

Call for Abstracts: Analyzing Urban Conflicts in Light of the “Emotional Turn”

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After the European Enlightenment made rationality its ideal, emotions and affects long appeared to be transitional phenomena that had to be overcome. Any positive reference to emotions seemed to be a socio-cultural atavism. Especially in Germany it was seen as regression to an outdated *Weltanschauung* (world-view). Norbert Elias's studies on the process of civilization, the sociogenesis of national habitus, and established/outsider figurations opened the door to a gradual reassessment of the connection between emotion and society (and emotion and cognition), which has been gaining momentum since the 1990s. Modern cultural and social sciences have come to realize that emotions and affects are not merely obstacles to “objective” knowledge but the key to new social and cultural insights. It has become widely accepted that they cannot be left to psychology. Instead, emotions and affects are regarded as social and cultural facts that demands multi- and interdisciplinary analysis. This re-evaluation is now reflected in conflict and violence research, not least thanks to Randall Collins' ground-breaking empirical analyses of violence.

This prompts us to ask how the emotional turn affects the way urban conflicts are analyzed. Is there previously unidentified or unutilized potential for knowledge and innovation? What potential is opened up by the change of perspective? We believe that there is a lot still to be discovered here. This begins with the question of whether 'affect' or 'emotion' should be the guiding concept of this latest social science and humanities turn.

To date, however, the emotions manifested in urban conflicts, such as fear and anger, have usually been analyzed in a rather casual manner with no regard to the theories of emotion. In such pragmatic analyses, local feelings of threat are frequently dismissed as

“symbolic threats” that do not need to be taken seriously (in contrast to “actual” or “realistic” threats). The local sociogenesis of feelings that emerge in the context of urban conflicts tends not to be adequately investigated because locally embedded implicit assumptions (or local social-psychological contexts that have developed over time) are ignored. Instead symbolic threat and the concomitant feelings are dismissed as the results of elite manipulation or simply attributed to false consciousness.

In view of this, it seems pertinent for researchers studying urban conflicts to consider what they have learned (or could still learn) from the shifting discourse on emotion and affect in the social and cultural sciences. To this end, we would like to invite authors to contribute to a focus issue of the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* on “Analyzing Urban Conflicts in Light of the ‘Emotional Turn’”.

We welcome three different forms of contribution: a) Firstly, empirical case studies (including comparative studies) that exemplify a conceptual and social-theoretical reflection on emotion and affect theory. b) Secondly, articles that take stock of the (national or international) situation and review the desiderata. c) Thirdly, studies investigating how urban societies deal with the problem complex of “conflict, emotion, and affect” (intervention, control, moderation).

The conflict topics are not predetermined, and may include migration, transport, climate, security, social inequality, housing, public space, art, local economy ... or many others. Contributions are welcome from any of the social and cultural disciplines: sociology, urban anthropology, planning science, architecture, human geography, cultural psychology, art and history to name but the most important.

There are, however, two strict requirements. Firstly the investigated conflicts must relate to urban society. And secondly, contributions must address at least one of the following three complexes.

1. The first complex relates to the interdisciplinary emotional turn, including the question of how emotional dynamics influence (or are generated by) conflict escalation (or de-escalation). Various affects are salient here (including shame, anger, and disgust), as well as emotional experiences of flow, pleasure, fusion, moral sublimity, etc. Another question in this complex is how and with what intentions and consequences emotions are articulated in the context of controversy and conflict resolution in urban society. Conflict dynamics that follow a socio-psychological logic (such as the shame-rage spiral) are also of interest, as is the question of the functions and consequences of group-related affect modelling before, during, and after urban conflict processes (for example differentiation functions, strengthening group cohesion through praise and criticism, stigmatization). Furthermore, the question of whether and how local, regional, and national cultures of conflict and emotion are articulated and salient in specific urban conflicts can also be addressed. Finally, there is the question of how scientists deal with their own emotions.
2. The second complex concerns the continuum between locality and national society (or locality and globality). The question here the extent to which urban conflicts are generated by local urban societies or represent manifestations of tensions operating at the national or global scale. Which affects and emotions are generated locally, which are merely 'superimposed' from the outside.
3. Finally, the complex of “intervention in urban contexts” represents an area of growing interest. Interventions such as urban regeneration projects, local policing measures, and desegregation policies appear to be encountering intended and unintended (again emotional) counter-reactions. The intervening actor’s power and control encounter a previously unseen and perhaps also unutilized power of self-control in the objects of intervention. The addressees of intervention are less and less willing to be reduced to being mere recipients or targets of socio-technological interventions. This new scepticism towards such interventions is epitomized by the social figure of the “angry citizen” (Wutbürger).

Deadlines

- Abstract submission by 30 September 2024 via email to ijcv@uni-bielefeld.de
- Editorial decision on acceptance of abstracts by 31 October 2024
- Submission of full manuscripts by 31 March 2025

Full manuscripts will be peer-reviewed. Acceptance of an abstract by the Guest Editors has no bearing on the subsequent decision on acceptance of the manuscript.