

CALL FOR PAPERS
for a topical issue of “Open Cultural Studies”

SAFE PLACES

“Open Cultural Studies” (www.degruyter.com/CULTURE) invites submissions for a topical issue “Safe Places”, edited by Diana Gonçalves (Universidade Católica Portuguesa) and Tânia Ganito (University of Lisbon)

Recent years have been marked by several events that have brought the idea of safety, or lack thereof, to the forefront of academic, political and social debates. Think of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, which resulted in millions of people, especially women and children, rapidly fleeing the country to seek protection and assistance in Europe. Or the Iranian schoolgirls finding a sense of safety and resistance inside their classrooms, enough to post images on social media of themselves chanting protest songs and removing the mandatory hijab as a demonstration against the oppressive regime.

The COVID-19 pandemic is another case in point. It forced us, on the one hand, under the slogan “stay home, stay safe”, to isolate and avoid the spreading of the potentially deadly virus, and on the other hand, to incorporate into our daily routines several practices of social distancing and personal hygiene to mitigate the health crisis and save lives.

Consider Europe’s ongoing refugee and migrant crisis and the large number of people desperately trying to cross borders to find asylum, or the undocumented migrants attempting to enter the United States as well as other groups deprived of their citizenship, who have been driven to flee their countries. What kind of safe zones do they encounter while and after crossing the borders?

We can also consider the technological revolution, which has drastically changed the way people relate and communicate, and how information is stored and exchanged. A by-product of the technological advances, and the consequent digitalization of life, is, of course, the misuse of technology, which elevates risk for users (the sharing of personal or sensitive data, identity theft, hacking activities, corporate espionage, cyberbullying, internet addiction, etc.). Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence have become crucial to improve safety, while, simultaneously, systems such as facial recognition are being used to track and monitor minority groups and to normalize mass surveillance, are also relevant topics of discussion.

Nonetheless, technology has also facilitated life and access to information and entertainment. Cinema, literature, the arts in general, more accessible than ever with a simple click or tap, offer a welcome distraction to the anxiety of our fast-moving times and function as a sort of refuge from reality. They also have the ability to mediate between languages and cultures and, hence, foster the imagination of different scenarios. These and other artistic domains not only constitute safe places for audiences but for the authors and the participants involved, too. Creative processes provide enough affect and intimacy to help people cope with identity issues and come to terms with violent events and transforming experiences.

As a final example, we cannot forget how the environmental emergency – climate change, the concentration of polluting gases, the increased frequency and magnitude of weather events and natural disasters, among many others – has contributed to a significant shift in the way we understand our place in the world and our relationship with it. In the face of such huge challenges, urban and neo-rural villages and communities, as well as mindful living practices, have been emerging across the globe as intentional, sustainable and regenerative options, providing a sense of safety against the destructive power of extractive industries and fast-paced lifestyles.

This special issue wishes to discuss the notion of “safe places” in contemporary culture and to explore its multiple meanings and associations. The use of the word ‘place’ is not random but an intentional choice. Even though the expression ‘safe space’ seems to be more common, especially in regard to the school environment (Ali 2017; Winter and Bramberger 2021) and humanitarian settings, our decision to focus on ‘safe places’ instead derives from Yi-Fun Tuan’s (1977) conception of places “as security” and “centers of felt value” and Buell’s (2001) idea of places as meaningful spaces. This issue, therefore, proposes to look at both physical, digital and symbolic safe places, real and fictional; and to study them as ways to both build and unbuild walls (as both secure zones, sources of protection, forms of defense or shelters where no harm can be done; but also, as places of comfort, familiarity, healing, openness, uncertainty and vulnerability).

We invite submissions of original research papers from scholars in Cultural Studies, Film and the Visual Arts, Performance Studies, Media Studies, Literary and Translation Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Migration Studies, Humanitarian Studies, among others, that engage with the notion of safe place. Possible topics and approaches include but are not limited to:

- Risk society, uncertainty and vulnerability
- The sociology of safety
- Communities as safe places
- Safe places in everyday life
- Fear, conflict, borders and the politics of (in)security
- The cultural and social construction of space and safety
- Safe environments in fragile contexts
- Rootedness and mobility, placement and displacement
- Physical, digital and symbolic safe places
- Landscapes, materialities and lived experiences as safe places
- Safe places in oral tradition, literature, photography, cinema and the arts

HOW TO SUBMIT

Submissions will be collected by May 15, 2023 via the on-line submission system at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/culture/>

As the article type, choose “Research Article: Safe Places”.

Before submission authors should carefully read the Instructions for Authors, available at

https://www.degruyter.com/publication/journal_key/CULTURE/downloadAsset/CULTURE_Instruction%20for%20Authors.pdf

All contributions will undergo critical peer-review before being accepted for publication.

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Further questions about this thematic issue can be sent to Diana Gonçalves (diana.goncalves@ucp.pt) or Tânia Ganito (tganito@edu.ulisboa.pt). If you have any technical or financial questions, please contact the journal’s Managing Editor Katarzyna Tempczyk at katarzyna.tempczyk@degruyter.com.