

Introducing RTG 2725 Urban future-making



Clara Da Ros

Clara Da Ros joined the RTG “Urban future-making: Professional agency across time and scale” in July 2022 as an associate PhD researcher. She studied in a french-german program of political and social sciences at the University of Stuttgart and Sciences Po Bordeaux. She graduated with a thesis on urban gardening and the production of hybrid spaces overcoming the separation between « nature » and the city. Her research interests are the transformation of urban spaces through civil society interventions, the so-called nature/culture relationships and the role of materiality in social processes.

Clara has been a PhD researcher at the University of Hamburg since 2020 and has been receiving a doctoral scholarship from the Wüstenrot Stiftung since February 2021. Her current work focuses on Do-It-Yourself Initiatives from civil society that settled in former war bunkers. While expressing explicit claims about a more sustainable urban life, these initiatives actively modify and shape these very specific places that are bunkers: installing gardens on top of the bunker, reinvesting the indoor spaces for cultural activities... The phenomenon sometimes referred to as Do-It-Yourself-Urbanism seems to become of ever more interest for the understanding of current developments of urban life related to sustainability expectations. These calls for sustainability strategies in urban society through interventions of residents in spatial arrangements, as well as the expectation for more participation in urban development processes expressed through them, have been at the core of a dense research field in social sciences. Still, it appears that the spatial aspects of these DIY-activities have not yet been approached as an investigation object as such.

Clara’s research topic is concentrating on the spatial aspects of these future-making initiatives, as well as their contribution to the understanding on how to (re)use urban areas that are either highly difficult to convert or that carry specific social meanings – sometimes even heavy historical legacies. Additionally to the contribution of Do-It-Yourself to reinvent everyday urban life, DIY-initiatives in bunkers offer a particular perspective: they implement future-oriented practices within places from the past, places that carry a heavy meaning and that are not easily convertible. The leitmotiv of this project is the expectation that looking at very specific places may help conceptualize spatial aspects of DIY-actions and practices more distinctly – and therefore their agency in the urban fabric.