

Spatialities: topography and/versus topology in contemporary spatial thinking

Organizers

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Description

The cartographic and calculative rationalities that stand behind the spatial understanding of modernity are well established in the history of the geographical thought. Recent works by Gunnar Olsson, Stuart Elden and Franco Farinelli have critically deconstructed the complex topographical genealogies of modern Western spatiality. An intense debate is consequently taking place in geography around the rethinking and refoundation of the very basic categories of the discipline: territory, boundaries, borders, scale, network, place. Critical geopolitics has contributed to the renewal of borders studies, highlighting the liquid, ambiguous, and uncertain status of boundaries, rather than their disappearance in a 'borderless world'. Elden's recent book *Terror and Territory* has radically reworked the key-notion of territory, well beyond the limits of its Westphalian account. Marxist geographers (among others Erik Swingedouw, Neil Smith and Neil Brenner) have advocated a radical rethinking of scale, recognising it being a cultural, social, and political artefact, rather than a spatial fixity. More radically, some authors have praised for a more thorough demise of modern spatial jargons altogether, advocating 'flat ontologies' (see the debate initiated by Sallie Marston, John Paul Jones III and Keith Woodward) and, recently, a deep 'topological twist' in our understanding of contemporary spatiality (see for instance the recent special issue of *Dialogues in Human Geography*).

Twentieth century philosophy played a major role in the rethinking of spatial categories, in order to conceive the (political but not only) contemporary processes of subjectification in spatial terms, while challenging the traditional primacy of time: French thinkers like Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Henri Lefebvre, Jean-Luc Nancy and, more recently, Etienne Balibar and Bruno Latour; Italian philosophers like Toni Negri, Roberto Esposito and Giorgio Agamben; and German theorists like Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt and Peter Sloterdijk have largely influenced both the impact of a 'spatial turn' beyond academic geography and the post-topographical turn in geography itself.

The present session aims at contributing to the ongoing debate by providing an opportunity for further interdisciplinary discussion on the use of spatial concepts in contemporary geography, philosophy and, more broadly, social and cultural studies.

Contributions on the following themes are welcomed:

- Histories and genealogies of spatiality.
- Philosophies and policies of the space.
- Reshaping concepts: scale, space, place, network, territory, region.
- Urban spaces and new spaces of citizenship.
- The topography/topology debate in different disciplinary traditions.
- Biopolitics and spatiality.

[Read the abstracts](#)

Slot 1

Sub-title: Philosophies of geographies

Chair: Paolo Giaccaria

Presentation n. 1

Title: Spatiality as form of the *Verständnis*darstellung. A Kantian point of view.

Author(s): Tommaso Morawski

Presentation n. 2

Title: The Geographical Desire. Rethinking Spatiality through the Work of Emmanuel Lévinas

Author(s): Chiara Giubilato

Presentation n. 3

Title: The multifaceted ambiguity of cosmopolitanism(s): between dialogism and conflict

Author(s): Dario Gentili, Paolo Giaccaria

Slot 2

Sub-title: Geographies of philosophies

Chair: Dario Gentili

Discussant: Claudio Minca

Presentation n. 1

Title: Territorio, regione integrale, confine geografico: Geography and sovereign territorial state in Italy (1890-1940)

Author(s): Matteo Proto

Presentation n. 2

Title: The Becoming Metropolis: Undoing Centrality through Assemblage Theory

Author(s): Richard Smith

Presentation n. 3

Title: The Discreet Charm of Networks. Networks as individuating milieux

Author(s): Mario Neve

Session code: S29