

Sem. 2 - A.Y. 2014/2015



CROSS-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON URBAN SPACE

AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Seminar (6 credits – 48 hours)

Code: B020765

Feb. 20th-June 26th 2015

Prof. Giulio Giovannoni (responsible and organizer)
Prof. Silvia Ross, University College Cork (co-organizer)
Prof. Marco Cenzatti, UC Berkeley
Prof. Margaret Crawford, UC Berkeley
Prof. Richard Ingersoll, Syracuse University
Dr. Patrizia Lattarulo, Irpet
Prof. Medina Lasansky, Cornell University
Prof. Andrea Mecacci, University of Florence
Prof. Davide Papotti, Università di Parma

1 -DESCRIPTION

Urban space is the physical continuum on which human existence and social life unfold, with their complexities and contradictions, conflicts and fights, passions and needs. However urban space is not a simple container of human and social life, neutral as an empty theatrical scene which waits to be used by actors and performers. Although being inert and hard to be transformed, urban space has a natural tendency to form an indistinguishable whole with the society which inhabits and shapes it. Social structures, as well as power relations, inhabiting cultures, and modes of production, are variously encoded in it. Spatial transformations signify social dynamics and changes which are often conflicting and disagreed. Urban planners and designers tend to ignore their controversial and problematic role, hiding themselves beyond the supposed neutrality of technical expertise. This is one of the reasons for it is important to critically reconsider the notion of urban space from different disciplinary perspectives, in order to gain a better awareness of the many implications of urban design.

The seminar, organized by Giulio Giovannoni and Silvia Ross, is conceived as an opportunity for a critical discussion on the topic of urban space from different disciplinary perspectives. It aims at aggregating scholars from disciplines ranging from urban design, literature studies, urban and architectural history, urban sociology, urban economics, and aesthetics. The seminar is intended to be an open project to be further developed in the future.

2 - GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The "Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Urban Space" seminar has three major goals:

- 1) To introduce to cross-disciplinary research methods in the urban studies field;
- 2) To develop critical awareness about the highly complex and problematic (political, social, economical, etc.) effects of architecture and urban design;
- 3) To acquire and practice research paper writing skills.

3 – WEEKLY LECTURES AND ACTIVITIES

Narrating cities: strategies of urban interpretation in a series of contemporary Italian short novels (3 hours)

Davide Papotti, Università di Parma

Friday Feb 20th 2015, 2.30-5.30pm, Room 7M, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

In recent years, a new narrative genre emerged in the contemporary Italian literary world: the "urban narration". This is a mixed genre that draws from different literary traditions: travel literature, travel guides, short novels, autobiographical accounts etc. The emergence of a few series of "urban narrations" published by different publishing houses shows a growing interest in the construction of narrative identities of cities and towns, mirroring a more and more problematic relationship between the inhabitants and the urban contexts they inhabit. Following a few examples from one of these series, "Contromano" (literally "Against the flow"), by the Rome-Bari based publishing house Laterza, the talk will touch some of the "hot" topics in the literary portraits of Italian cities and towns: the use of public spaces, the processes of globalization and their impacts in the urban landscapes, conflicts in the use of urban spaces, the sense of belonging of city inhabitants, the relation between tourists and residents, the role of tourism marketing, the formation of "city brands", etc.

Urban Space and Literature Studies (6 hours)

Silvia Ross, University College Cork

Monday Feb 23rd 2015, 9.30am-0.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Monday Feb 23rd 2015, 2.30am-5.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

This part of the seminar will concern i. theories on space and place from geographical and literary perspectives
ii. literary and filmic texts which exemplify spaces of alterity (based on race, ethnicity, gender or class) and conflict (both manifest and structural).

Designed Space and Lived Space (6 hours)

Giulio Giovannoni, Università di Firenze

Tuesday Feb 24th 2015, 9.30am-0.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Tuesday Feb 24th 2015, 2.30-5.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

This section of the seminar will focus on the relationship between designed space and lived space starting from the assumption that commodities, like persons, have social lives (Appadurai 1986). Empirical evidence shows that designed space often conflicts with the way its users project their values, their cultures, and more generally their lives into space. Although there is no general theory on the relationship between designed space and lived space, there are some general readings which work as an introduction to the topic and/or as a methodological framework. The issue will be then developed through a certain number of cases at different scales which will be also used to discuss and compare different methodological approaches.

Urban Space as Art Fake (3 hours)

Andrea Mecacci, Università di Firenze

Wednesday February 25th 2015, 2.30-5.30pm, Room 7M, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

What is the role of art work in the frame of diffuse aesthetics? Is it possible to conceive urban space as a great copy, a huge art fake? It is evident that aestheticization processes occurred in the last thirty years have changed the status of the work of art. In fact it is not accidental that the discomfort caused by these changes is reflected in a list of negative-meaning metaphors trying to identify the ways art has attempted to redefine its mimetic status: «de-definition of art» (Harold Rosenberg), «dematerialization of the art object» (Lucy Lippard), «aesthetics of disappearance» (Paul Virilio), «vanishing point of art» (Jean Baudrillard), «art in a gaseous state» (Yves Michaud), and «philosophical disenfranchisement of art» (Arthur Danto). Also urban space takes an active part in the relationship between the crisis of the artistic (the artwork) and the explosion of the aesthetic

(diffuse aesthetics), a scenario that certifies the horizon of contemporaneity and definitively dismisses the equation aesthetic-art that marked the thought of nineteenth-century, in a more problematic way the thought of twentieth-century modernism, and in a form still recognizable the thought of postmodernism.

Hyperreality and Urban Space (3 hours)

Giulio Giovannoni

Friday Feb 27th 2015, 9.30am–0.30pm, Room 7M, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Hyperreality is considered a typical feature of post-modernity and can be defined as the inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality. The concept of hyperreality can be applied to urban space in the sense that in many instances the spaces of myth and of imagination end up producing real spaces. This often makes the distinction between authentic and fake, real and hyperreal, blurred and difficult to draw. This section of the seminar will briefly review the theoretical debate on hyperreality and try to draw a link between hyperreality and the production of urban space through a certain number of case studies. Cases will be considered critically, emphasizing aspects as the relationship between the production of hyperreal space and social purification, hyperreality and everyday life, and similar.

The urban rescripting of space in Fascist Era Tuscan Towns (3 hours)

Medina Lasansky, Cornell University

Wednesday March 11th – 2.30-5.30 pm, Nardini Bookstore, Le Murate Complex

Over the course of the twenty-two years of PNF rule there was a symbiotic relationship between urban space and Fascist politics. Of particular interest is the way in which urban landscape was used to stage history for the purpose of establishing the parameters of modern Fascist culture. Urban renewal projects were employed to make explicit the associations between past and present rule. Medieval town halls were restored and converted for government use. Piazzas in Arezzo, Florence, and Siena became sites for redesigned civic festivals. In each case displaying the past provided the means to legitimize Mussolini's claims on the present. (The lecture will be preceded by the presentation of Medina Lasansky's book 'Renaissance Perfected' by Richard Ingersoll, and by a discussion of the book with Giacomo Pirazzoli and with Francesco Collotti.)

Identity, History, and the Production of Urban Space (3 hours)

Giulio Giovannoni

Wednesday March 18th – 2.30pm-5.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Narratives about community, history, and identity are powerful forces which are often used to create the preconditions for the production of urban space. However, both the concept of community and that of identity are two problematic categories which can easily be misappropriated for questionable political and social goals. The urban rescripting of space in fascist era Tuscan towns studied by Prof. Lasansky is a great example of such misappropriation.

This section of the seminar will provide a theoretical framework aimed at reconsidering the concepts of community and identity through the review of some major theoretical contributions on the topic. The case of Barcelona will be then discussed, where urban design was connected in the last 150 years to the assertion of a Catalan national identity. This happened in complex ways which should prevent us from drawing too general conclusions on the relationship between history, identity, and urban design.

Introduction to urban research (6 hours)

Giulio Giovannoni

Wednesday April 8th – 2.30-5.30pm, Room 7M, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Wednesday April 15th – 2.30-5.30pm, Room 7M, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

This section of the seminar will provide an introduction to urban research, touching issues as the nature of applied urban research, the levels of analysis, research design, data collection, and the reporting of research.

Museality Versus Reality (3 hours)

Richard Ingersoll, Syracuse University in Florence

Wednesday April 22nd – 2.30-5.30pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

During the past 30 years the number of museums in the world has increased exponentially. Last year China inaugurated 450 new museums. As many as 10,000 new museums have opened in the US since 2000. While Italy cannot keep up with that pace, almost every major city has inaugurated at least one new museum during the past decade. The increase in museums has been the privileged program for high-style architecture--coaxing Kenneth Frampton to surmise that it is a form of compensation for the ugliness of contemporary cities. While museums have cropped up everywhere and for any number of subjects (shoes, literature, and of course art) cities are being managed increasingly like museums. In this investigation I will try to locate the reality factor in regards to the rise of museality.

Urban Space as a Contested Space (2 hours)

Giulio Giovannoni

Wednesday April 29th – 2.30-5.30 pm, Aula Pietre, Palazzo di San Clemente, Via Micheli 2

Urban space is often the terrain of encounter--clash between competing users of public spaces. Competition and conflict may depend on differences in age, social status, race, culture, sexual inclination, among others. Mostly the categories of 'renewal' and 'decay' are used according to the interests of particular groups. Inevitably urban design is in the benefit of certain groups and to the detriment of others. However the fight is generally masked by the rhetoric/ideology of decay and renewal. This section of the seminar will question, through a wide range of historical and contemporary examples, the very foundations of urban design.

Urban Space and Everyday Life (3 hours)

Margaret Crawford, UC Berkeley

(seminar time to be scheduled in June 2015)

Urban Space as Heterotopia (3 hours)

Marco Cenzatti, UC Berkeley

(seminar time to be scheduled in June 2015)

Space and Society in Urban Economics: The Italian Tradition (3 hours)

Patrizia Lattarulo, Irpet

(seminar time to be scheduled in June 2015)

5 – ASSESSMENT AND REQUIREMENTS

Each student will: participate to class discussion of readings on a weekly basis; write a 5000-words research paper on the seminar topics. Good English reading and writing skills are required.

6 -EVALUATION AND GRADING SYSTEM

Passing the seminar requires:

- 1) Participating actively to class discussion of readings (attendance is mandatory);
- 2) Writing a 5000 words research paper on the seminar topics.

7 -ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR

Class participation is mandatory.

8 -ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Should issues of academic dishonesty arise (plagiarism and so on), the teacher will refer to the Degree Course Director and to the Degree Course Council, which will adopt appropriate measures.

SEMINARIO "CROSS-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON URBAN SPACE"

WEEK	WEEKDAY	DAY	HOUR	TOPIC	LECTURER	HOURS	ROOM	ADDRESS
1st	Friday	20-feb-15	14.30-17.30	Narrating cities: strategies of urban interpretation	Davide Papotti	3	7m	Via Micheli 2
1st	Monday	23-feb-15	9.30-12.30	Urban space and literature studies - part 1	Silvia Ross	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
1st	Monday	23-feb-15	14.30-17.30	Urban space and literature studies - part 2	Silvia Ross	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
1st	Tuesday	24-feb-15	9.30-12.30	Designed space vs lived space - part 1	Giulio Giovannoni	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
1st	Tuesday	24-feb-15	14.30-17.30	Designed space vs lived space - part 2	Giulio Giovannoni	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
1st	Wednesday	25-feb-15	14.30-17.30	Urban Space as Art Fake	Andrea Mencacci	3	7m	Via Micheli 2
1st	Friday	27-feb-15	9.30-12.30	Hyperreality and urban space	Giulio Giovannoni	3	7m	Via Micheli 2
3rd	Wednesday	11-mar-15	14.30-17.30	The urban rescripting of fascist era Tuscan Towns	Medina Lasansky	3	Nardini Bookstore	Le Murate
4th	Wednesday	18-mar-15	14.30-17.30	Identity, history, and the production of urban space	Giulio Giovannoni	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
7th	Wednesday	08-apr-15	14.30-17.30	Introduction to urban research - part 1	Giulio Giovannoni	3	7m	Via Micheli 2
8th	Wednesday	15-apr-15	14.30-17.30	Introduction to urban research - part 2	Giulio Giovannoni	3	7m	Via Micheli 2
9th	Wednesday	22-apr-15	14.30-17.30	Museality versus Reality	Richard Ingersoll	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
10th	Wednesday	29-apr-15	14.30-17.30	Urban Space as Contested Space	Giulio Giovannoni	3	Aula Pietre	Via Micheli 2
16th	Wednesday	to be scheduled		Urban space and everyday life	Margaret Crawford	3	to be decided	
16th	Wednesday	to be scheduled		Urban space as heterotopia	Marco Cenzatti	3	to be decided	
17th	Wednesday	to be scheduled		Space and society in urban economics: the Italian tradition	Patrizia Lattarulo	3	to be decided	

Total hours

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