dr.-Ing. Katrin Gliemann katrin.gliemann@tu-dortmund.de

When supervising theses, my range of topics is broad - with a particular interest in topics with a socio-spatial orientation. I am particularly keen on a careful methodological approach - here I can provide advisory support if needed. In my research, I have dealt with the development of immigrant neighborhoods, intercultural participation, digitalization, real lab approaches and biographical research. I am currently working on a project on translocal migration and climate change impacts in West Africa.

Research topic 1: Migration and urban development

Cities came into being through migration, and cities are continuously changing through migration. The professional discussion is often normatively charged and even planners are not immune to stereotyping and othering. Reflective and critical approaches are therefore particularly important in this thematic field. Possible topics are:

- How can planning better take into account the heterogeneity of residents with an immigration history?
- What role do people with a migration history play in urban transformation processes?
- How do different countries deal with the issue of socio-spatial segregation?

Research topic 2: The role of animals in planning

Animal shelters, riding stables, dog runs, slaughterhouses, petting zoos or animal cemeteries ... Everywhere in cities there are areas dedicated to animals. In addition, there are wild animals in even greater numbers: those that have always been in cities, such as rats or pigeons, and those that in recent times have increasingly found better living conditions in the city than in the agro-industrialized rural area, such as foxes or raccoons. In the planning discourse, however, animals hardly play a role as urban actors. Possible topics are:

- Which points of contact with animals do planners have in their professional practice and which strategies do they use?
- How has the assessment of animals in planning changed over time, for example due to new laws and procedures?
- Should animals also be granted a "right to the city"?

Research topic 3: New (empirical) approaches in planning research

The methodological spectrum of many theses is clear: mappings, expert interviews and/or online surveys. Since every choice of method also affects the nature of the results, previously little-tested methods can bring new perspectives on the research object to light. Possible topics are:

- What do narratives have to do with spatial planning?
- How can the life stories of urban dwellers be used in planning?
- How does the gained knowledge about a research object differ when two (or more) empirical methods with different logic are used?

Moritz Kasper, M.Sc. moritz.kasper@tu-dortmund.de

I am happy to supervise theses in German or English that combine theoretical and empirical material and provide an outlook on how the gained knowledge can be used for urban design, urban planning, or urban governance/activism. In my own research, I deal with heterogeneous, sociotechnical infrastructures of everyday urban life, particularly water and electricity supply in Nairobi, Kenya. Thematically, I like to supervise work on cities/phenomena of the global south as well as on various infrastructures, everyday practices, everyday urbanism and creative/ cultural scenes.

Research topic 1: Heterogeneous infrastructures

The importance of infrastructures and basic services for urban life is well known. According to a “western” understanding, these are mostly centralized, universally available, and homogeneous infrastructures, e.g. water and electricity grids. In many places in the global south, however, such infrastructures are very heterogeneous, i.e. there are different, often overlapping supply options. Questions on this topic could be:

- What is the relationship between heterogeneity and equity/ equality in supply/ service?
- What positive characteristics (e.g. increased resilience?) can be attributed to heterogeneous infrastructures?
- How is infrastructural heterogeneity reflected in cities of the global north?

Research topic 2: *Storage*

The storage of all kinds of material and immaterial resources (water, electricity, data, food, etc.) is often as important for the functioning of cities and regions as their actual distribution and circulation. People and institutions 'store' such resources with different containers and practices and at different levels. Questions on this topic could be:

- How and why do households (in the global south) 'store' water and/or electricity?
- What role does energy storage (e.g. batteries) play in the transition to sustainable energy systems and/or e-mobility?
- What role do 'self-storage' services play in urban space and life?

Research topic 3: Urban rhythms and temporalities

While urban life and our disciplines (spatial planning, urban studies, ...) are primarily understood through spatial perspectives, the temporal dimension is at least as important a factor in structuring cities and regions. In everyday life and beyond, urban rhythms, specific events and other temporalities determine how, where, and when space and its infrastructures are used and produced; and vice versa. Questions on this topic could be:

- What rhythms determine urban everyday life? How are these reflected in space?
- How do the use and/or atmospheres of spaces change over time (e.g. day/night, summer/winter,?)

Dorcas Nyamai, M.Sc. dorcas.nyamai@tu-dortmund.de

I am willing to supervise Master's theses in English that broadly touch on urban development and planning particularly in cities in the global south. My research interests are related to topics such as mobility, accessibility, spatial/social justice, infrastructure, urban development and associated subjects.

Research topic 1: Urban mobility and accessibility

The growth of cities and consequently, the clustering of opportunities and services makes the accessibility of individuals increasingly significant for inclusive urban development. There are numerous innovations to mobility that have taken place in the recent decades that have altered the functioning of mobility systems. As the innovations continue to develop, they present mobility as a dynamic field of systemic unfolding. Planning for mobility, particularly sustainable mobility, is a process that requires constant adjustment to understanding the diversity of individual mobility behaviour among city inhabitants. To analyze these dynamics, a number of questions can be raised:

- What and how are the changing patterns of contemporary urban mobility?
- How can sustainable mobility be advanced in the face of these changes?
- How can cities plan for inclusive accessibility and 'just' mobility systems?
- What role do time and space dynamics play in the advancement of sustainable mobility practices?