

# Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration of/in City Narratives

*writinG urban places*

COST Action CA 18126  
Mini Conference WG2  
17 November 2020

**COST Action CA 18126  
Writing Urban Places**

*Mini Conference*  
Working Group 2  
17 November 2020  
Online

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Booklet designed by Willie Vogel

**To access the recorded sessions please go to the Action's YouTube channel here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6K89lqX57oVEJdJ6MGwHiw>

Since this booklet is meant to accompany the recorded sessions, at the beginning of every keynote, statement or summary throughout the booklet, you can find the time slot marking the beginning and end of the talk within each recorded session (in minutes and seconds, e. g. 39' 24" - 49' 15").

# CONTENTS

<b>0. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Meaningfulness</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Keynote</b>	
Sensations, Signs, and Stories: Meaning in the Urban Environment. Kris Pint	<b>9</b>
<b>Statements</b>	
Meaningfulness and the Perceivable form of the Urban Landscape Saskia de Wit	<b>16</b>
Literary & Imagological Tools to Read Meaningfulness in Urban Spaces Onorina Botezat	<b>17</b>
Meaningfulness and the Writing of the City: Rap in Cova da Moura Adriana Martins	<b>18</b>
A dialogue with the 'Narrative-Desert' Viktorija Bogdanova	<b>21</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2. Appropriation</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Keynote</b>	
Appropriation as Transformative, Manipulative, and Affective Sara Santos Cruz	<b>29</b>
<b>Statements</b>	
Appropriation for whom: Looking through the Lens of Capabilities Approach Sernaz Arslan	<b>34</b>
Who is allowed to appropriate Urban Space? Dalia Milián Bernal	<b>35</b>
About Appropriation: Between the Normal and the Alien Amer Obied	<b>36</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>39</b>

<b>3. Integration</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Keynote</b>	
The Etymology of Design Matthew Skjonsberg	<b>41</b>
<b>Statements</b>	
[Writing Urban Places]: Integration, Text and (Literary?) Form Michael G. Kelly	<b>43</b>
The Role of Public Art in the Promotion of interculturality and Hype-Diversity Isabella Indolfi	<b>44</b>
Integration and the Historic City Juan A. García Esparza	<b>46</b>
Integration: Fences and Urban Experience Dace Bula	<b>48</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>4. Concluding Thoughts</b>	<b>55</b>

## Introduction

*Sonja Novak & Angeliki Sioli*



The goal of the mini online conference "Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration of/ in City Narratives" (November 17th, 2020 over Zoom™) was to initiate a discussion on how the respective terms are understood from a theoretical perspective within the COST Action "Writing Urban Places: New Narratives of the European City." After a fruitful and productive first year dedicated to the exploration of minor terms for the writing of urban places[1], the Working Group 2 turns its attention to the examination of the three main terms that represent the foundation of the Action.

The conference invited members across all four Working Groups of the Action to offer definitions and understandings related to these three terms, as seen from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Points of view from architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, literary theory, cultural heritage were brought together, compared and questioned, enriching thus the understanding of these terms. The participants' contributions also suggested new possibilities on how meaningfulness, appropriation and integration can offer tools in studying and intervening in mid-sized European cities, thus creating and writing new narratives of/ in them. In doing so, the conference aspired to frame and inform the methodological and praxeological initiatives brought to the fore by the Working Groups 3 and 4 respectively.

The mini-conference was structured around three main sessions, each of them dedicated to one of the respective terms under examination. Each session opened with a short key note lecture setting the main parameters of the conversation in relation to each term. Following this initial lecture, each session hosted two pairs of short statements and responses to these statements. These statements and responses were meant to be provocative and challenge the mainstream understanding of the terms, showcasing unconventional examples or case-studies. All sessions concluded with extensive open discussions among all the participants, where further questions, concerns and ideas were exchanged and unpacked. All sessions were recorded and are available on-line at the [Action's YouTube](#) channel.

The present booklet presents summaries of the keynote lectures, statements, responses and discussions, that took place on the day of the conference, along with selective visual material that accompanied these contributions. It is meant as a guide for the on-line recordings, offering the reader with a virtual map for locating where the extended versions of all these contributions exist in the recorded videos.

[1] Riesto Svava, Henriette Steiner, Kris Pint and Klaske Havik (eds). VADEMECUM: 77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places. Rotterdam: nai010, 2021



## Meaningfulness

The main idea of Kris Pint's keynote is that meaning emerges in our embodied connection and interaction with the world and is to a great extent connected with language or even based on it. Meaning is also underlined by a structure of oppositions which is also to be investigated through our COST action: the mid-sized as opposed to the metropolis, the past vs the present, the emotional/sensory versus the bodily etc. Saskia de Wit focuses on the idea of form and defines meaningfulness in the urban environment as a fact of (sensory) perception, where each of us creates their own narratives when experiencing the physical form. Onorina Botezat's analogy between architecture and literature provides us with a proposition on tools for understanding architecture, with the neighbourhood being the smallest "content-producing unit". Adriana Martins emphasized the necessity to interconnect meaningfulness, appropriation and integration and illustrates these with the example of rap songs and a problematic neighborhood in the Lisbon metropolitan area, whereas Viktorija Bogdanova tackles the idea of the „narrative desert“ and the danger of the void of meaning.

To access the recorded session on Meaningfulness please follow the link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RozdBfCWbz8&t=3982s>

00' 00" - 41' 58"

## Sensations, Signs, and Stories: Meaning in the Urban Environment

Kris Pint, Hasselt University, Faculty of Architecture & Arts

### Sensations: bodies

I want to talk to you today about the role of 'meaning', of 'meaningfulness' in our relation to the urban environment. And I think it is necessary that we first have a look at how meaning works, how urban environments become meaningful.

An important book in this regard is Mark Johnson's *The meaning of the body: aesthetics of human understanding* (2007). In this book, Johnson makes clear that our common understanding of meaning is much too narrow, and much too focused on semantic, conceptual meaning. Johnson tries to expand this view. For him, 'meaning is not just a matter of concepts and propositions, but also reaches down into the images, sensorimotor schemas, feelings, qualities, and emotions that constitute our meaningful encounter with our world'[1].

Meaning is thus something that emerges in our embodied relation to and interaction with our environment, so meanings are always also affective, emotional, sensorial. This is of course very important to keep in mind when we are talking about the meaning of architecture, of the built environment. So when we want to talk about the meaning generated by specific buildings and sites, an analysis of these embodied experiences is key.

As an example, I want to discuss the Stadshal, the City Pavilion, in the center of a mid-sized Belgian city, Ghent. The Pavilion was designed by Robbrecht & Daem and Marie-José Van Hee architects and quickly nicknamed the 'Schapenstal', the 'Sheep stable'. The canopy reflects the architectural and historical context of the site, yet at the same time, the project was contested precisely because of the historical nature of the square where it was situated, right before the belfry. Despite the obvious references to medieval buildings, the Pavilion has a modern look, and its massive size indeed obstructs part of the view. It was initially also criticized by UNESCO because they were not consulted in the process. And obviously, this rather expensive construction was also seen as an unnecessary prestige-project, a waste of money that was better spent on perhaps less spectacular, but more effective forms of urban development. So the site is an interesting, and also typical case of conflicting meanings and interpretations. There is the interesting relationship between a modern city and its historical past, but also between tourists and locals, between the municipal authorities and some of the inhabitants of the city.

But as Mark Johnson makes clear, the meaningfulness of this site does not only lie in the cultural, socio-political meanings it generates and the underlying city narratives it reveals, but also very much in the actual experiences it is able to generate: the view, an emotional and physical sense of shelter, the working of the light, the rhythmical flow of people coming and going, the movements made by users of the space for different events or activities. A proper



analysis of the meaning of this urban intervention should also take these meaningful aspects into account.

As Johnson argues in another text, 'The embodied meaning of architecture' (2015), the role of architecture is to intensify this meaningful relationship with the environment: 'My hypothesis is that architectural structures are experienced by humans as both sense-giving and signifying. That is, architectural structures present us, first, with a way of situating ourselves in, or being "at home" in, and making sense of our world, and, second, they provide material and cultural affordances that are meaningful for our survival and flourishing as meaning-seeking creatures.' [2]

As Johnson himself acknowledges, this almost existential function and value of a building echoes Heidegger's famous comments on the temple in his essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1960): it is the construction of the temple that 'opens up a world' [3]. And it is indeed worth noting that Heidegger focuses here on the sensuous, experiential aspect of this 'world': 'The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are.' [4] We could argue that in a modern, secular context, constructions like Ghent's City Hall acquire the same function as the temple in the Greek polis, making visible the surrounding urban texture, the people, the weather, the atmosphere.

Yet it is important here to keep in mind that Heidegger in his 'What are poets for' (1950) also uses the image of the temple to refer to another aspect of existence that 'opens up a world' when he calls language 'the precinct (templum) that is, the house of Being.' [5] Just like the actual temple, we could argue that it is only through the 'temple' of language that an actual environment can be revealed, experienced. And while Johnson is right in stressing the importance of non-linguistic meaning, as humans we cannot escape language and the fact that, to a large extent, meaning is finally based on language.



### Signs: oppositions

And here perhaps we need some Semiotics 101 and bring back to mind the important and shocking 'discovery' of Ferdinand de Saussure, together with C.S. Peirce the founder of modern semiology. Saussure's analysis of language made clear that meaning is not so much a question of reference, of establishing a kind of correct, truthful relationship with the outside world, but a question of differences within the linguistic system itself, both on the level of form (e.g. the difference between sounds that generate a difference in meaning), as on the level of content. To determine the meaning of an element, there always has to be another, differing other, with a distinctive difference that allows for meaning to appear. This had of course profound philosophical implications, especially in so-called continental or French philosophy: meaning became a question of structures and performances within a system, which always required a form of opposition, of 'othering' to work. Meaning lost its self-evidential nature: meaning is, in the end, a textual construction.

And here, in my opinion, semiotics reveals a blind spot in Johnson's approach to meaning. In his pragmatist view, our embodied relationship with our environment is holistic, harmonious, or at least strives for such harmony. But as semiotics makes clear, the creation of meaning is by definition antagonistic, based on radical differences, and thus inherently conflictual. This is obvious in Johnson's own discourse, for instance with his basic opposition between his own embodied viewpoint with the faulty Cartesian disembodied one. Meaning always requires oppositions, also in Heidegger's idea of the temple: it is because of the opposition with the architectural presence of the temple, that the natural elements, the sea, the trees, the grass, get their meaning.

I want to argue that premises of our COST-action have, again, inevitably, also has this implicit antagonism: for instance, it wants to thematize the mid-sized city both in opposition to the countryside and the metropole, and it is in this opposition to both of these other terms, that our common research object becomes meaningful and interesting.

**Stories: narrative ecosystems**

The same principle of difference, of antagonism, is also at work in the structure of narratives, meaning sequences that we use to interpret our environment. Here one can think of the very classical, old school example of the actantial model by Greimas, the abstract blueprint of every story: with an opposition between the subject, the protagonist, who wants something else, an object, and has helpers and opponents, with again conflicting interests.

This is also important to understand how the urban stories we explore and perhaps even formulate in this COST-action – perhaps inadvertently – follow this system of oppositions, for instance when we look at the male/female oppositions in the use of public space, but perhaps also between 'locals' and new immigrants, between high- and low-income households, or, in the contemporary vogue, between the human and the non-human; or when we try to make narrative sense of what happens in a specific urban context when we create a story with helpers (e.g. community workers) versus opponents (I guess project developers are the usual suspects in many of these stories). And depending on the frame, the same actions can be perceived in a radically different light: in an attempt to reevaluate the historical dimension of a site, the rich heritage of a specific urban area can help to give meaning and generate a sense of pride for the local population, but it can also be used to gentrify an area, to gradually push out lower-income households...

So we are in a catch-22 here: we need the temple, the house of language, we need stories to make meaning, to make something meaningful, but this is merely the construction of a specific urban reality. Of course, these are postmodernist truisms, but still very much worth keeping in mind as we go along with this really tricky concept of meaningfulness. If only because semiotics makes clear that meaningfulness, the need for meaning, the flourishing of meaning, is not necessarily always a good thing.

This becomes clear when we take a look at another case study, the Pergamon Altar, built in the second century before the common era, which was part of the Pergamon acropolis, now Bergama, a city in Turkey. A famous reproduction of this altar can be found in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. We could say that this altar originally functioned as an example of a Heideggerian temple, an edifice that opened, grounded, and founded a world for the inhabitants of this city. This also appears in the theme of the frieze that made this Altar so famous: the Gigantomachy, the battle against the Giants, the primeval forces of chaos that were defeated by the Olympic Gods, who then imposed their order on the cosmos.

The altar has the typical majesty of the classical style, imitated in so many neo-classical buildings we can find in cities around the world. All of the meaningful features that Mark Johnson attributes to architecture can be found intensified by this building: containing, verticality, balance, and expressing forces like gravity, movement, of course, with the enormous staircase...[6]

One would think that this building is already packed with enough cultural and historical meaningfulness, and yet, it can still generate other meanings. In October 2020, the Pergamon museum was the target of conspiracy theorists, who threw an oily substance on dozens of artifacts, probably in a sort of ritual cleansing. They might have been inspired by the paranoid

ideas of a certain Attila Hildmann, who believed and alas also propagated, based on a Biblical verse, that the altar was the throne of Satan. Hildmann and his followers believe that there exists a secret society of Satanists, who use the Altar for human sacrifices. A Satanic cult which also involved no one less than Bundeskanzler Angela Merkel, who happens to live near the museum.[7] It is fascinating to see how effective and easily such an ancient story got revived. The story of secret gatherings of evil people sacrificing and eating children was – ironically – also used to vilify the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Another well-known version of this story is of course the belief in the witch sabbath. But what is new is how these paranoid meanings can now travel in the parallel, virtual 'polis' of the internet and social media, mostly invisible for those not in-the-same-virtual-bubble. People sitting next to you in public transport may share the same actual place, but the mental space accessed through their mobile devices might be radically different. Their linguistic temple so to speak has become invisible to others, opening up another world altogether, where Satanic stories actually can survive, where 5G-masts and vaccination are means to control the population, and where in fact, Donald Trump won the election. These stories seem to defy and resist the technocratic functionalism that seems to be the hallmark of contemporary society.

With the vandalism in the Pergamon museum in mind, this quote by Michel de Certeau from *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) seems still very timely: 'where stories are disappearing (or else are being reduced to museographical objects), there is a loss of space: deprived of narrations (as one sees it happen in both the city and the countryside), the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting, fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct, and nocturnal totality.' [8]

Precisely because cultural heritage like the Pergamon Altar became a museum object, a relic of the past, it is no longer able to provide some kind of spiritual center: a great deal of the population feels lost in this kind of 'nocturnal totality', in a contemporary Gigantomachy where the new Giants are established political parties, big corporations, global organizations and big media outlets that can be blamed for all what goes wrong in the world today. These counterstories, often very grim and violent, came to replace the stories that got erased in the past decades. Or as Certeau puts it: 'The same is true of the stories and legends that haunt urban space like superfluous or additional inhabitants. They are the object of a witch-hunt, by the very logic of the techno-structure. But their extermination (like the extermination of trees, forests, and hidden places in which such legends live) makes the city a "suspended symbolic order." The habitable city is thereby annulled. Thus, as a woman from Rouen put it, no, here "there isn't any place special, except for my own home, that's all .... There isn't anything." Nothing "special": nothing that is marked, opened up by a memory or a story, signed by something or someone else. Only the cave of the home remains believable, still open for a certain time to legends, still full of shadows. Except for that, according to another city-dweller, there are only "places in which one can no longer believe in anything."' [9]

Michel de Certeau was right: stories and legends can never be fully erased, and contemporary society often faces an almost desperate search for stories to believe in. And the example of the Pergamon Altar-vandalism also makes clear that these resisting stories and new beliefs are not always nice and peaceful. Certeau's idea of resisting stories that haunted the urban technocracy was indebted to the surrealist movement, but also to the resistance of students and workers in May 68 in France. But in the age of post-truth and fake news, Paris Spring

slogans like 'l'imagination au pouvoir' now get a sinister undertone, which makes it hard today to completely share Certeau's optimism.

However, the rise of conspiracy theories and bleak fictions reveals this desperate need for meaning, which cannot be provided by a mere functionalist, economical, technocratic outlook on the city. It also points out the potential danger of concepts like 'smart cities': even with the best intentions (e.g. fighting climate change), such an approach runs the risk of repeating the errors of the past, making the same arrogant mistake of modernist urbanists, of experts that think they can control the city and its stories, starting from scratch.

The difficult question now is of course what the role could and should be of urbanists, designers, anthropologists, and cultural philosophers in such a complex situation. From our shared background in the Humanities, we know how this need for meaning, meaningfulness is an important, crucial aspect of a viable future urban ecosystem, just like renewable energy or clean mobility. Perhaps our common task can only be rather modest (albeit it important): to explore and to develop the narrative, meaningful capabilities of the built environment, to provide an ecosystem where different stories and meanings can thrive: again, meanings that are not only stories or concepts, but also embodied experiences: affects, emotions, senses. Meanings that go from bodily movements to atmospheres to bigger stories linking the city both to a past and a future. And this to avoid a kind of narrative desert (like the notion of the urban 'food desert', areas where one cannot get to healthy food easily), a sense of meaninglessness that attracts paranoid, violent meanings to fill the narrative void. The underlying hypothesis here, following Johnson and Certeau, is that if cities can create the economic, social conditions and the public space that allows for a rampant growth of meanings and stories, the narrative ecosystem might be rich enough to prevent one specific kind of destructive stories from overgrowing the others.

[1] Mark Johnson, *The meaning of the body : aesthetics of human understanding* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), xi.

[2] Mark Johnson, "The embodied meaning of architecture," in *Mind in architecture: neuroscience, embodiment, and the future of design*, eds. Sarah Robinson and Juhani Pallasmaa (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015), 33-50, 40.

[3] Martin Heidegger, "The origin of the work of art," in *Poetry, language, thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 15-86, 41.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Martin Heidegger, "What are poets for" in *Poetry, language, thought*, 87-140, 129.

[6] Johnson, "The embodied meaning of architecture", 41 ff.

[7] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/21/berlin-vandalism-of-museum-artefacts-linked-to-conspiracy-theorists>

[8] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), 123.

[9] Ibid., 106.

42' 22" - 46' 32"

## Meaningfulness and the Perceivable Form of the Urban Landscape

Saskia de Wit, Delft University of Technology, Landscape architecture

"If there can be no form without meaning, there can be no meaning without form" wrote architect Steven Kent Peterson when discussing what constitutes the physical form of the contemporary city. The perceivable form of the physical landscape structures, serves and enhances experience, creating the conditions, the organisation of the sensory experience that is the source of the meanings/meaningfulness each of us derives from, or attributes to the environment. Its sensory qualities are inherent attributes of the physical environment, which serves as a stimulus or catalyst for the transaction between people and the landscape.

Meaningfulness in the urban environment is a fact of (sensory) perception. Nowadays, considering our relationship to our urban environment in terms of embodied experiences and affective relationships, we tend to define experience/perception, as focused on the reception of sensory stimuli (information seeking). However, according to Malnar and Vodvarka, sensory information is not in the first place an asset of the perceiver, but of the perceived object, place, or landscape: "all experiences – smells, sounds, weight, temperature, texture – are localized in one perceptual space." It is these conditions, not the subjective experience, perception, or meanings, that should form the subject matter of research on meaning in the urban environment. We should shift our attention to the qualities of the perceived—the physical surroundings as carriers of meaning.

The qualities of the urban landscape only become meaningful if they can be experienced. The structural elements are not so much images with a defined meaning, but bodily perceivable kinaesthetic events that allow for each and every urban dweller or visitor to create their own narrative.

As Eugene Victor Walter writes in *Placeways*: "A place is a location of experience. It evokes and organizes memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination. The feelings of a place are indeed the mental projections of individuals, but they come from collective experience and they do not happen anywhere else. They belong to the place." Thus, the main question is not whether visitors consciously perceive what is there to be perceived—the meaning we derive from the urban environment, as an asset of the perceiver—but to unearth what it is that the place holds—as an asset of the perceived, the perceivable form of the urban landscape.

Steven Kent Peterson, "Space and anti-space," *Harvard Architecture Review*, Spring (1980): 88-113.

Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka, *Sensory design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 45.

Eugene Victor Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 21.

46' 34" - 51' 30"

## Literary & Imagological Tools to Read Meaningfulness in Urban Spaces

Onorina Botezat, Christian University in Bucharest, Imagological and Cultural Studies and Legal Terminology

Inter- and transdisciplinary is both a modern approach to current issues and the perfect framework that brings together different tools that help us to better understand and unveil hidden, not obvious meanings that once uncovered show the complete image of an issue. Such is the dialogue between literary sources and urban spaces. Words are for literature what bricks are to architecture. And the very concept of meaningfulness depends on how they collocate and how they are brought together in order to convey a meaning! To understand the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history we have etymology. The tools for understanding architecture are more numerous, to my mind: there is history, industrialization, men crafting, and cartography, in one-word layers and layers of human achievements and stories to tell! The style in which a building is designed and constructed refers to a specific period, place, or culture.

If we add to this compare-and-produce analogy the idea of urban literacy, we can say that the neighborhood is the unit of it, a content-producing unit. That leads to the common ground points:

In terms of channels and tools: communication, storytelling, culture

In terms of a frame, a playground: urban place

The urban place is a perfect space to bring together different research areas in order to respond to such a complex, multi-faceted place. Meaning comes from a profound understanding of serious and important elements. And literary agency reflects on the encounter with the Other. In times of globalization, the urban space is the perfect scene, a mingling that is apprising of our day-to-day cultural encounters. Our daily urban routes cross stereotypes, culture bond images in ways we are not always aware of. A multicultural community is built on shared history and mutual understanding, respect for human activity and cultural practices.

A historically and theoretically informed method for understanding this way of inflecting culture through perceptions of national character remains indispensable. (Beller & Leerssen, 2007) The study of cultural representations, those of accepting and welcoming the Other, or those of repudiating and disallowing the Otherness, confronts with various geographical spaces, from neighborhoods to nations, where each item contributes to the puzzle-completion, visuals, urban landscape, imagological, intercultural, literary and translations studies.

If we add to these ideas the big and little (A/a-s) of J. Lacan theory of self-awareness and ways of rooting the speech and Derrida's points on hospitality, we may have even more methods and tools to reach the meaningfulness of our urban space.

Manfred Beller, Joseph Theodoor Leerssen. 2007. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: a Critical Survey*. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi.

Jacques Derrida: *Of Hospitality – Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida To Respond*, Stanford University Press, 2000 [De L'hospitalité, Callmann-Lévy, 1997]

51' 35" - 59' 45"

## Meaningfulness and the Writing of the City: Rap in Cova da Moura

Adriana Martins, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Culture Studies

This mini-online-conference aims at discussing the 3 terms about which our COST Action "Writing Urban Places: New Narratives of the European City" revolves, that is meaningfulness, appropriation and integration.

As I have already stated in one of our meetings, I cannot understand one term without talking about the other two, and I hope to have time to explain that through the case study I would like to discuss with you.

Today, I will address the issue of meaningfulness associating it to urban places, and to a problematic neighborhood in the Lisbon metropolitan area, located in the municipality of Amadora, called Cova da Moura.

My starting point is Marc Augé's opposition between place and non-place in supermodernity, and I would like to play with these notions with a view to reconfiguring them when we think about problematic urban neighborhoods.

Augé (1995), in his volume *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, characterizes a place as "relational, historical and concerned with identity". In other words, a space is considered a place when someone confers meaning on it. A non-place would not have these features. It would be devoid of meaning, even if contractual relationships exist (motorways, service stations, big stores, hotel chains, airports).

I would like to explore the opposition between place and non-place based on the position of enunciation from which one looks at/considers and consequently defines what a place or a non-place might be. In other words, the 'non-place' that I am proposing here is different from Augé's non-place as it is not a space where many people circulate with specific aims, being considered not as humane, but instead as a kind of objects, as individuals are seen and treated as numbers devoid of personality.

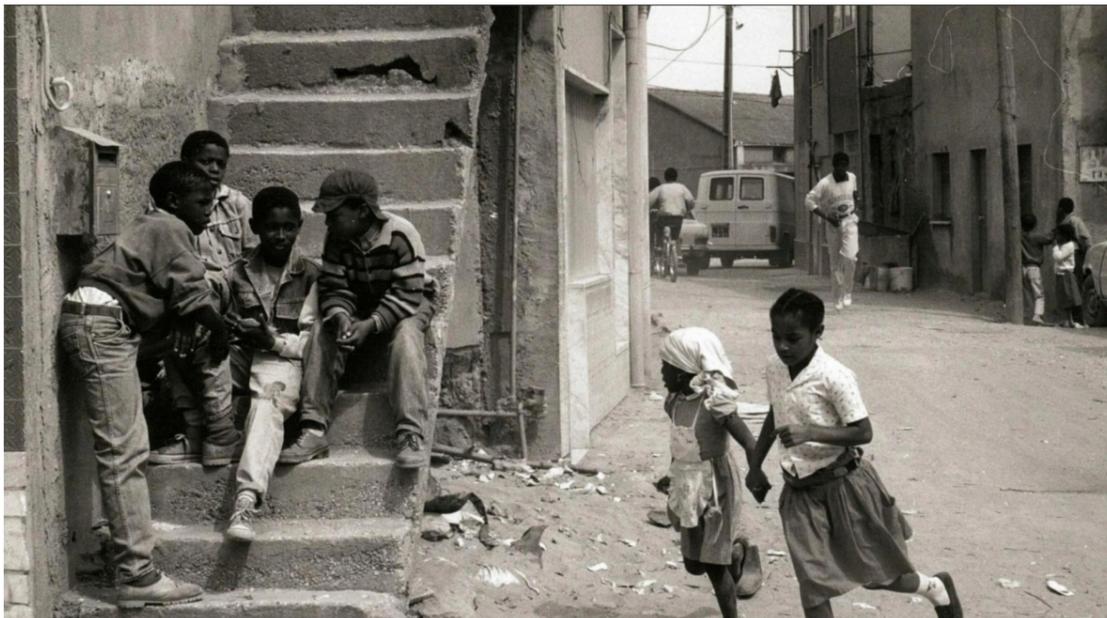
Depending on the position of enunciation from which a space is characterized, it can be transformed into a place or a non-place. My claim is that, in line with Augé, a place is anthropological whenever it is considered a place of identity, of relations, of history, a place that entails a sense of belonging and affects. However, depending on the position of enunciation and the meaning attributed to it, it can be transformed into a non-place in the sense that it is rendered unimportant, dangerous, threatening, a kind of ghetto.

Cova da Moura is a neighborhood that can be considered a meaningful place for its inhabitants and a non-place (that is, insignificant, unimportant, worthless) for those who see it as space where illegal constructions abound and urban criminality and violence spread. The

neighborhood has existed since 1974 and it was initially inhabited by the returnees that came to continental Portugal with the process of decolonization. The proximity and good accesses to Lisbon were assets. This population was increased in the late 1970s and 1980s by African immigrants, mostly from Cape Verde that started to build their houses with the support of the community and with available materials. These illegal constructions built in private and state lands increased up to a point that the population density was so high that living conditions in some parts were very bad. In a nutshell, this is a neighborhood mainly inhabited by people with low levels of education, who have menial jobs, and who have to tackle with racism, and in some cases, the replication of colonial relationships of power in a postcolonial Portugal. (Batalha, 2010)

What is interesting about Cova da Moura is that its inhabitants do not want to leave it. Many inhabitants already born in Portugal consider themselves more Cape Verdean than Portuguese due to racism and to the stigma related to the bad reputation of Cova da Moura. Community bonds have been very strong, and this is a neighborhood that counts with a very dynamic association of inhabitants (Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude, created in 1987), whose social, cultural and professional initiatives reinforce these bonds. The sense of community is strengthened by the small commerce that exists in the area (cafés, restaurants, hairdressers), and that are sought for by Cape Verdean immigrants who do not inhabit Cova da Moura, but are eager to keep contact with their traditions. One of the ways of keeping these bonds strong is the hip hop culture mainly through rap songs and street art murals. Rap lyrics (in Cape-Verdean Creole and in Portuguese) narrate the difficulties of generations of immigrants in Portugal and address the identity ambiguities of young Portuguese who feel many times more Cape Verdean than Portuguese (even if they have never visited Cape Verde). Issues of violence (mostly perpetrated by the police) and the stigma of being born in Cova da Moura together with issues of a wide range of prejudice are also dominant themes. Rap has gained such visibility inside and outside the neighborhood that a studio called "Kova M Studio" was created in 2007, and many rappers from the neighborhood and also from other areas have had the chance to record their work here for the first time.

It is my contention that rap lyrics contribute to confer meaning on Cova da Moura, assuming more than a dimension of novelty and creativity, a dimension of resistance against those who have transformed Cova da Moura into a non-place by associating it to crime, disorder and violence. In other words, it is my contention that rap lyrics, by epitomizing the act of word taking (Certeau, 1968) and of writing about life in a controversial neighborhood, trigger a process that derives in a dual hermeneutics – a hermeneutics of place and a hermeneutics of the Other – that deserve to be investigated in articulation with issues of appropriation and integration, as this dual hermeneutics paves the way for interlocution (Bhabha, 2007).



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59' 50" - 1h 05' 20"

## A Dialogue with the 'Narrative Desert'

Viktorija Bogdanova, poet and architect investigating poem-drawing

*Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?  
(How serious people's faces have become.)  
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,  
everyone going home lost in thought?*

*Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.  
And some of our men just in from the border say  
there are no barbarians any longer.*

*Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?  
Those people were a kind of solution.  
(Constantin P. Cavafy, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1904)*

### The danger of the narrative desert

The story in the film 'Waiting for the Barbarians' unfolds in a small peaceful village, lying on the edge of civilization. On the other side of the wall is an immense desert, where nomads seem to be dwelling out of the unnamed kingdom. The citizens of the Kingdom and the Nomads are maintaining a balanced communication, until one day a Colonel arrives to announce (and search) for the danger that the Nomads could bring as others. Thirsty for the 'truth' to find proofs of his prediction about Nomad's uprising against the Kingdom, he decides to torture a boy from the other side so mercilessly, until the boy admits what the torturer desires to hear. Pain is Colonel's tool to reach the desired 'truth'. From this moment on, the Others in the story transform into Barbarians: the difference living behind the border of the powerful kingdom, is demonized into an enemy by the torturers thirsty for violence and will to power.

The whole village believes and behaves according to the new false narrative hovering above the Border: the citizens drop-off their everyday routine to passionately attend the punishment and humiliation of the Barbarians on the piazza.

The only man who rejects to glorify the violence is the Magistrate, whose character manifests in the sensitivity and dignity he brings in the encounters both with the citizens of the Kingdom and with the inhabitants of the Desert. He is aware of the self-proclaimed protagonism of the Kingdom through the imposed labeling of the others as antagonists. He does not dissolve in the conformist absence of effort in the crowd, neither does he obey / fear the intimidating torturing of the Colonel.

What is it that keeps his mind sharp and his behavior 'problematic' for the obscene torturers?

### The danger of the void of meaning

While being interrogated about the inscriptions in some wooden piece in mysterious language found in his room, the Magistrate answers the following:

*'It is the character... barbarian character for "war." Although it can also stand for "vengeance and if... if you turn it upside down like this, it can mean..."justice." There's no way of knowing in what sense it is intended.'* (2019)

By emphasizing the immense ambiguity of the foreign language and its meaning conditioned by the stereotypical or open-minded perception of the reader, the Magistrate disturbed the linear flow of Colonel's blind obedience to the 'Kingdom'. Opening the different possibilities of meaning he brought the Colonel closer to a state of re-thinking meaning, beyond the authority he respects and obeys without questioning, without responsibility of personal thinking. But again, rather than stepping into and understanding this inner disturbance, he makes a re-direction of the attention aggressively, blaming the Magistrate for his wish to behave as 'the only just man'.

The question of meaning is a topic that not everyone takes seriously, without self defense mechanisms of irony. It is a sensitive question, because it does not belong neither in the physical nor in the psychic dimension of the human being, but to a third one: the noetic human dimension. According to Viktor Frankl, the father of logotherapy and a survivor from the concentration camp, the will to meaning is located precisely in the noetic dimension, comprised of processes such as "independent decisions of will ('intentionality'), material and artistic interests, creative design [(creativity)], religious and ethical sensitivity ('conscience'), understanding of values, and love" (Lukas 2000, 9–10). The search for meaning and the constant human striving to extend towards something beyond the self, is the core human characteristic that allows him to appropriate, interpret, find and create meaning in life. Frankl identifies the lack of meaning to be the core problem of psychic diseases and names it 'the existential void, the existential vacuum, the abyss experience' (1970, 83).

The danger of this void lies in the following possibility: it may often be filled with destructive impulses that aim to devastate meaning, or to bring it to a degree of complete arbitrariness and nihilistic indifference. Since reductionism – and even judgement – is the 'mask of nihilism' (Frankl 1970, 21), transferring the personal responsibility to hierarchical structures of power as a mode of 'filling one's own duty' seems to be a common practice when a person avoids to reflect on meaning.

It is interesting to note that in the very introduction of the term will to meaning Frankl defines

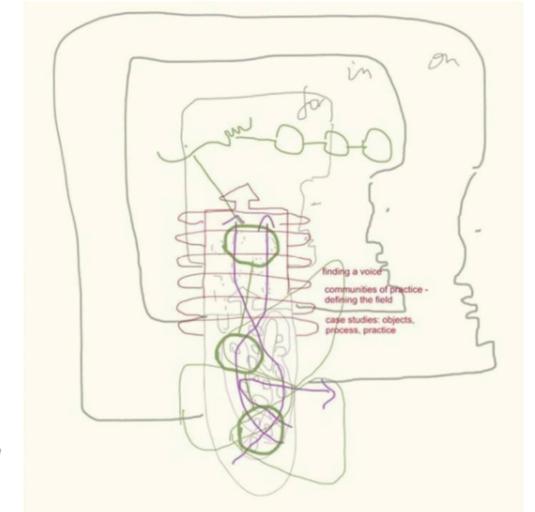


Figure 1. Levels of reflection: 'in the activity of practicing', 'on the past practice experience' and 'for the future practice' A drawing by Richard Blythe (Blythe 2016, 20-21).

it as something different from the will to pleasure and the will to power (1970, vii). Can one's noetic world of intense and passionate search of the will to meaning be strong enough to resist ruthless structures of power? (see also Milgram's Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View, 1974).

### The danger of the obscenely violent question: what does it have to do with architecture?

Everything.

For architects, urban designers and other makers involved in the re-creation of the environment, the will to meaning is inevitably and intensely related to the embodied memory of spatial emotional experience. Rather than waiting for an approval from authorities, technical rules or architectural awards and numbers, or for the (imaginary) barbarians... what if we tried to re-define and refresh our inner world of values and statements according to each specific situation of a new encounter with otherness?

In absence of the absolute 'good' in architecture, faced with the possibilities and dangers of the 'weak' architecture, Sola-Morales lists the architectural criticism as the new authority of power that the practitioners embrace masochistically and passively, in order to avoid the responsibility of self-reflection and self-cognition (cite). He points out the need of urgent cessation of the division between the architectural theory and architectural practice, "the disassociation between object and discourse ... the pathology of a relationship based more on distancing and fear than on some paradisaic dialogue, "harmoniously illuminated by the light of truth (Sola-Morales 1996, 142).

The moments when the will to meaning is repressed, ignored or rejected in the name of objective and measurable design criteria, the detachment from the inner processes of meaningfulness begins. The taboo of using first person singular in academic writings is dissecting and repressing the closeness and appropriation of meaning, and the re-discovery of the importance of embodied experience. If we are constantly aiming to find meaning out of the self, into the approval of the authorities or the violence over the 'barbarians' we are fundamentally preventing the possibility of finding the personal voice. The voice that is not built upon pain and frustration, but upon inner understanding of meaning and 'creational discontent...the burning desire to inquire... the very flame of inquiry, of search, of understanding' (Krishnamurti 2016, 35-36).

In this context, can one say that the 'finding of the voice' is a therapy, a healing from the inner blockades of acknowledging and expressing one's own levels of reality? For many of us, this voice is not a luxury, but it is a state of emergency:

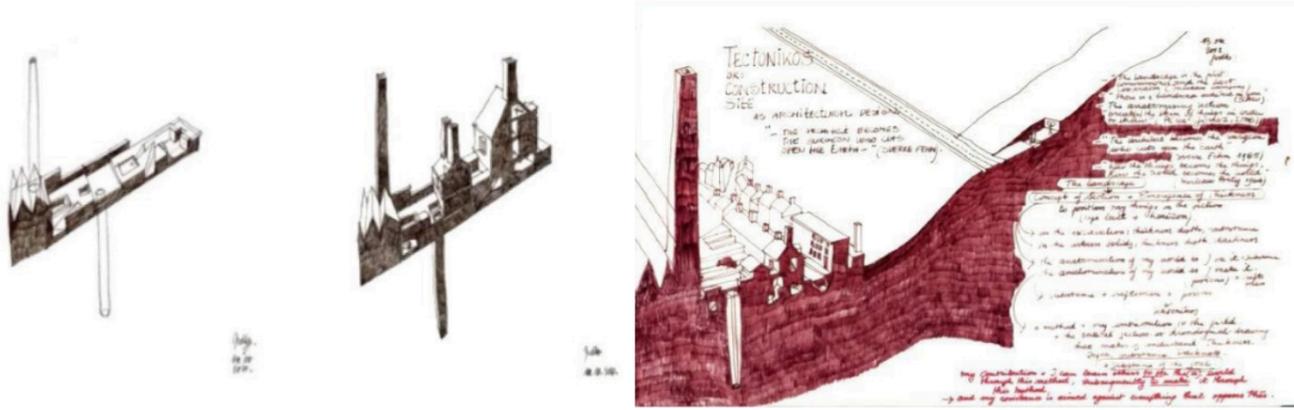


Figure 2. Van Den Berghe, drawings excavating the memory of the Grandmother's House [jvdb, 06-2009 / 01-2010©] Source: The Overarching Essay (Book 2, 2012), page 43 (left) and 78 (right).

*As they become known and accepted to ourselves, our feelings, and the honest exploration of them, become sanctuaries and fortresses and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas, the house of difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action. (Lorde, 1985)*

The design driven research at the RMIT Melbourne, founded by Leon Van Schaik seems to elevate the understanding of this inner wisdom from unconscious and forgotten levels of the inner architect into a conscious reflection of their influence in the design practice. And I find it is here that literary and other transdisciplinary methods assist to reveal levels of reflection (Figure 1) and levels of meaning that the architectural instruments alone may not. 'Finding the voice' is one of the core moments of insight in the 'venturous design practice research', where the venturous researcher seeks to stretch the boundary of the discipline and thereby to extend it in some substantial way' (Blythe 2016, 2).

While making a PhD driven by his practice, titled Theatre of Operations, or: Construction Site as Architectural Design, Johan Van Den Berghe has done an extended research on the house of his grandmother. A regression therapist, who helped the architect to enter his mind-palace through the method of loci, supervised the research. Drawings and photographs of his architectural practice entwine the memory writing, and they flow as a collage of two parallel worlds: one of the architect Van Den Berghe and one – of the boy Van Den Berghe.

This part of the PhD is named 'The Book of Narratives' and the text is entwined with photographs from his present practice, dialogically (beyond words) indicating the influence that childhood tacit knowledge and experience bring as meaning inside the projects of the past, present and the future.

It is probably this courage to be lonely and to immerse into self-understanding through the encounter, that makes one conscious of the different levels of meaning between the personal and the collective. This observation of the different levels of meaning is not an anxiously problematic ambiguity; it is rather a fruitful poetic multiplicity of different realities. It is probably through this fresh will for meaning, this healthy tension of constant re-creation of the personal architectural tower of values that one learns to say 'no' to authoritarian practices that aim to threaten, violate and extinguish any voice that defeats the imposed obedience.

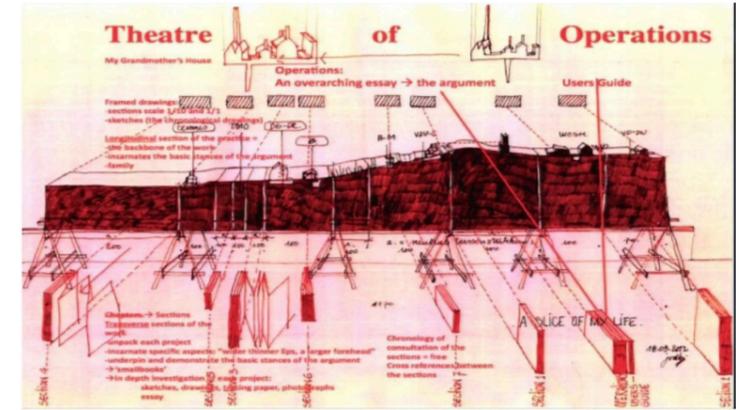


Figure 3. Van Den Berghe. A drawing answering 'How will my final PhD presentation look like?' a couple of months before submitting the final version. Part of the doctoral research of the author [jvdb, 06-2009 / 01-2010©] Source: User's Guide (Book 1, 2012), page 6.

[1] Made after the novel 'Waiting for the Barbarians' by John Maxwell Coetzee in 1980, which is originally made after Constantin Cavafy's poem with the same name and by Dino Buzzati's The Tartar Steppe (1940).

[2] Van Den Berghe adopts the phrase 'theatre of operations' to stress the coexistence of Blythe's 'theatre of practice' (2012) and the theatre of research, experienced by Van Den Berghe as a PhD candidate (Book 2, 21). Originally, the term 'theatre' in the context of design practice research is first mentioned by Leon Van Schaik as 'a shoebox theatre' – a metaphor for the Invitational program in the Pink Book (Schaik and Johnson 2011, 16).

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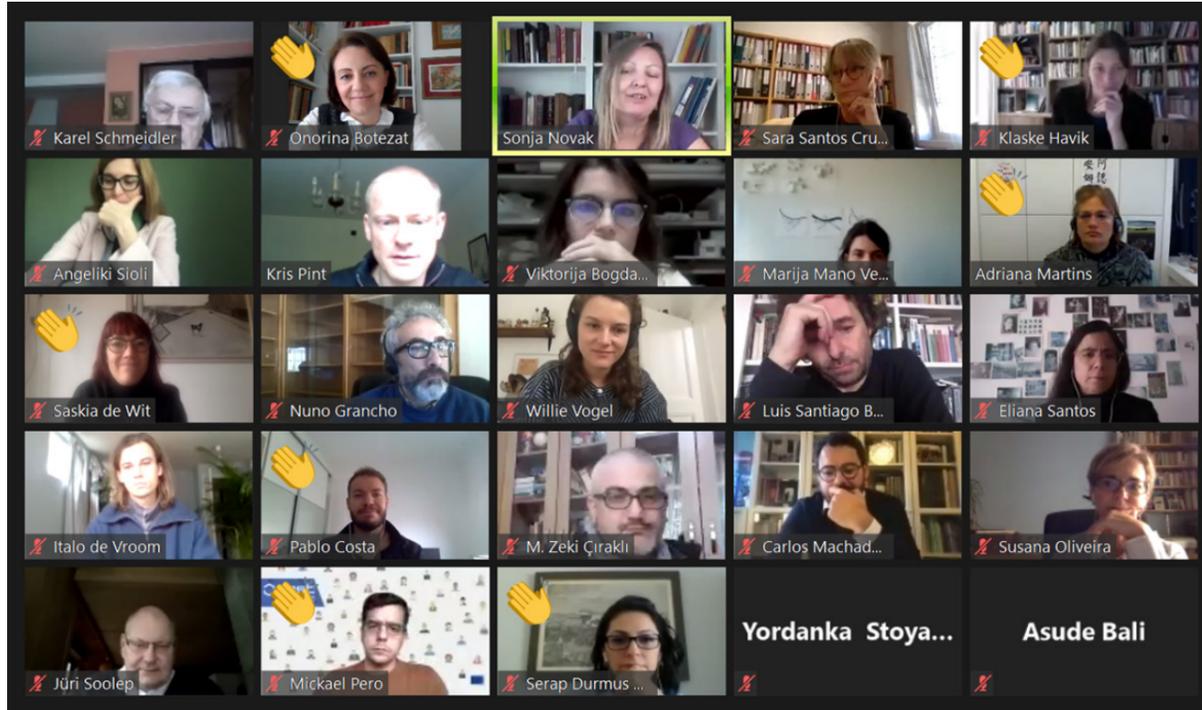
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1h 06' 20" - 1h 29' 07"

## Discussion Summary

*Meaning arises from creating connections or relations and interactions between things, for example, from juxtaposing two notions, ideas, objects, bodies, items of language etc., though it not necessarily need solely be a relation of opposition, but it can simply be a neutral correlation, connection or analogy. These relational items can be form and content (e. g. of language), the physical and the ephemeral, comfort and discomfort, fullness and lack of something, place and non-place, conflict and harmony, me and the „other“, the emotional and the bodily experience, reception and production, where the one always needs the other.*



## Appropriation

*Sara Santos Cruz' keynote addresses appropriation as a transformative, manipulative and affective occurrence and differentiates between cultural and urban appropriation. She identifies four main points: space and territoriality, social and relational appropriation, spontaneous and informal and affective and identity. Sernaz Arslan focuses on gender appropriation and views it from the perspective of different capabilities. She raises the question on who is able to appropriate the city and what do we do to incorporate the needs of those who do not have the dominant capabilities for appropriation, whereas Dalia Milian Bernal talks about temporary appropriation and energies that certain communities have when appropriating abandoned spaces. Amer Obied draws our attention to the „normal“ versus „alien“ in terms of appropriation, where there seems to be an obligation rather than the willingness to fit in and where the society should be able to reject stereotypes and embrace individuality. Angela Mensing-de Jong responds with examples from East Germany and Dresden, where it became clear that there is a need to convince the people as important stakeholders who need to use the city beyond only temporary use [1].*

To access the recorded session on Appropriation please follow the link:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25fpqbV\\_rTk&t=3817s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25fpqbV_rTk&t=3817s)

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## Appropriation as Transformative, Manipulative and Affective

*Sara Santos Cruz, University of Porto, Research Centre for Territory, Transport and Environment (CITTA)*

Appropriation, meaning "to make one's own", is the act of taking something for your own use, usually without permission. The term can be found in different domains from cultural studies to urban studies.

In cultural studies, 'cultural appropriation' is defined as the adoption or taking of specific elements (such as ideas, symbols, artifacts, images, art, traditions, icons, behaviour, music, styles) of one culture by another culture. According to Rogers (2006), cultural appropriation can be placed into categories (cultural exchange, dominance, exploitation and transculturation), that emphasize both social structure and power relations (Rogers, 2006).

The idea of an enriching transformation by exchange of cultural elements, values, customs, practices & ideas is usually set aside, as the debate on Cultural appropriation demonstrates the imbalance of power that still remains between cultures. The term "dominance" implies manipulation and control of values and symbols of the subordinated culture. These debates on Appropriation appear as various cultural expressions, from arts to music, fashion, etc. More specifically, Appropriation has a long history in Art. Gothic churches were built on Roman churches. Reviewing the concept in cultural studies, authors often refer to what Picasso once said – "Good artists copy, great artists steal" allowing for some intentional borrowing, copying, and alteration of existing images and objects. Nevertheless, 'imitation' can be quite polemic, varying from being acceptable to being considered plagiarism.

When we move to the urban context, the term appropriation gains a new mood. 'Urban appropriation' takes us to the "feeling of possessing and managing a space, irrespective of its legal ownership, for its everyday use or as a means of identification" (Korosec-Serfaty, 1985). Going back to Lefebvre (1974, 1991), it is the typical human action when people express their right to the city and the street as a space of encounters. Or the process by which, human beings, constantly, consciously or unconsciously, reclaim that space, by doing something in a certain place (Ostermann e Timpf, 2009). Many other definitions appear among the literature, overall encompassing four main points.

### Space & Territoriality

Human beings relate to space, or more precisely, they have a biological need to define territories. Human territoriality, reflecting a biological characteristic, is about instincts, driven by a need to claim and defend a territory. But some authors argue that people learn this sense of territoriality through their past experiences and their culture, this way understanding the social significance of space. Others argue that it is the result of an interaction between social and biological processes, thus besides the instinct, social frameworks play a crucial role in structuring more intricate forms (Madanipour, 2003).



### **Social & Relational**

Reminding Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, to name a few, space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings), which affects spatial practices and perceptions (Purcell, 2002). For Doreen Massey (1991), space "is constructed in a relational way and it is this characteristic that allows for a continuous production and reconfiguration of meanings". In this perspective, appropriation rises as spontaneous acts and practices in a manifestation or part of the struggle for the right to the city.

### **Informal & Spontaneous**

Moreover, appropriation suggests a degree of informality and spontaneity. As an informal act, Informal appropriations occur when originated by the creativity or desire of people, being spontaneous, sometimes illegal, not regulated, based on experience. As opposed to formal appropriations that are planned for a certain space and where the possibilities of use are indicated by built environment.

Appropriation implies change in public space. As suggested by Lynch (1960) when studying change, is essential to determine two aspects. Firstly, "How manipulable the site is? Or "How difficult is it to alter or transform?" - in a sense, manipulability refers to the freedom of the users to alter the setting to their own uses. Secondly, "How reservable are the changes once they are made?" - Reversibility relates then to the freedom of future users. If changes made by previous users restrict the activities of future users.

Classification of types of spaces according to their capacity to be appropriated and the nature of these appropriations have been suggested by Franck & Stevens (2007), as open-ended spaces – flexible and adaptive; allowing for discovering and creativity; found spaces when people identify certain characteristics that allow the appropriation, but spaces are not designed as such; and boundary (Liminality) spaces when the appropriation emerges by proximity to the private and closed space.

### **Affective & Identitary**

The last point refers to the affective dimension. Research on this topic started early in the 1970s, in environmental psychology studies. For Korosec-Serfaty (1975, 1984), appropriation of space is understood as a feeling of possessing and managing a space, irrespective of its



legal ownership, for its everyday use or as a means of identification. For Graumann (1976), it is a way of interiorizing space, and it is associated to personal identification, for Proshansky (1983).

As said, appropriation does not entail possession or property ownership, in the sense I do not need to be the owner of an urban space to be able to appropriate it. I appropriate it but the city also appropriates me in a two-way process. Thus, appropriation of urban spaces is about identification, whether or not reality is more or less changed. The psychological processes relate to urban cultural practices, perceptions, representations, desires, aesthetics and feelings, they involve the social and personal imaginary, the bond between the individual and the place. In this interactive process, individuals intentionally transform the physical environment into a meaningful place while in turn transforming themselves (Feldman & Stall, 1994).

Furthermore, appropriation is a mechanism by which place attachment and place identity develops, i.e., to the meaning and significance of places for their inhabitants and users, and how these meanings influence individuals' conceptualizations of self or their identities (Lewicka, 2008, 20011; Proshansky, et al., 1983; Rioux, et al., 2007; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

Looking around cities, appropriations occur everywhere, in the most varied forms of manifestations. as part of daily practices, where certain public places are an extension of the private space of the house or as part of a daily routine when a square is repeatedly appropriated by old men to play cards. Children adjust spaces to play football or skate in public space. Around the city, all kinds of appropriations emerge spontaneously.

However, various kinds of informal urbanisms have also been promoted worldwide, like pop-up urbanism, tactical urbanism, DIY urbanism, and other forms of place-making. These interventions can look like parklets converted into a mini green area, man-made public spaces, sidewalk gardens or allotments, and pop-up markets, to name just a few. They are essentially citizens taking over city planning through small-scale, temporary projects intended to improve their lives and their neighbours' lives. These interventions fit into a pattern of citizen activism, mostly in a context of limited public funding. In these situations, communities have actively responded by solving problems with their own resources, with the aim of improving short term urban issues, but with long term goals. These acts are seldom totally spontaneous as they require previous preparation and planning. Often, these interventions follow and import examples and experiences from other contexts. Instead of being genuine and spontaneous appropriations, these organized and collective appropriations become sometimes replicas of successful stories.



### Final remarks

There are different sorts of appropriations, with different purposes, more or less spontaneous, more or less permanent, more or less participative, more or less meaningful. People have multiple perspectives and points of view about what they want to do, what they need to do, and what they can do in urban spaces. All kinds are welcome in the city, as urban spaces are the extension of our private spaces. There is exchange and dominance in urban appropriation. Exchange in the reciprocal bond people-place, but also dominance when appropriation is subjected to relations of power and control.

The act of appropriating represents each own statement, a kind of manifestation of the right to use and transform the city. But to appropriate is also to leave stories that take place in the public arena. Appropriations are manipulative to each own's purpose, stressing affections & feelings and writing stories in urban places. Ultimately, the identity of the city is built upon those meanings.

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43' 20" - 46' 53"

## Appropriation for whom: Looking through the lens of Capabilities Approach

*Sernaz Arslan, Istanbul Bilgi University, doctoral candidate in Political Science*

It is easier to talk about appropriation; appropriation of urban space along with rights and resources associated with it when you are male, heterosexual, cisgender, able bodied, young, socio-economically well-off, not a religious or ethnic minority. If we are to talk about appropriation as an act of reorientation away from the city's role as an engine of capital accumulation and towards its role as a constitutive element regarding cooperative social relations among urban inhabitants as argued by Lefebvre, we should rethink it within the framework of Amartya Sen's capabilities approach.

Sen's version of capabilities approach underlines the actual freedom to choose the life or being one's values. According to him, various kinds of resources are needed to achieve certain functionings. Functionings can be defined as 'the various things, a person may value doing or being'. There aren't any limits to the number of potential functionings. They can range from having enough food and decent shelter to having access to education and being able to participate in the society. Individuals can be in diverse circumstances and can have very different needs; therefore, there isn't a definite causal connection between resources and functionings. It means that two individuals with equal resources can end up with totally different functionings. What the individuals can actually achieve is related to several factors including biological, social, cultural and economic ones. Sen focuses on people's set of capabilities to turn resources into functionings. Hence, he pays attention not to abstract conditions; but, on the actual living people are able to achieve.

Urban space is the place for encountering the different and the novel; for engaging in meaningful interactions; for making claims and reaching out for various resources; for developing a sense of belonging. Appropriation is the key and first step for these to become real. However, without recognizing the needs and actual capabilities of all urban inhabitants including the black sheeps, the vulnerable, the disadvantaged we cannot talk about full and complete appropriation, which will enable us to contribute to the meaning and future of urban spaces.

46' 59" - 52' 54"

## Who is Allowed to appropriate Urban Space?

*Dalia Milián Bernal, Doctoral researcher and lecturer in the School of Architecture, Faculty of the Built Environment at Tampere University*

Who appropriates urban space is one of the main questions that motivate my research, particularly concerning temporary uses. Undeniably, it is only a fraction of urban dwellers who are allowed to appropriate urban space, and certainly only for socially accepted activities. I contend here, however, that: through their actions and physical transformations of urban space, their tactics and capacity to self-organize, the activities they coordinate, the networks they build, and the energy they create around them, the few urban actors able to appropriate urban space open the door, even if slightly, to other members of society take part in the processes of urbanization. For example, I learned how through the occupation of an abandoned building a group of urban actors were able to amend the law regarding public nuances, to allow communities to appropriate abandoned buildings for social and cultural purposes.

To learn more about my research, please visit: <https://projects.tuni.fi/temporaryuses/>

53' 00" - 58' 30"

## About Appropriation: Between the Normal and the Alien

*Amar Obied, Architect and a PhD candidate in Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon*

*They put me in a jar  
and asked me to fit,  
But I am no water,  
I am from the clay of heavens,  
And once the I grow;  
the jar will certainly break*

These are the words of the revolutionary Iraqi poet Ahmad Mattar. These words strongly and significantly reverberate in today's political, social, and urban landscapes.

We may read in-between the lines Mattar's rejection of the jar -meaning the stereotype- and the embracing of freedom and individuality, as well as a willingness to fight rather than to yield, and perhaps a certain worry about what is outside the jar, the unknown and untethered. Nonetheless, I believe Mattar's existential problem is not only the shape of the jar itself, but the obligation to fit within it, rather than the choice to.

It is here and in many other places we may assert a similar struggle between the weight of our self-awareness, cultures, ideologies, preferences, appearances, status, and heritages, versus the context in which they are perceived, practised, or simply present.

While on the one hand, some contexts are more tolerable and inclusive, believing in the diversity premised by a culture of acceptance; there are, on the other hand, contexts in which this luxury is absent, and the predominant tendency is for uniformity, even if forced.

In both cases there is a clear need for co-existing and a need for a set of rules to govern, nonetheless, the two are not equal. I argue that the former is a process of integration, in which all parties are participants in creating the normal, and the latter is a process of appropriation in which one party is pressured and/or persuade into forfeiting some or all aspects of their unique definition in order to meet the requirements of the normal.

In the light of this argument, I would like to address one specific subtext of appropriation: the normal versus the alien.

The normal is but a set of beliefs, appearances, and behaviours which are accepted and perpetrated by one group of people and is fundamentally beneficial for them. The normal is accumulative, inherited, persistent, resistant, comprehensible, predictable, and unchallenging, anything else is alien.

Appropriation is the change of shape and/or meaning of the alien in order to meet the normal. Thus, posing the dilemma of whether to comply with the pressure and become the norm(al) or resist and become alienated and isolated.

This premise of normal comes with a prior recognition of the power to impose it, it could be the power of sheer numbers, physical power, religious, political, or economic. Needless to say, power defines the normal, the normal sustains power.

In this sense, the normal presents itself as a manner of imposition instead of compromise, intolerance instead of tolerance, moreover, artificial instead or authentic. The water ceases to be water and takes the shape of the jar.

Mattar, as he was being asked to sing praises for dictatorships, asserts that the notion to appropriate into the appropriate is but an attempt to force a sense of uniformity and homogeneity and normalise the alien.

Finally, while I agree with Mattar's assertion, and while being a firm believer in inclusivity and democracy, I still believe there is some merit for this understanding of appropriation, for sometimes meaning and particularity do not fold under virtuosity and moral consensus, therefore a change is a must and for the better.



1h 03' 37" - 1h 27' 31"

## Discussion Summary

The discussion raised, among others, the question of difference between usage and appropriation, the aspect of time and temporariness in appropriation as well as the different levels and kinds of appropriation (e. g. cultural versus urban, new forms that have arisen as the result of the COVID19-pandemic, gender appropriation, site-specificity). Furthermore, the term appropriation was linked and put in a relation to meaning and it was concluded that it works two-ways and is a concept way beyond mere use, which involves a kind of change/transformation of space, be it material or immaterial.



Fernando Pessoa



Não sei quantas almas tenho.  
Cada momento mudei.  
Continuamente me estranho.  
Nunca me vi nem achei.  
De tanto ser, só tenho alma.  
Quem tem alma não tem calma.  
Quem vê é só o que vê.  
Quem sente não é quem é.

Atento ao que sou e vejo,  
Torno-me eles e não eu.  
Cada meu sonho ou desejo,  
É do que nasce, e não meu.  
Sou minha própria paisagem,  
Assisto à minha passagem,  
Diverso, móbil e só.  
Não sei sentir-me onde estou.

Por isso, alheio, vou lendo  
Como páginas, meu ser.  
O que segue não prevendo,  
O que passou a esquecer.  
Noto à margem do que li  
O que julguei que senti.  
Releio e digo, «Fui eu?»  
Deus sabe, porque o escreveu.

© 1930, Fernando Pessoa (himself)  
From: *Poesia*  
Publisher: Assírio & Alvim, Lisbon, 2005  
ISBN: 972-37-1071-4

I don't know how many souls I have.  
I've changed at every moment.  
I always feel like a stranger.  
I've never seen or found myself.  
From being so much, I have only soul.  
A man who has soul has no calm.  
A man who sees is just what he sees.  
A man who feels is not who he is.

Attentive to what I am and see,  
I become them and stop being I.  
Each of my dreams and each desire  
Belongs to whoever had it, not me.

I am my own landscape,  
I watch myself journey -  
Various, mobile, and alone.  
Here where I am I can't feel myself.

That's why I read, as a stranger,  
My being as if it were pages.  
Not knowing what will come  
And forgetting what has passed,  
I note in the margin of my reading  
What I thought I felt.  
Rereading, I wonder: "Was that me?"  
God knows, because he wrote it.

© Translation: 1998, Richard Zenith  
From: *Fernando Pessoa & Co. - Selected Poems*  
Publisher: Grove Press, New York, 1998, 0-8021



## Integration

Through a number of urban skate park projects that he has designed, keynote speaker Matthew Skjonsberg discusses issues of integration for different communities through architecture. Emerging from ideas explored during the design of these skate parks, Matthew also discusses the necessity for integrating more actively nature and urban places nowadays and questions the meanings of the words landscape and urban, making a plea that we need to define them anew. Michael G. Kelly brings one more binary relationship into the conversation: namely the relationship between reality and representation. He suggests that we can think of texts as utterances that integrate the terms they bring together, and this could be used as a metaphor for urban design. Isabella Indolfi responds by bringing our attention to art in public space and how this allows for integration, implementing intercultural dialogue, links among people and communities. Juan A. Garcia, through a heritage perspective, asks what kind of integration we permit and accommodate in urban environments and design. He posits that contemporary approaches to integration argue in favor of integrating different perspectives in the urban fabric, even humble elements, that are not spectacular. For him, integration is also behavioral, a quality in the environment that allows us to accept, adapt, transform not only the place but other people's ideas and mentalities. Dace Bula concludes, sharing how her participation in the Cost network has shifted her own research focus to include people's engagement with the built environment. She has observed that she has become more interested in building objects like walls or fences and their impact on the urban experience. She challenges us to think of territories besides the borders as territories for integration.

To access the recorded sessions on Integration please follow the link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdIMWbCreVO>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gicMIYtCHKI&t=26s>

00' 00" - 39' 00"

## The Etymology of Design – on the Integration of Narratives

Matthew Skjonsberg, ETH Zürich, Regional Design and Landscape, Architecture

It is important to acknowledge the realities experienced by different language communities, and their intimate relationship to the landscape. These relationships are the expression of both individual and collective identity in our environments. As designers, we deal with many interest groups in an intergenerational way, so even if the project is catered for a specific target group (for example skateboarders are consulted in relation to the design of a skatepark), we'll also address the interests of their children and grandparents - anticipating the day when this user group has transitioned into another one (also providing access for wheelchairs and elderly facilities, for instance).

The three entries I contributed to the Vademecum - civic design, nature study, and new natures - each in their way speak to this notion of integration and differentiation. Taking Kostas Terzidis's essay on 'The Etymology of Design' (2001) as a reference, we recognize that design is 'more about memory than it is about invention', and come to see the central role memory plays in people's relationships to existing environments.

Finally we come to see landscape as a dual network - first the ecological armature of 'nature', then the infrastructural armature of 'culture' - serving multiple and often contradictory functions, all of which are subject to continuous negotiation. Throughout these negotiations it is important to ensure that we engage the design of landscapes in such a way as to provide a platform for indigenous people and other minorities to speak, and give due value to rural traditions and artefacts.

**The following text has been submitted by the keynote speaker in addition to the lecture summary**

*Acknowledging the rebranding of colonialism as urbanism, we might helpfully refer to the Greek etymology of the word 'design', coming from schedio, derived from eschein the past tense of eho, it refers to something you once had but no longer have.[1] It is about making a sign to point to an existing condition, or relationship, that has been forgotten or neglected. Design, according to the Greek, is more about memory than it is about invention. This understanding is considered through various historical and contemporary examples, and through the lens of rural and urban relations – arriving at a proposal for the advocacy of rural equity and the attribution of rights to soil, water and air through 'The Five Swiss Watersheds Project' – affirming the assertion that 'there is no wealth but life'. [2]*

Speak For Yourself – An Introduction to the Five Swiss Watersheds Project

At a recent symposium in the American west addressing the question of how to mark landscapes where toxic waste is buried - so that in 20,000 years people will know not to dig there - after several hours of panel discussions and audience exchanges a solitary man sitting towards the back raised his hand, and when called upon he said, "I understand you've framed your initial question on the premise that you all will be on Mars by then. Ok - but don't worry, we aren't going anywhere. We'll be here, we will tell them." When he said 'we' it was



understood by the audience members, because he was a Native American man. But in fact there were many in that audience who related to what he said, and after a kind of stunned silence he was enthusiastically applauded - and I expect there are many who will likewise read this and agree, and will even be moved by his statement.

What does it mean to be native to a place? We might begin from the observation that the 'carrying capacity' of the landscape is directly proportional to the 'caring capacity' of its inhabitants. Recognizing that Switzerland's five watersheds are the sources of five major European rivers – the Adige, Danube, Po, Rhine, and Rhone – it is important to note that each of these is home to a corresponding language group (Romansh, German, Italian and French) where the percentage of population speaking that language correlates directly with the areas of these watersheds as a proportion of Swiss territory. One can speak of shared culture along each of these European rivers – each river its own language – and at the same time here in Switzerland we know that each valley has its own dialect. [Barham 2001] We don't know what Switzerland will look like after the glaciers are gone – now likely within a decade. Through this transition it is important that these Swiss communities are enabled in their self-determination. Until very recently Switzerland has struggled to establish meaningful gender equity, even – but within 5 years it will also be largely real, given the progress of recent parity initiatives. We are likewise ambitious that this research will support the ambitions of the people of Switzerland, and thereby – in some modest but meaningful way – all natives of this earth.

In some Swiss valleys nuclear plants are still operating, in others operations are winding down as these facilities are decommissioned – but eventually the same question will be faced by all these communities as is faced by Native Americans, and by all those of us who choose to remain. For example, the Jurapark Aargau is bordered by no fewer than seven such facilities, despite the fact that the site enjoys Switzerland's highest level of ecological protection. Fortunately, there are experts on hand to address such issues – and while little of this process is public knowledge, in Switzerland we can be optimistic that the outcome might also provide a positive example for others facing the same challenges but who don't have Swiss advantages. Just so, as indigenous cultures around the world are under increasing pressure, and as short- and long-term decisions are made regarding such weighty matters, it is as important as ever to continue to learn to work together as a community – and likely more important than ever to learn to speak for yourself.

[1] Kostas Terzidis, 'The Etymology of Design: Pre-Socratic Perspective', *Design Issues* 23, no. 4 (1 October 2007): 69–78, <https://doi.org/10.1162/desi.2007.23.4.69>.

[2] Matthew Skjonsberg, 'There Is No Wealth But Life - Architectural Ethics from The Charter of Athens to the Charter of Elements', in *Racines Modernes de La Ville Contemporaine* (Genève: Metis Presse, 2019), 43–64.

[3] Elizabeth Barham, 'Ecological Boundaries as Community Boundaries: The Politics of Watersheds', *Society & Natural Resources International Journal* 14, no. 3 (2001): 181–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920119376>.

39' 24" - 49' 15"

## [Writing Urban Places]: Integration, Text and (Literary?) Form

*Michael G. Kelly, University of Limerick, is Senior Lecturer in French and head of subject*

The thrust of this intervention was to recall and reflect upon the textual (and thereby implicitly linguistic) paradigm within which the work of WG2 occurs, with particular reference to the term of 'integration', significantly over-determined in a broad urban studies context, to say nothing of its manifold political and social ambiguities.

Moving from the linguistic figure of the utterance allows for an approach of 'integration' in terms of a performative (and hence situated) integrative process. This intuition is present in the title of a prose work such as Jean-Christophe Bailly's *La phrase urbaine* (Seuil, 2013), whose essays build the analogy with the process of walking through the uncontainable city space. Meaning-making and interpretation are activities that both generate and spin out from the integrative process of such utterance, wherein elements can be understood (> meaning) in terms of their dynamic, articulated co-presence (within the text). Whether the text operates a 'holding together' of diverse elements, or enacts transformative interactions of those elements, is one of the many questions that inhabit any number of literary 'utterances' – there is no general integrated practice-based outcome observable, rather tendencies, related (implicitly or explicitly) at varying degrees of tension with each other.

One potential line of development from this proposition is that 'writing urban place' as an integrative process demands to be framed more broadly than a purely narrative-based or narratological process can do. The role of narrative in many integrative textual practices can be argued to be less than frontal – as the long-standing reflection on the condition of modernity within form- and genre-breaking textual practices bears out. A key originating point in this respect might be Baudelaire's prefatory statements ('À Arsène Houssaye') to his *Spleen de Paris* (1867), and one could argue that a large part of modern and contemporary poetic practice is concerned with the problematic nature of the spatialized text as one capable of integrative effect (whether on the writer, the reader, or the broader symbolic economy).

The reference to '(Literary?) Form' in the title of the intervention highlights this crisis of form as arguably the central problematic of the artistic, and more specifically literary, response to the modern urban condition – the city as unceasing change and thereby uniquely nurturing of a subjective condition which is, nevertheless, far from reconciled (integrated) with it. A concluding addendum developed another aspect of this subjective dimension that is always an active concern for work done from a literary and cultural studies perspective – that is, the 'imaginary' dimension / level of what might be analysed from other perspectives as objective realisations. Here, primary reference was to Antoine Picon's essay 'La Ville des réseaux. Un imaginaire politique' (Manucius, 2014), in which the 'network' as a dimension of the 'networked city' is argued to imply the existence of a 'shared imaginary' element in all actors / users, essential to the regularity of its operations. This, in our view, is a particularly embedded and implicit form of imaginary, what might be called a common-ground-hidden-in-plain-sight. This is ground which events such as the current sanitary crisis may have laid bare to the urban observer in new ways – a revelation which may in turn generate integrative (literary?) utterances in the time to come.

49' 21" - 56' 08"

## The Role of Public Art in the Promotion of Interculturailty and Hyper-Diversity

*Isabella Indolfi, independent curator, based in Italy*

This intervention starts from the idea that integration in the XXI century city should be meant as interculturality [1] and hyper-diversity [2] - both terms are borrowed from the "Vademecum - 77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places" edited by some of our colleagues.

For hyper-diversity we mean "a complexity as well as a fluidity of social positions, senses of belonging, and identities in cities"[3]. The match of narratives from the past and from the future creates the so-called interculturality, in "a synergy of plurality combined with traditional narratives"[4].

Art offers infinite possibilities to experiment innovative ways of inclusion and can provide concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among communities. Art can encourage intercultural dialogue and reinforce social cohesion through the creation of bridges and links among people and communities.

Outside traditional spaces of art production (such as museums, galleries and foundations) art can create new spaces of encounters and reach out to new audience. In public and unconventional places, artists can play a really active role in building new narratives in the city; through participatory strategies they can engage the communities in active storytelling, helping them to project their own identity in the environment. A site-specific and socially engaged approach can open the doors of dialog between artists, communities and institutions.

I can mention here two projects that I curate and that have been selected by the Working Group 4 of the Writing Urban Places COST action, with the aim to identify policies and good practices in public art that facilitate interculturality and hyper-diversity.

The first project is the Italian community-based Biennial Public Art Festival SEMINARIA, realized by the no-profit association Seminaria Sogninterra. The Festival takes place in Maranola, a small medieval village in the south of Italy, in a region which is suffering from a wave of depopulation. Here international artists, through a residency program, are hosted and commissioned by the local people, and are invited to conceive of new and specific projects. The active participation of the local people is the backbone of this independent festival: the inhabitants host the artists and open their own homes to the public, welcoming everybody.

The community is small and the sense of belonging is strong, so every external intervention is very helpful to open windows on the outside, and to activate the awareness of being in a bigger world. A key tool is the residency program, considered as a real journey in the community's life, that enables the artists to work in site-specific way. Artists are called to research and highlight the set of small things that make up this sensory community[5], which unwittingly gather around the difficulty of living in a village designed for medieval needs, the fatigue of the steep stairs of the town, the smell of the production process of the olive oil that spreads from the hill,

the sounds of the bells of the three churches open to the 1500 inhabitants. Even though, these stimuli shape the behavior of the community in an unobtrusive and perhaps unconscious way. The artists, like epidermal antennas, perceive all these little marks, re-elaborate them and return them to the community in the form of a work of art. Finally, the outsider gaze of the artists helps the community to recognize their own identity, re-enact it and eventually to open itself to the outside.

<http://www.seminariasogninterra.it/>

The second project is the international ID.project (your.city.identity), a community-engaged digital public art initiative, developed by renowned new media artist Anna Frants and distributed by CYLAND Media Art Lab. This project investigates the multifaceted identities of communities around the world through the active participation of its people – pivoting off the belief that a location's identity consists not only of monuments and streets but of personal experiences preserved in the memory of its residents. ID. employs QR (Quick Response) codes on ceramic tiles and installs them to notable sites. Each of these QR codes hyperlinks the location to a capsule of memory, containing a colloquially unique history told by a resident in a short video interview. Every interview becomes a personal marker and a constructive pathway for connecting people to the fabric of a place. The mode for enabling these personal histories is to point one's mobile camera at the QR code. By this simple action, all who happen upon these sites can readily watch the embedded content and be part of an accessible collective memory. This oral history project aims to encourage us to cherish the smaller details of our cities, by creating an interactive emotional map, in other words, a creative geography [6], a layer of information that overlaps the urban space and project the viewers in another dimension connected to their embodied experience. ID.project evolves into hundreds of non-monuments scattered around communities, and gives shape to a virtual and physical map. Through the creation of the so-called (again from Vademecum) converging media spaces[7], in other words "hybrid spaces integrating elements of urban space and media space"[8], ID.project augments physical spaces, and enables connection of both the physical and the virtual community.

<https://www.id-project.org>

[1] VADEMECUM, 77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places, edited by K. Havik, K. Pint, S. Riesto and H. Steiner, p. 93

[2] *ivi*, p. 87.

[3] *ibid.*

[4] *ivi*, p. 93.

[5] *ivi*, p. 131.

[6] *ivi*, p. 57.

[7] *ivi*, p. 53.

[8] *ibid.*

56' 22" - 1h 03' 12"

## Integration and the Historic City

Juan A. García-Esparza, Universitat Jaume I

When introducing integration, some general questions arise: What integration do we desire? What integration do we permit or accommodate? What integration do we live in? Because integration is political, economic, social and it is cultural as well. Hence, integration is a behavioural quality of the environment, it implies accepting, adapting, and transforming the place, others' ideas and forms of expression.

A definition of Arts' integration might be the one that looks for widening the perspective of a general matter, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of a cohesive sense of the arts. In the realm of cultural heritage, contemporary critical methodologies consider an approach that integrates plural meanings, and plural appropriations, what in turn gives space for more democratic culling processes.

Heritage practitioners and academics now consider approaches between preserving the pure logic of the tangible together with the intangible: emotions, feelings, values, power, and justice. These wide-open perspectives are telling us that integration is happening, and it is challenging the way it can be appraised in the fieldwork.

The analysis of how contemporary discourses, practices and uses of the historic city integrate or not its society, the daily life and past forms of heritage, and how to understand them all fitting in previous forms of colonial protection is a challenge for the contemporary historic city. These legacies and the role they play today in historic cities intersect and clash with the local vitality and creativity. It happens because heritage sites often were created by way of processes that lately have segregated spaces and societies, temporally and geographically, from a contemporary world.

So this again is a story of good and bad guys, who are defining what prevails, dominates and organises today's life in the historic city. Nonetheless, theoretical discourses are in favour of integrating alternative forms of legacy. The discourse is now integrating the weak, the spontaneous, the humble, and the flamboyant, in the urban fabric. Alternative forms of expression and actors arise, coexist and cohabit in scenarios of the past.

Individuals and communities have always had their ways of preserving, adapting and inhabiting. Objects, places and landscapes now are starting to be integrated and reactivated in the domains of contemporary life. But these realities still defy the disciplinary baggage, canons and categories; as well as the prevailing methods, discourses, concepts and practices of heritage studies.



Figure 1: Juan A. García-Esparza, 2019. Chair of Historic Centres and Cultural Routes, Spain.

The problem of adequately engaging past and present forms of legacy has been exacerbated by methodological challenges. Historians have long ignored the gaps and unspoken emotions, particularly in the static architectural heritage. Visual analyses, understanding them as aesthetic judgements following already established canons of beauty and order, often lack the methods to engage with the iterations of the diverse and the heterogeneous; concepts closer to the dynamic realm of the intangible.

Accordingly, non-official forms of heritage preservation now are resulting from complementary methods, particularly oral history and ethnography. However, these new forms of approach have frustrated historians who understood heritage studies as a field in which alternative or informal forms of culture were excluded from the picture. Today, those non-official processes are the ones excluding veiled forms of power, dominance and control.

Caption: Functional integration. Adopted several decades ago, metal shutters are part of a consolidated landscape. While their owners cannot do without their functionality, for others, these are elements of controversy because they demote and disfigure the integrity of the historic environment.

This contribution has been possible thanks to the research project: Writing historic centres. Dynamics of contemporary place-making in Spanish World Heritage Cities. (DoCplaceS), PID2019-105197RA-I00, funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, Spain (2020-2023).

1h 03' 20"

## Integration: Fences and Urban Experience

*Dace Bula, Director of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia*

My remarks are concluding a session, during which highly varied interpretations of 'integration' were presented. I hope to be able to respond to some of them.

I think the COST action, in which we all participate, provides a unique perspective on integration in that it invites to link the social and spatial dimensions of integration processes (or tangible and intangible aspects as Juan A. García Esparza just put it). This implies a number of questions, such as: whether and how built environment and its particular objects encourage or, on the contrary, preclude integrative moves. Whether and how they produce conditions for or obstacles to integration? What are the connections between the fragmentation of physical space and that of social space? What integration or separation narratives does the built environment transmit or inspire?

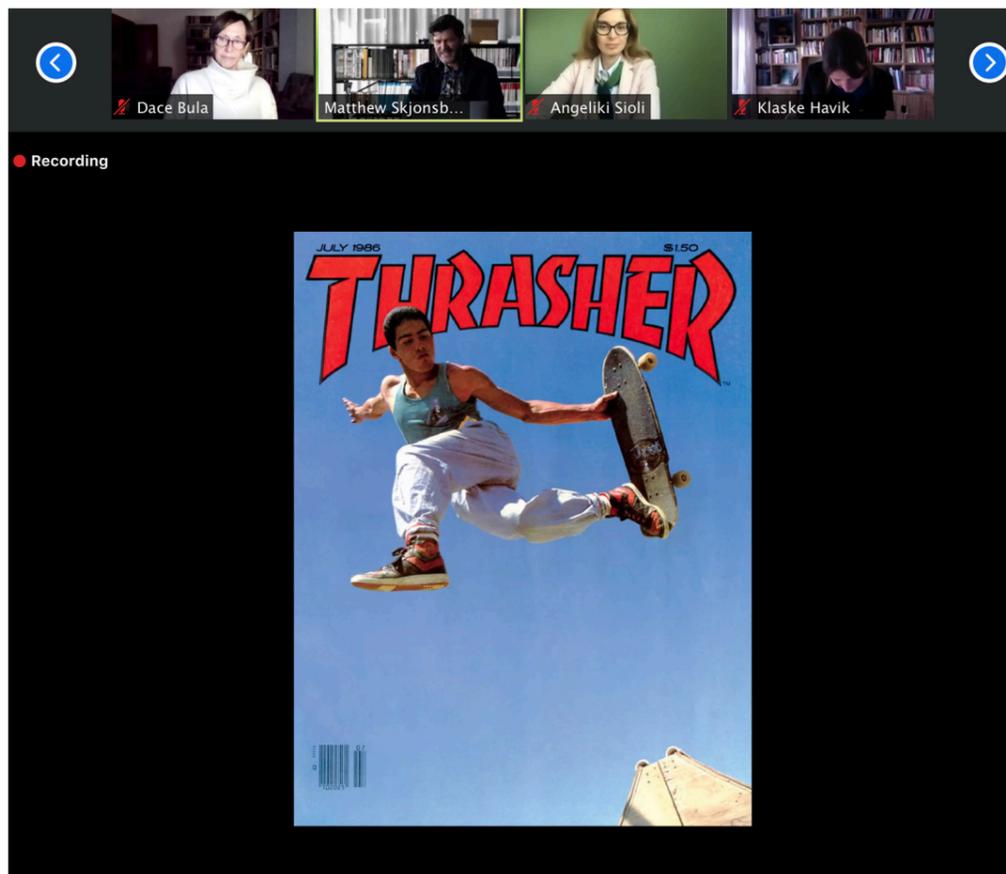
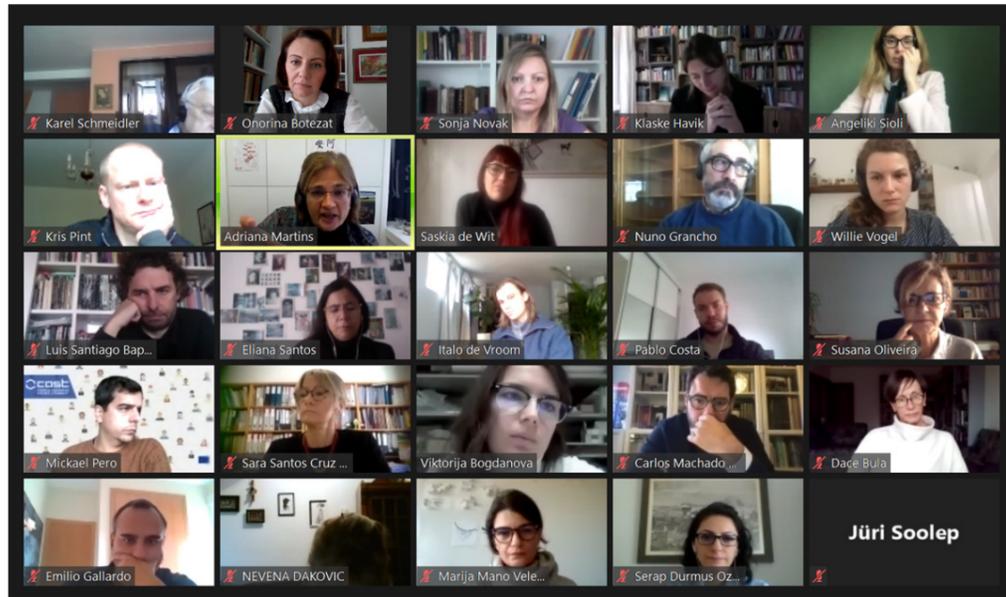
And, as a narrative scholar, I particularly appreciate this narrative vantage point on urban experience. It allows for fruitful empirical and conceptual frames. Narrative inquiry can be used as a field method to approach the ways in which city dwellers construct the meaning of urban spaces, engage in symbolic appropriation acts or experience social divides. The narrative approach also suggests that we think of the idea of legibility of the physical world or urban literacy as Klaske Havik has it; as the inclination of the human mind to translate spatial encounters into narratives. As we know, the idea is present in a number of contemporary lines of thought – in the concept of 'built narratives' used in urban design studies, the concept of 'spatial stories' present in cognitive science, the concept of 'storied matter' coming from material ecocriticism, as well as the posthumanist concept of the 'discursivity of matter'.

To proceed with the integration capacity of urban space, I would like to say something about my personal view on it (in the context of this COST action). It is participating in this network that has encouraged a shift in my project on environmental experience narratives in the Riga port neighborhoods. I have modified or widened the initial focus of inquiry to include people's engagement with the built environment that has to do with all three key concepts of this COST and with integration in particular. Namely, I have become increasingly interested in such built objects as walls and fences (very characteristic of the Riga port territory) and their impact on urban experience. This reverberates with some ideas from Matthew Schonberg's talk earlier today (his example of fence surrounding the skatepark).

Walls and fences are contemplated as objects that are both functionally and discursively influential, especially in border studies (and elsewhere). Basically aimed at the fragmentation of space, they transmit multiple boundary messages – those of separation, demarcation, enclosure, gathering, protection, etc. Regardless on what grounds certain segments of urban fabric are set apart by walls or fences (be it ownership or the type of activity, or any other reason), these constructions exert discriminating effect on both physical and social spaces.

They also deeply shape people's experience of urban environment. Dividing the space into insides and outsides, they create differential spatial regimes of accessibility, safety, passability, and visibility. They also produce social discrepancies regarding authorization, entitlement, and belonging or the reverse – exclusion and prohibition. Border narratives in themselves, walls and fences are addressed in the oral stories people tell, and they provide a material surface for various kinds of graphic discursivity including the inside-outside controversies. It is also quite customary that territories next to fences become zones for space appropriation debates and actions.

In my research, I try to combine all these aspects. I treat fences surrounding the Riga port and cutting out one fifth of the city territory from human access as a 'storied matter' in several senses. First, in the sense of a narrative subject appearing in the interviews of the residents. I also consider the narrativity of these fences as constituted by their function, enforced or disputed by spatial forms of discourse (such as signposts, warnings, and graffiti). And I also look at symbolic activities of appropriation aimed at transforming the communicative character of these spatial objects in the search for a more open and more inclusive urban space.



0' 26" - 17' 58"

## Discussion Summary

The issue of integrating nature and urban environment appears as even more crucial (and even more possible) in the mid-sized European cities that the network is studying. A concern is raised of how a balance between the two can still be maintained, so that we do not end up having over-integration, and rural/urban maintain their distinct identities. The parameter of scale is discussed, in how it plays a defining role in issues of integrations for communities. Since in our contemporary context virtual communities have a global scale that goes beyond the physical local context, we need to rethink the issue of scale. Given the possibilities of virtual work, we also need to think of the rural differently, as nowadays inhabiting the rural does not mean anymore that we cannot be fully connected with the world. Adding to this point, an observation is brought to the fore, according to which mid-sized European cities are between a metropolis and a rural setting and by default a very compelling edge condition, that requires further and in-depth study. The conversation concludes with the suggestion to look outside the different thematic categories usually associated with urban space and its communities, and that integration can help us question all the labels attributed to them, allowing us to see them anew.



## Event Poster

The Program of the event *Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration of/in City Narrative*.

writinG urban places

09:00-10:00 Opening	10:30-10:50 Keynote: Kris Pint  <u>"Sensations, Signs and Stories: Meaning in the Urban Environment"</u>  10:50-11:10 Q&A on the key-note  11:10-11:20 Statement: <b>Saskia de Wit</b> Response: <b>Onorina Botezat</b>  11:20-11:30 Statement: <b>Adriana Martins</b> Response: <b>Viktorija Bogdanova</b>  11:30-12:00 Q&A and Open Discussion	13:00-13:20 Keynote: Sara Santos Cruz  <u>"Appropriation as Transformative, Manipulative, and Affective"</u>  13:20-13:40 Q&A on the key-note  13:40-13:50 Statement: <b>Sernaz Arslan</b> Response: <b>Dalia Milián Bernal</b>  13:50-14:00 Statement: <b>Amer Obied</b> Response: <b>Angela Mensing-de Jong</b>  14:00-14:30 Q&A and Open Discussion	15:00-15:20 Keynote: Matthew Skjonsberg  <u>"The Etymology of Design"</u>  15:20-15:40 Q&A on the key-note  15:40-15:50 Statement: <b>Michael G. Kelly</b> Response: <b>Isabella Indolfi</b>  15:50-16:00 Statement: <b>Juan A. García Esparza</b> Response: <b>Dace Bula</b>  16:00-16:30 Q&A and Open Discussion	17:00-17:30 Closing
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**Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration of/in City Narratives**  
mini-online-conference \_ 17 November 2020

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMuduCrrTgqE9MSa5nZxwcr27eNSS0g0NAg>

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## Concluding Thoughts

*Sonja Novak & Angeliki Sioli*



The event “Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration of/in City Narratives” was an attempt to get at least a step closer to determining some of the major terms of our COST Action CA18126 Writing Urban Places. New Narratives of the European City from a theoretical perspective. It is quite usual for academia, especially when working on the theoretical framework, to identify and define notions and terms, organize and systematize them as well as subterms connected with them, explore the relationships between them, set boundaries and distinguish them from one another, so the initial idea of this event was to organize three sessions, each of them around one of the three major terms: meaningfulness, appropriation and integration. Interestingly enough, the last of the three listed terms – integration – seems to ironically have the tendency to question any type of setting boundaries as its definition and the main idea behind it is to incorporate something into a larger unit; to form, coordinate or blend into a functioning or unified whole; it refers to desegregation and is thus a paradox that is proving quite difficult to define from a theoretical point of view.

Furthermore, we have established that integration is behavioural: it is a quality in the environment of accepting, adapting, transforming not only the place but other people’s ideas, mentalities, etc. Similar to the behavioural and intentional nature of integration, it can be concluded that meaningfulness and appropriation are also intentional and behavioural. They are processes we undertake, permit and accommodate, in all walks of life, thus also in urban narratives and in our interaction with the urban environment. Meaningfulness has been inseparably connected to language and communication, be it symbolic language (signs, emotions) or literal (literary text). As this connection between meaning and language is undoubtedly present, in which the meaning is the content and the language is the form, this again points towards a process of uniting or combining them in narratives, as a result of the process of integration. Moreover, when we assign meaning, is this not a process of appropriation? Concerning appropriation, there is an obvious link between the social/cultural and the spatial aspect that deserves further discussion. The discussions have shown that there is a clear need for multiperspectivity of various scientific disciplines in exploring all of the above terms, in which we need to avoid qualitative judgment or assigning positive or negative connotations, but rather remain neutral and inclusive.

Binaries or opposites have also been one of the key ideas of the conference. This binary relation should not exclusively be understood as conflict, but rather as an encounter between the two ideas or notions: rural and urban, content and form, artificial and natural, I and the other, comfort and discomfort, formal and informal, permanent and ephemeral, presentation and reality. From these encounters meanings may also arise, or rather, be assigned. This leads us to the need to take a closer look at the relations between the three major terms of meaningfulness, appropriation and integration as well, not only their definitions. Other questions that arose are e. g. how COVID will change urban narratives, how to explore virtual space in relation to meaningfulness, appropriation and integration and what is the scale of each term at which we need to investigate and explore them? Further joint research of our COST network will hopefully bring us closer to a possibly consensual understanding of these major terms and to answering some of the questions at hand.



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