

“Taking position”
Disciplinary and professional crossbreeding around spatial questions
June 30th - July 1st 2016

Anthropology seems to durably establish itself, in collaboration with other disciplines, trainings and practices than those which, until then, were strictly reserved for it. It enters other areas than university and academic research and commits itself to associative activities in link with contemporary issues. This interdisciplinary symposium, which is organized by the French Association of Anthropologists (AFA) and hosted by the Strasbourg National School of Architecture, in partnership with the University of Strasbourg, aims at scrutinizing more particularly some spaces as a pretext for questioning disciplinary and professional crossbreedings. Through this potentially common spatial “alibi”, the objective of this meeting is to increase awareness of many operational concepts still confined to the boundaries of their own discipline among anthropologists, architects, geographers, 3D modeling producers, designers, theorists of aesthetics, etc.,. The idea is to encourage dialogue between theories and methodologies, as well as around their mutual appropriation and transformation.

The notion of space is one of the most polysemous terms, able to expand the shadow of its definition, like a demiurge, on any speech and any production. As far as this call for proposals is concerned, space will necessarily be understood in its concrete territorial thickness so as to avoid treating it like a simple portmanteau word. Its immaterial dimension needs to be linked to its material one. Nevertheless, thinking together both the specific features of each of our own approaches and the way they meet around the studied phenomena remains a necessity. The material space has been treated in a few founding researches: Bororo villages described by Claude Lévi-Strauss; the Kabyle house seen by Pierre Bourdieu; the social morphology of Eskimos society by Marcel Mauss. Following those, the book by Françoise Paul-Levy and Marion Ségaut, entitled *Anthropologie de l'espace* (1983), more clearly formalized a specific research approach that provides an overview of the richness of societies' spatial modelings. However, what this physical space is, does not reach consensus. For many people, considering that it is just one of the many dimensions of a complex reality, it cannot constitute on its own an object of study. This call for proposals is clearly in line with this perspective. It considers that one needs to develop a relational approach of space while taking into account its physical existence. Like Gustave Fisher in *Psychosociologie de l'espace* (1981), the aim of this call is to try to describe and understand how a specific material environment can influence action but also, following Gérard Althabe, how actors cannot be seen as outside the field in which they are taking place: each "production of the space" (Lefebvre, 1974) is always also a socio-historical construction that has obvious political implications.

Several lines of research, are privileged. They are not hermetic to one another nor exclusive.

Disciplinary, professional and associative hybridisation (bridges)

Which are the possible dialogues, frictions and contaminations between disciplines and professions that share space as a matter of interest? How may Anthropology enter new sectors of action? Which are the new careers and the lasting or punctual collaborations emerging then? To answer those questions participants can present academic itineraries or research experiences carried out by multidisciplinary teams. Here, the accent will be put on what happens (advantages and limits) when anthropologists meet other scientific, professional or associative actors working on space.

Sharing places, methodologies and theories

Whether we speak of “unity or place” or “*genius loci*”, what can be said about space as embedded in a given soil – or screen – carrying several layers of meanings? How to work with it today or in the future? This place, close or far, might be the one anthropologists experience during their fieldwork: how to define it? It also may be the one architects design and imagine *in situ*. For them,

as for geographers and many others, observation is a common instrument. However, it may be differently mobilised: anthropologists will be mostly receptive to the social interactions which a given place is the setting of; architects will take into account the existing topography and landscape in order to try to transform it while respecting it. Beyond observation, this theme will welcome proposals which question disciplinary methodologies: how are they differently brought to action and how do they mutually influence one another? Starting from those methodological reflexions, it will be possible to analyse which theoretical approaches they can serve or not.

Places and identities of interstitial spaces

How does a place convey identity issues? Space will here be approached through empirical studies at a small or medium scale. Descriptions and analysis will then focus on socially and historically contextualised experiences. This theme will privilege “hybrid spaces”, the ones anthropology has often worked on, and that literature has defined as “interstitials”. But, they might also be defined as mediation spaces, bonding or disconnecting ones, as spaces creating solidarity or conflicts, and are sometimes informed by imaginaries and potentialities. Those spaces could also be recalled as “proximity areas” where the Other and insiders mix up together and that forms of dematerialisation transform and divert from the archetype of an idealised public space. Therefore, they reinvent themselves while eluding the neoliberal hold (or being eluded by it). Which are the political meanings of socio-spatial identities in a context of State resignation? How is proximity lived and perceived? A special focus on exclusions based on gender, class, age or “race” will be encouraged. The analysis will have to present places informed by resistant and emancipatory actions, collective dynamics or informal arrangements.

Contemporary cultural dimensions of space

Which are the emerging cultural dimensions of space? What does the “institutional culture” do to spaces, especially to urban ones? Answering these questions will allow exploring terms such as “creative cities”, “clusters”, “digital cities” and “third places”. An in-depth analysis of the dynamics, the consequences and the actors involved in the institutional projects will then be possible.

Communications may be based on European or non-European fieldworks. Any supports for presenting them will be accepted, from the academic traditional ones to the more unconventional ones (commenting models, digital editing, performances, etc.). Interdisciplinary communications or cross-communications (researchers, practitioners, association members, etc.) are encouraged.

Proposals of one and a half page maximum must be submitted before the 15th December 2015 to the following email address: prendre_position.afa@laposte.net

Please, mention clearly your professional and institutional affiliations and a valid email address.

The organising committee will contact you by January 2016.

Organizational committee

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