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Semiotics of Space / Space of Semiotics
Sémiotique de l'espace / Espace de la Sémiotique
Semiótica del espacio / Espacio de la semiótica
Semiótica do espaço / Espaços da Semiótica

edited by
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To Laurent

Table of Contents | Table des matières Tabla de contenidos | Tabela de conteúdos

- 15 Introduction: Semiotics of Space / Space of Semiotics
Isabel Marcos
- 19 Introduction : Sémiotique de l'espace / Espace de la
Sémiotique
Isabel Marcos
- 25 Introducción: Semiótica del espacio / Espacio de la semiótica
Isabel Marcos
- 31 Introdução: Semiótica do espaço / Espaços da Semiótica
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I.

Semiotics and systems of value Sémiotique et systèmes de valeur La semiótica y los sistemas de valor Semiótica e sistemas de valor

- 39 Relations among narrative actants modalizing the enunciatee:
a study of Ramayan 3392 A. D.
Rafael Lenzi
- 53 Seducing from a distance: fortune and comme des garçons
Valeria Burgio & Davide Fornari
- 69 La « futilité » de l'architecture au 20ème siècle
Eleni Palaiologou

- 79 La peinture décroissée: la série Brooklyn Illuminations de
Nomi Kaplan
Lynn Bannon
- 89 Sémiotique, valeurs et civilisation surréaliste
Andrea d'Urso
- 101 Prolegómenos para una política de la proxemia
Mariano Dagatti
- 117 Câmaras y espacio visual en escena : las câmaras de Vicente
Colomar y María Jerez
Sergio Cabrerizo
- 129 O estigma como estratégia de dissuasão : a propósito de um
anúncio de publicidade
Eduardo Camilo
- 157 Arte e Espaço : as invenções e representações das paisagens
Maria Lúcia Kern

II.

Semiotics and structuration of visual productions
Sémiotique et structuration des productions visuelles
Semiótica y estructuración de las producciones visuales
Semiótica e estruturação das produções visuais

- 175 Expect the unexpected : Paul Virilio's "Museum of
Accidents"
Catarina Patrício
- 185 Pombaline Downtown : the symbology of space grammar
Célia Belim
- 201 Construcciones espaciales en el cine
Mabel Tassara

- 217 Semiótica e camuflagem
 Paolo Fabbri
- 231 Aceleração e desaceleração : classicismo e barroco nas hqs
 (bds)
 Carolina Tomasi
- 245 São Paulo na mídia impressa
 Simone da Silva
- 263 O texto publicitário – New Holland
 José Augusto Gonçalves
- 279 Passado e presente: espaços do Rio de Janeiro
 Eduardo Maya & Monica Magalhães

III.

Semiotics and cyberspace
Sémiotique et cyberspace
Semiótica y ciberespacio
Semiótica e ciberespaço

- 295 Hikikomori : social withdrawal in contemporary Japan
 Cecilia Saito
- 309 (Cyber)space of relationships : power and subjectivity in
 network society
 Paolo Vignola
- 321 Social networks and peeping
 Tutku Akter
- 333 Espace du sujet (ou corps) et cyberspace
 Françoise Leflaive

- 345 Espaces transposes : la mise en scène de productions
médiatiques et artistiques sur Internet
Laure Bolka
- 361 Explorer l'espace numérique. Entre signes et engagement
corporel : le risque des métaphores
Annette Béguin–Verbrugge
- 375 Arte pública digital e publicidade : um novo espaço
relacional?
Helena Pires & Martinho Moura
- 391 A retórica visual barroca e neo barroca: linguagens, cultura e
formatos persuasivos na cibercultura
Lourdes Gabrielli & Jose Silva

IV.

New Spaces and Morphologies Nouveaux espaces et morphologies Nuevos espacios y morfologías Novos espaços e morfologias

- 407 Urban Morphogenesis and Semiogenesis: Analysis of Four
Harbor Towns
Wolfgang Wildgen
- 427 The semiotics of cultural landscape / space
Olga Lavrenova
- 435 Objet et projet : apories de la représentation
José Gorjão Jorge
- 445 Espacios y metamorfosis en La soledad era esto de Juan José
Millás
Stefania Imperiale

- 455 Algumas noções sobre o ritmo do espaço
Paula Souza & Alpha Simonetti
- 465 Mutações visuais : da Musgueira à Alta de Lisboa
Gonçalo Antunes & Nuno Soare
- 477 De uma representação de Michel Serres : análise de uma
representação na obra As Origens da Geometria
Manuel Albino
- 491 “Casas – Uma” e “Casas Sagradas” : “Uma–Lulik” dos
timorenses como espaços de vivência e de ritualização
Vicente Paulino

V.
Spaces of actual experiences
Espaces vécus
Espacios de experiencias vivenciales
Espaços de vivência

- 509 Past with poetic license
Slobodan Paich
- 523 Space as if it were empty. Emptiness
Daina Teters
- 537 The postcolonial tourist practice: contested visual spaces of
memory and identity
Frauke Wiegand
- 549 The metaphor of the Iberian nation : looking into José
Saramago’s Jangada de Pedra
Margarida Rendeiro
- 559 The designer as interpreter of the city’s surface : Friedrich
Hegel’s, the epidermis of buildings and liquid modernity
Liliana Soares, Dante Donegani & Fátima Pombo

- 573 Towards a semiotics of light : from physical space to spaces of
representation
Sílvia Pinto
- 587 Una intervención para la interacción : textos que se
transforman en espacios comunicacionales
María Retrepo
- 601 Consumo em São Paulo : vitrina das sociabilidades
metropolitanas
Jenara Lopes, Adriana Baggio, Graziela Rodrigues, Luciana
Cotrim, Sílvia Alencar, Sylvia Demetresco & Tatiana Pereira
- 612 O acontecimento jornalístico e a banca de revista
Paulo Vaz & Vanessa Trindade
- 623 Semiótica e desenho : revalorizando a experiência
Lino Fernandes & Raquel Pelay

Introduction : Semiotics of Space / Space of Semiotics

ISABEL MARCOS¹

The present book constitutes the third delivery of the whole gathering of contributions presented at the first European Regional Congress of the International Association of Visual Semiotics (AISV–IAVS)². This congress, under the theme “Semiotics of Space / Spaces of Semiotics”, was held at Lisbon in September 2011. It was successfully devoted to the study of spatial phenomena envisaged as a process of signification, that relates to architecture, to geography, to urbanism, to communication, to design, to plastic arts, to cyber culture, to performance, to television, and the cinema, to literature, or to marketing.

The first volume presented by Degrés (n. 153, Spring 2013) was devoted to *The Space–Time Semiotics against the acceleration of history*, gathering a total of 8 articles. It brought to light the important changes that spatial phenomena experienced in the last centuries: our time, the time of “masses and machines” (Ernst Jünger), also became that of generalized communication in a society that has radically changed scale. If the power of the visual channel already allowed an apparently immediate apperception of the phenomena and their spatial treatment, the acceleration of the processes of exchange has undoubtedly reinforced this fundamental trait.

¹ This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project “UIDB / 04647/2020” of CICS.NOVA – Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais da Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

² This work could not have been achieved without the support of the scientific committee that was willing to undertake the task of “peer reviewing”. Unable to publish everything, this scientific committee had to choose forty–two articles as being the most representative of those presented at the Congress of Lisbon, we wish to thank them warmly for their work. I would also like to express my gratitude towards the Executive Committee that worked unceasingly to enable this book to see the light of day. Many thanks also to the elected members of the bureau (from 2010 to 2019) of the International Association of Visual Semiotics (AISV–IAVS) who gave me support all along the publication these acts of the congress.

The second one was a double volume, published also by Degrès (n. 156–157, Winter 2013 – Spring 2014), and devoted to the cognitive and morphological aspects of space, through the presentation of a total of 13 articles. Most of our social, intellectual and sensorial experiences, from the more elementary to the most elaborated ones, are in fact linked to lived space (where one meets the other, fleeing from danger, grasping an object, feeding oneself, and observing a phenomenon?). It is thus about examining the perceptible interactions between the subject and its environment, and to observe how spaces where situations and events are thus created become the epistemic support of knowledge and experience, and cling to questions such as these: does physical space, notably on what is visually perceived, have the same structure as social space, territorial space, or that of our abstractions? How are the fabricated spaces — theatrical, fictional, pictorial, sculptural, architectural, etc. — the expression of our spatial imagination? What is the contribution of cognitive semiotics to the understanding of spatial meaning and of its visual hypostasis? How did the new modalities of seeing lead to the evolution of semiotic functions?

Although cognitive currents have spectacularly developed semiotics, remarkable methodological advances are also attributable to the morphological approach, that has been revealed to be performing in quite diverse fields such as biology, mathematics, urbanism, dynamic analysis of systems in social sciences, history, or the philosophy of art. The Lisbon Congress demonstrated how a morphodynamic semiotic enables us to address issues related to “*the urbanisation of real time and the disurbanisation of real space*”.

The present book published by *Aracne Editrice* gathers 46 articles, organized in 4 languages, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. These are articulated around five themes:

1. Semiotics and systems of value

How does “*the urbanisation of real time and the disurbanisation of real space*” become visually explicit in each of our domains (architecture, geography, urbanism, communications, design, plastic arts, cyber culture, performance, television, cinema, literature, marketing, etc.)? The management of these new spaces and of these new visualities, do

they not suppose a questioning of the systems of values on a planetary scale?

2. Semiotics and structuration of visual productions

The new paradigm of the contemporary city, does it ask for new grammars of space? As soon as chronological staggering —past, present, future—, a necessary condition for progressive structuration of space, is diluted in instantaneity, must we not reinvent, for this new city, new modalities of structuration? “Real” space is it not brought back from now on to a structure of surface, without memory, without social stratification, without biodiversity?

3. Semiotics and cyberspace

The *media* who exploit the interconnected computer network create new types of space: spaces of communication, of projection, of staging, of constituting current events... It is therefore about studying the way a given culture is more and more shaped by media spaces. Does the cyberspace introduce different parameters from those which organise real space, and is it from now on pertinent to elaborate semiotics of cyberspace? Can we associate cyberspatial objects with objects of the world, like the clouds and the climate, to make of it the theme of artistic performances?

4. New Spaces and Morphologies

If we consider the founding works of morphology (Goethe, Saint-Hillaire, d'Arcy Thompson, Warburg, Gombrich, Thom) the impact of the morphological approach in such diverse fields as in biology, mathematics, urbanism, analysis of the dynamics in the systems of social science, history or the philosophy of art and if we consider also the impact of other innovative currents, like morphodynamic semiotics and neurosciences, which take as an aim the perceptive interaction between the subject and its environment,... How will the look upon morphodynamic semiotics enable us to approach the questions linked to urbanism of real time and to the disurbanisation of real space?

5. Spaces of actual experiences

The greater part of our social, intellectual and sensitive experiences, from the most elementary to the most elaborated, are linked to *locative* space: where to meet the other, flee the danger, seize an object, feed oneself, to observe a phenomenon? ... How do these different *locative* and event filled spaces become the *epistemic* support of knowledge and experience? Does the physical space, notably in what is perceived visually, the same structure as the social and territorial space or that of our abstractions? The “*built*” spaces — theatrical, fictional, pictorial, sculptural, architectural, etc. — are they the expression of our *imaginary* cognition, of our mental representations themselves? What is the contribution of cognitive semiotics to the comprehension of the spatial meaning and of its visual changes? How could the experience, the spatial phenomenology, and the new modalities of seeing have given rise to the evolution of semiotic functions? And what is their relationship with the phenomenology of time?

6. Conclusion

The outcomes of the Lisbon European Regional Congress 2011 include a total of 67 articles — numbers 6, 7, and 8 of the “Library Visio” — and they are an undoubtable and powerful contribution to the birth and development of new grammars of space, one of the tasks that the International Association of Visual Semiotics has set itself to achieve since its foundation, a quarter of a century ago.

In the name of the AISV–IAVS, as invited editor by *Aracne Editrice*, I wish to thank particularly its Director of Collection, Tiziana Migliore, for the publication of the works presented at this first European Regional Congress of Visual Semiotics.

Introduction : Sémiotique de l'espace / Espace de la Sémiotique

ISABEL MARCOS¹

Le présent ouvrage constitue la troisième livraison « d'un ensemble rassemblant les contributions présentées au premier congrès régional européen de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique Visuelle (AISV–IAVS)². Ce congrès, qui s'est tenu à Lisbonne en septembre 2011, avait pour thème « Sémiotique de l'espace / Espaces de la sémiotique ». C'est avec succès qu'il s'est consacré à l'étude des phénomènes spatiaux envisagés comme processus de signification, qu'ils relèvent de l'architecture, de la géographie, de l'urbanisme, de la communication, du design, des arts plastiques, de la cyberculture, de la performance, de la télévision et du cinéma, de la littérature, ou du marketing.

Le premier volume accueilli par Degrés (n. 153, printemps 2013) était consacré à *La sémiotique de l'espace–temps face à l'accélération de l'histoire*, réunissant un total de huit articles. Il a permis de rendre compte des importantes mutations que les phénomènes spatiaux ont connues au cours des derniers siècles : notre temps, temps des « masses et des machines » (Ernst Jünger) est aussi devenu celui d'une communication généralisée dans une société qui a radicalement changé d'échelle. Si la puissance du canal visuel autorisait déjà une

¹ Ce travail a été financé par des fonds nationaux à travers FCT – Fondation pour la Science et la Technologie, I.P., dans le cadre du projet « UIDB / 04647/2020 » du CICS.NOVA – Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais da Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

² Cet ouvrage n'aurait pas pu être mené à bien sans le soutien du comité scientifique qui ont bien voulu faire le travail de *peerreviewing*. Ne pouvant tout publier, ce comité de scientifique a dû choisir quarante deux articles, comme les plus représentatives de ceux qui ont été présentés au Congrès de Lisbonne, nous tenons à les remercier vivement pour leur travail. J'aimerais exprimer aussi ma gratitude envers le comité de exécutif qui on travailler sans relâche pour que ce livre puisse voir le jour. Un grand merci aux membres du bureau élus (de 2010 à 2019) de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique Visuelle (AISV–IAVS) qui m'ont soutenue tout au long de la publication de ces actes du congrès.

aperception apparemment immédiate des phénomènes et leur traitement spatialisé, l'accélération des processus d'échange a sans nul doute renforcé ce trait fondamental.

Le deuxième est un double volume publié lui aussi par Degrés (n. 156–157, hiver 2013 – printemps 2014), consacré aux aspects cognitifs et morphologiques de l'espace, réunissant un total de treize articles. La plupart de nos expériences sociales, intellectuelles et sensorielles, des plus élémentaires aux plus élaborées, sont en effet liées à un espace vécu (où rencontrer l'autre, fuir le danger, saisir un objet, se nourrir, observer un phénomène ?) Il s'agissait donc d'examiner les interactions perceptuelles entre le sujet et son milieu, et d'observer comment les espaces situationnels et événementiels ainsi créés deviennent le support épistémique de la connaissance et de l'expérience, et de s'attacher à des questions comme celles-ci : l'espace physique, notamment en ce qu'il est perçu visuellement, a-t-il la même structure que l'espace social, territorial, ou que celui de nos abstractions ? Comment les espaces fabriqués — théâtral, fictionnel, pictural, sculptural, architectural, etc. — sont-ils l'expression de notre imaginaire spatial ? Quel est l'apport d'une sémiotique cognitive à la compréhension du sens spatial et de ses hypostases visuelles ? Comment les nouvelles modalités du voir ont-elles pu déboucher sur l'évolution des fonctions sémiotiques ? Si les courants cognitivistes ont spectaculairement fécondé la sémiotique, des avancées méthodologiques remarquables sont aussi attribuables à l'approche morphologique, qui s'est révélée performante dans des champs aussi divers que la biologie, les mathématiques, l'urbanisme, l'analyse de la dynamique des systèmes dans les sciences sociales, l'histoire ou la philosophie de l'art. Le Congrès de Lisbonne aura fait voir comment une sémiotique morphodynamique permettait d'aborder les questions liées à l'urbanisation du temps réel et à la désurbanisation de l'espace réel.

Le présent ouvrage publié chez *l'Aracne Editrice*, réunissant un total de quarante-six articles, organisés selon quatre langues — l'anglais, le français, l'espagnol et le portugais — articule une réflexion autour de cinq thématiques :