

Exploring the Legal Life of Urban Spaces

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Sometimes we are emotional about spaces and places, about distant spots or familiar neighbourhoods. We love or hate, or feel loved and hated, ignored or inspired, in certain places. But when and where does the law come in?

Today's [Rechtskulturen Colloquium](#) at Humboldt University's Faculty of Law in Berlin shall explore the complex relationships between urban space, the law, and emotion.

Rechtskulturen Fellow [Christine Hentschel](#) will present her current work in progress, with [Helmut Aust](#) as commentator. According to the speaker's abstract, the lecture

"is based on the assumption that law is never simply applied, but always interpreted by a heterogeneous assemblage of legal and non-legal authorities. Common sense, professional experience, prejudice, and aesthetic judgment all inform the actions and decisions taken by urban practitioners – from officials at the Ordnungsamt to representatives of urban renewal initiatives. The site for Hentschel's analysis is Berlin's neighbourhood of Neukölln – a place long branded as depressed and failing, but currently going through a phase of rapid, and nervous, transformation. The talk disentangles the legal and quasi-legal strategies that urban regulators apply in their attempts to alter the social, aesthetic and affective fabric of Neukölln's spaces. Two spatialities – each in its own way iconic and troubled – come into focus here: the space of the casino on the one hand, and that of Broadway Neukölln (a shopping street called Karl Marx Straße) on the other. Coupling critical socio-legal studies with postcolonial urban theory, governmentality studies, and affect theory, Hentschel seeks to conceptualize the creative workings of the law in a time of a neighbourhood's nervous flickering."

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