

CATference 2022

Budapest, 27 June – 1 July 2022

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Cities and information hygiene: Disinformation, conspiracy theories and factoids in the urban arena

Session organiser:

Michael Gentile (University of Oslo, Norway)

The past few years have been marked by an escalation in the way mis-/disinformation and conspiracy theories – often working in tandem – impact on people’s daily lives. None of this is new, of course, but the covid-19 crisis, and now the Russian war on Ukraine, have arguably created unique conditions for the structuration and consolidation of disinformation and conspiracy thinking. While belief levels may or may not have increased, radicalization among believers is increasingly evident, not least owing to the gradual mainstreaming of conspiracy thinking within public debate, which can be attributed, to a large extent, to the rise of populist parties whose lifeblood lies in Us-vs-Them narratives and in the ensuing societal polarization. The challenge to democracy is a serious one, and democratic backsliding, voire autocratization, rely to a significant extent on the erosion of the consensus on what constitutes fact vs. opinion or fiction. Cities are often the sites that disinformation and conspiracy theories are about, but they are also the main sites of resistance to such narratives.

The main question asked in this session is “*How does the urban interact with the false or conspiratorial?*”

I welcome papers/presentations that address this question directly or indirectly. *Examples* of relevant themes/questions could be:

- Who produces disinformation, and about what, and why?
- How do false stories or conspiracy theories travel within and beyond cities?
- Who believes?
- How do different conspiracy theories at different scales link, and under which circumstances?
- How does (insufficient) information hygiene (dis)inform urban policy?
- How are conspiracy theories, disinformation and factoids used by political factions to achieve their goals?

I look forward to hearing/discussing any ideas you might have.

Please send your abstract to:

michael.gentile@sosgeo.uio.no