

Urban Studies Journal – Special Issue

Ordinary Urban Speculations

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Rationale

This special issue first posits the urban as an object for, and a site of, expansive speculation that is no longer strictly financial, but spans across different technological and economic registers (Bear 2020; Fields 2023). For example, urban routing algorithms, digital twins for urban planning, and other smart modes of mundane governance (Woolgar & Neyland 2013) make prospective scenarios actionable in the present. Such speculation not only prefigures, pre-empts and produces dominant futures (Amoore 2013); rather, urban speculations encapsulate multiple practices of managing the future which are increasingly folded into our urban technological lives but largely go under-critiqued.

Second, we simply note that speculation in/on the urban *has* in fact itself become ordinary. Financial and technological speculations now manifest in mundane forms, whether in speculation on urban assets, in smart urbanism (Leszczynski 2016) or forms of testing in the wild (Marres and Stark 2020). Simultaneously, even in more extraordinary settings such as urban test-beds (Halpern et al. 2013), matters of everyday urbanity, such as mobility or housing, are speculated upon and algorithmically reconceived, as even speculation on extraordinary urban futures is becoming ordinary (Halpern and Mitchell 2022). This SI thus asks what is ordinary— and who gets to speculate on it – in our techno-urban lifeworlds.

Following the recent work on the relationship between the technological and the urban, this SI furthers the role of computation in urbanism (Antenucci 2019; Beverungen & Sprenger 2017; Mattern 2021; Vadiati 2022) as well as that of its corollary, the urban-ness (through architectures/ neighbourhoods/addresses) undergirding our computational infrastructures (Heinrichs 2021; Dhaliwal 2022). More broadly, we consider speculation to be among practices of worlding cities (Roy & Ong 2011), wherein certain capacities and assets (financial/social/cultural) are enrolled in projecting urban futures beyond their present bounds, both in contained, unique experimental sites and commonly distributed across contemporary cities.

While urban studies has notably advanced knowledge of financial speculations, the exact role of technologies (and their corporate / infrastructural assemblages) within these processes still demands attention. This requires expanding urban studies' understanding of speculation across its various registers, manifestations, and geographies. This SI does exactly that, outlining the pivotal role of speculative techniques in making, breaking, and remaking every day the futur(it)ies of our cities.

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