

# *Space Oddity: On Spatial Narratives*

XII Graduate Conference in Culture Studies

25-27 January, 2024

Research Center for Communication and Culture (CECC)

Universidade Católica Portuguesa – Lisbon

## Call for Papers (deadline extension)

The overcoming of the modernist dichotomy ‘form follows function’ led to an age of confusion in architectural and spatial terms. As Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz (1965) points out, the fast-changing contemporary city seems to lack a defined architectural vocabulary and consequential visual order. Today, what distinguishes a church from a theatre, observed from the outside? To understand the semiotics of our surroundings, now more than ever, we need to understand their diachronic depth, the meaning that spaces assume through time, experience, and evolution. We should address space as a narrative process (Lotman 2005).

Thus, contemporary spaces offer unprecedented, malleable narrative possibilities, in both their architecture and environment framed within. This means that theorists and practitioners have developed and continue to develop ideas and actions to (re-)value, (re-)enact, and (re-)use existing and new spaces, including cultural institutions, virtual realities, streets, and public squares, among many others, to shape a more inclusive and convivial future. However, spaces have also been widely implemented to reiterate regimes of oppression and design new forms of violence, from urban segregation to digital surveillance.

This conference aims to bring together researchers and cultural practitioners to share (and produce) knowledge around contemporary discourses on spatial narratives and narratives on space. This discussion welcomes multidisciplinary perspectives and contributions from fields such as architecture, culture, gender and urban studies, politics, design, and semiotics to question and challenge the potentialities and criticalities of present spatial narratives and opportunities for future ones. We are looking for innovative and experimental approaches around the multiple natures of space and its declinations, from architectural spaces to spaces we don’t know yet, from spaces of enclosure to spaces of freedom (Laing 2016), from spaces that inhabit our collective memory to the promises of more-than-human spaces (Rehman 2017).

The reflections and theories developed around spatial narratives are the starting point to question which narratives we want for the future. What do the narratives of the past say about the possibilities of the future? Is it possible to imagine new relationships and narratives with/about spaces that could include contemporary issues such as care, ecologies, safety, inclusion? In which ways can space be connected to the recognition of our human, non-human and hybrid interdependencies? With this call for contributions we invite papers (but also nontraditional forms of intervention, including performances, interactive presentations and video-essays) that engage in discussing the past, present and future of spatial narratives. Topics include but are not limited to:

- From space to place, spatial meanings and interpretations
- Architecture and architectures (literary, artistic, performed, ...)
- Exhibition spaces and their narratives: artistic practices, knowledge, mediation
- Research and methodologies on space (ex., Forensic Architecture)
- Politics of space: safe spaces, housing crisis, private property vs. public spaces (Truijen, Boer and Otero Verzier 2019), ...

- Spaces as tools for the construction of communities and identities (Orff 2016)
- Institutional and alternatives spaces
- Space and the future, or the future of space: ecology (Kate 2016), care and inclusion
- The infinite possibilities of space: ephemeral architectures, virtual spaces, non-places, scenographies, outer space
- Towards a better future through spatial action: practices and theories (Dodd 2020)
- Human, natural, hybrid, more-than-human spaces
- ...

### **Bibliography**

- Dodd, Melanie. 2020. *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City*. New York: Routledge.
- Laing, Olivia. 2016. *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone*. Edinburgh and London: Canongate Books.
- Lotman, Juri. 2005. "On the Semiosphere". *Sign Systems Studies* 33 (1): 205-229.
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. 1965. *Intentions in Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press.
- Orff, Kate. 2016. *Toward an Urban Ecology*. Princeton University Press.
- Rehman, Nida. 2017. "Of more-than-human spaces: an interdisciplinary panel discussion". Pittsburgh: School of Architecture, Carnegie Mellon University.
- Truijen, Katia, René Boer and Marina Otero Verzier. 2019. *Architecture Of Appropriation. On Squatting As Spatial Practice*. Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut.
- Weizman, Eyal. 2017. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: Zone Books.

### **Confirmed keynotes**

- Ana Naomi de Sousa, documentary filmmaker & writer/journalist.
- Ana Margarida Abrantes, researcher and professor.

### **Organizing Committee**

- Dora Fernandes
- Federico Rudari
- Rodrigo Marcondes
- Teresa Pinheiro

### **Practicalities**

The conference's working language is English.

Individual paper presentations will be allocated 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for questions.

We invite abstracts for individual or joint papers and presentations as well as alternative interventions including artistic interventions, co-creative workshops, reading groups and more. Please specify any requirement for materials in your abstract.

Abstract (approximately 250 words) and short biography (100 words) should be sent by email to [soconference2024@gmail.com](mailto:soconference2024@gmail.com) no later than ~~September 15th, 2023~~ **October 6, 2023**.

Notification of acceptance will be sent on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, at the latest. After acceptance of abstracts, participants will be asked to register for the conference and to provide a few personal details to this end.

### **Fees**

The registration fee includes coffee breaks and conference materials.

- Early Bird Registration (up to December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023): 75 €
- Regular Registration (from December 1<sup>st</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023): 100 €

CECC may consider reducing or waiving a limited number of registration fees in cases of documented financial difficulties.

CECC researchers are exempted from the registration fee.

### **Contact**

For further information, please email: [soconference2024@gmail.com](mailto:soconference2024@gmail.com).