Semiotics of Post-Communist Spaces (Bucharest, 11–14 Jun 25)

University of Bucharest, Romania, Jun 11–14, 2025
Deadline: Apr 14, 2025

Cristina Albu, University of Missouri - Kansas City

Reading Urban Strata: Semiotics of Post-Communist Spaces.

This conference seeks to examine the relationship between time, architecture, and society by adopting a durational perspective on the construction and interpretation of post-communist urban spaces. How can architecture be read in depth? How can we deconstruct the ways in which different layers of history and materialities intertwine while also accounting for the complex tensions and interconnections between them?

Doreen Massey proposes thinking of space as dynamic and inextricably connected to time. Building on Henri Bergson's concept of duration and continuity, while challenging the separation of space and time, Massey advances three key propositions: that space is constituted through interrelations, from the global to the intimate; that it is the sphere of multiplicity, where distinct trajectories coexist; and that it is always under construction, perpetually open to change. Drawing from these ideas, the conference will explore the plurality of experiences and narratives fostered by post-communist spaces, focusing on the intersection between the material, the personal, and the political.

Post-communist cities, in which architecture has often strategically been employed by the communist regime to reshape concepts of heritage and identity, provide a unique context for thinking about the interconnectedness of time and space. Many of them bear jarringly visible marks of power struggles, economic shifts, political and environmental changes. The architecture of Bucharest offers an ideal setting for investigating the dynamic and conflicting production of city spaces, being marked by striking discrepancies in terms of style and urban signage.

We invite researchers and PhD students to submit papers that explore the intersection of architecture, memory, and society in post-communist spaces. We encourage submissions that engage with the following themes:
- The Layering of Time and Memory in Urban Spaces: What visual and material traces of past political regimes are encapsulated in architecture? How does their presence influence contemporary perceptions of the present and the past?
- The Semiotics of Post-Communist Architecture: What meanings do architectural forms carry? How do people living in and around them make sense of their histories?
- The Social Life of Architecture: What new layers of meaning do people add to post-communist spaces through their affective and cognitive engagement with them? How does the everyday life

of these spaces (re)define them?
- The Role of Architecture in Shaping Collective Identity: How do urban spaces reflect, challenge, or reshape national and local identities in post-communist contexts?
- Comparative Studies: What shared codes of signification can be noted across different cultural spaces which carry the imprint of communist ideology? What are the differences between them in terms of urban planning, architectural discourse, and lived experience?
While the conference focuses on East European post-communist spaces, we are open to submissions addressing other geopolitical contexts which offer insightful points of comparison.

We are particularly interested in creative and alternative forms of presenting and sharing research on the multilayered history of urban spaces. In addition to traditional paper presentations, we welcome performance talks, site-specific interventions, and other innovative formats that engage audiences in interactive and experiential ways.

Submission Guidelines
- Abstracts (300 words) should be submitted along with a brief biography (150 words).
- Please indicate if you are proposing an alternative format of presentation (e.g., performance talk, intervention, etc.).
- The submission deadline is Monday, April 14.
- Submissions should be sent to: eliza-cristina.patrascu@s.unibuc.ro

Reference:
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