

# Urban Space and the Senses

An International Conference of the "Cross-Disciplinary Urban Space" Network  
9-10 May 2020

University of California at Berkeley, Department of Architecture

Organizers:

Margaret Crawford (University of California at Berkeley), Giulio Giovannoni (University of Florence) and Silvia Ross (University College Cork)

Keynote speaker: Niall Atkinson, University of Chicago

## Call for papers

Although historically dominated by sight-based approaches, for some decades now urban studies have also been engaged with the study of space through sound, touch, smell, and taste. The concepts of soundscape, tactile space, smellscape, foodscape, initially developed by a few scholars from various backgrounds, have pervaded a number of fields such as architecture, planning, anthropology, social sciences, historical studies, literary studies, and art history, to name but a few. Social, cultural, and environmental features of space are in fact reflected in all sensorial landscapes. Ecological and environmental crises are legible in noises and smells, as well as through sight. Social and spatial conflict is reflected in language, music, noise, olfactory contaminations produced by food. A multisensory approach to the study and design of urban space appears to be more and more necessary.

Studying urban space with the five senses inevitably leads us to transcend spatial stereotypes through a direct empirical and bodily approach: apparently dystopian places can reveal unexpected sonic virtues, just as picture-postcard landscapes can in fact be an utter mess for their other-than-visual senses. When used in historical research, a multisensory approach to the study of space can have a demystifying power, offering representations of material life which are often much more realistic than established historical representations. These are just some of the reasons that make an interdisciplinary debate on the study, representation and design of urban space through the senses particularly promising.

As part of the 'Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Urban Space' network, this international conference investigates the ways in which different disciplines engage with urban space and the senses, in areas ranging from architecture, urban planning, literature, film studies, geography, history, linguistics, philosophy, art history, sociology, drama and theatre studies, anthropology, among others.

Topics of investigation could include, among others:

- representation and mapping of sensorial landscapes
- urban musical landscapes
- sensorial urban analysis and walking
- urban conflict and the senses

- sensescapes of migration
- sensorial landscapes and health
- sensorial urban history
- sensorial architectural history
- architectural/urban design and (dis)ability
- linguistic landscapes, migration and conflict
- multisensory park and landscape design
- retail, consumption, and sensorial design
- religion, design and the senses
- gender, sexuality and the sensing of urban space
- synaesthesia and the urban landscape
- speaking in tongues: urban space and the voice
- 'under my skin': tactile representations of urban space
- foodscapes and the urban geography of taste

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES** The 'Urban Space and the Senses' conference has four major goals:

1. To advance the debate on urban space and the senses from different disciplinary perspectives, taking into account their mutual influence;
2. To explore theoretical perspectives, as well as theoretically-informed case studies on urban space and the senses in a comparative context,
3. To enhance critical awareness about the relevance of sensorial approaches in urban analysis and design;
4. To extend the network of scholars interested in investigating urban space from different disciplinary perspectives already initiated with the seminar "Crossdisciplinary Perspectives on Urban Space" held in the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence in the 2014-17 spring semesters and the conferences organized in Florence (2016; 2018) and in Cork (2017; 2019).

**SUBMISSION PROCESS:**

The organizers invite submissions for 20-minute presentations to be delivered in English. Please send a 300-word abstract, contact details and a brief bio by **Friday, 15 January 2020** to the conference email address [crossdisciplinaryurbanspace@gmail.com](mailto:crossdisciplinaryurbanspace@gmail.com)

Conference web site: <https://crossdisciplinaryurbanspace.com/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/crossdisciplinaryurbanspace/>

**CONFERENCE FEE:**

The conference is entirely self-financed. To cover operating costs a conference registration fee of 150\$ will be required.

The organizers anticipate that a peer-reviewed collection of selected essays, to be published with an academic press, will result from the conference.