

NEW METROPOLITAN PERSPECTIVES 2018

THEMATIC SESSIONS - TS

TS-13

THE CITY AS ACTION: THE UNAVOIDABLE LIMITS OF REGULATION IN COMPLEX SYSTEMS

Keywords: Complexity; Planning; Action; Conditions of Action; Nomocracy.

The city is a complex system not solely because it comprises multiple objects and elements; its complexity lies principally in the fact that “the city is action”. In fact, the city is the emergent result of actions and continuous interaction over time. Whereas, the interactions of plural actions imply the emergence of unintentional socio-spatial configurations and an overall uncertainty of the system. This occurs because whenever we carry out our intentions in a plural world, there will be countless side-effects that can only partly be foreseen; most of the outcome depends on a series of combined reactions of a largely random nature. In other words, the interplay of forces and circumstances are so numerous and complex that it is impossible to know and consider all possible outcomes in advance. We can therefore say that any (urban) action has immediate effects – to some extent intentional and predictable – along with remote side-effects that are not necessarily intended or predictable. In this perspective, the section is focused on the limits of regulation in complex systems, and is structured around two main questions: (i) What are the conditions within which actions take place? (ii) On which conditions can planners effectively intervene and how?

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