

ambiances

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INTERNATIONAL NETWORK |



UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

Ambiances, tomorrow

3rd International Congress on Ambiances

Volos, Greece: 21 - 24 September 2016

<http://ambiances2016.arch.uth.gr>

This third Congress will attempt to take stock of research into, and applications based around the notion of ambiance both in the scientific sphere and with regard to the future of design and artistic creation.

For the past 40 years, a large number of researchers, designers and artists in Europe and throughout the world have been focusing on the issue of architectural and urban ambiances. The increasing and enduring importance of the International Ambiances Network demonstrates the topicality of this whole area on a theoretical, critical, practical, experimental and artistic level, as well as from a political, historical and learning perspective. The output of the network members and numerous research teams tackling ambiance-related issues attests to this notion's ability to re-examine both the knowledge and the production of our living spaces. It constitutes a response to contemporary societal issues such as environmental challenges related to climate change and energy efficiency.

While the first Congress held in Grenoble in 2008 was all about forging a community and taking stock of research and practices in creating architectural and urban ambiances (*Faire une ambiance*, dir. Jean-François Augoyard), the second Congress held in Montreal in 2012 was able to point up their practical – and even praxeological dimensions, be they of an architectural, urban, social, aesthetic, artistic, political, technical, environmental or pedagogical nature (*Ambiances in action*, dir. Jean-Paul Thibaud et Daniel Siret). This second congress was therefore useful for rationally mapping out the uses and fields where the notion is at work.

The Third Congress will be used to circumscribe the notion of ambiance (or atmosphere) in a dynamic prospective and demonstrate how it can become an operator in transforming our habitats, cities and societies. So, The future of ambiances can be analysed according to a three-fold perspective in terms of its pragmatic, theoretical and prospective dimensions.

A mature notion with constantly renewed usage (pragmatic dimension)

While the notion of ambiance has demonstrated its capacity to forge an international community and move knowledge and expertise forward, the time has come to analyse these developments, continue showcasing achievements and analyse the whole future of the concept. In other words, the Second Congress provided an answer to "What use do we currently make of the notion of ambiance?" We propose that the Third Congress be used to round out this question with another one, namely, what uses are currently emerging that enable us to envisage and design tomorrow's architecture, city and regions through the prism of the notion of ambiances.

Numerous researchers and designers draw upon applications from disciplines separated by strict boundaries to design spaces and conduct experiments. The very idea of the designer and subject-agent blend into one insofar as expertise is increasingly widely shared. Contemporary applications in both the social sciences and design, as well as the emergence of digital applications and on-board technologies are also an invitation to re-examine the split between analysis, project and production. As such, the very question of translating ambiances (between senses, disciplines, actors and languages) needs to be tackled head-on.

New unprecedented positioning and hybridation (theoretical dimension)

Changing uses and applications of ambiance-related technologies are daily testimony to increasing inter-disciplinary hybridation. What disciplines are currently focused on the notion of ambiance? How can we redefine their contours, fundamentals, tools and representations? How, where and towards what end do we currently perceive notions of ambiance and atmosphere? The – essentially inter-disciplinary – notion of ambiance has led to an increasing degree of porosity in uses between disciplines and their stakeholders as well as a similar range of experiments.

In particular, we will examine these developments with regard to a number of fertile research fields: architectural theory and criticism, research into urban and territorial conditions, research into the built environment, and the open-ended field of ecology (ecology of perception, ecology of attention and social ecology).

Evolving ambiances – the world yesterday, today and tomorrow (prospective dimension)

The world is changing, both in its built forms and in ways of living in, and inhabiting them. Economics and politics can change radically and sometimes violently in situations we had considered to be stable. The climate and the environment are changing. Territories are being transformed and day-to-day living spaces are undoubtedly undergoing major change. In both the private and the public sphere, sensorial space is being transformed both in appearance and in its forms of activation. There is an increasing degree of crossover between digital and physical space. Changing techniques and know-how renew the ways in which ambiances appear and how they are perceived.

How does the notion of ambiance help in analysing and impacting upon these changes? What ambiances lie along the horizon between a realistic and utopian perspective? What is the world's ambiantal future? Naturally the symmetrical question to this one is how do we gauge the ambiances of the past and, retrospectively, how were the ambiances of the future perceived in the past? How can we gauge how ambiances are changing between the short-term with its forceful impact, and longer-term changes?

The Third Congress will therefore provide the scientific community, designers and artists with an opportunity to showcase and debate how these developments trace out the future of ambiances and especially how they will be conceived, experienced, felt and practised.

Proposals are expected to include partial responses and arguments relating to the general theme of the **Ambiances, tomorrow** via six themes outlined in this call for papers.

Particular interest will be given to proposals that provide for possible cross-over and hybridation between various different fields and expertise:

- Research that straddles several disciplinary fields.
- Research that combines research practices and design activities.
- Research that incorporates diverse sensorial possibilities.
- Research that draws from both art and science.

1. Ambiantal experiences and experiments

This theme focuses primarily on ambiances in terms of experiences and experiments. Such notions are key to research into ambiances because they pose a dual question about how to gauge ambiances and how to effect them. Experiencing ambiance is as much about being able to act as being able to manipulate or manufacture it.

How is such comparative experimentation shared by the scientific community and by artistic initiatives suitable for encouraging thought and action and for highlighting unexpected singularities that could renew our relationship with the world and with doing – both in design processes and in the constant updating of a situation?

Framing the question of ambiances in terms of experimentation opens new possibilities by focusing on multiple technical, social or aesthetic standards currently in force. Starting with an exploration and production of spaces and uses, the focus is on clarifying arrangements, processes and experimentation support media. This session seeks contributions that are underpinned in some way or other by research highlighting different forms of experience, either through a specific type of production (space, arrangement, materiel object, work, site, medium, etc.) that makes it possible to deliberately alter a habitat, or through practical experiments that combine physical, sensorial and social dimensions.

2. Traces, notations and representations of ambiances

If we take the three terms "traces", "notations" and "representations" either separately or together as processes, how can we gauge ambiances – or have them gauged – in terms of their tangible, intangible and mutable qualities within a perspective in which territories, spaces and the environment are experiencing huge changes (urbanism, climate, etc.)? What traces do experiences of ambiances leave and what traces can we leave of such experiences? What experiences of notations and representation(s) can research draw upon within the perspective of a "future of ambiances"?

At the present time, when there is an overlap between research and design in the pre-project phase, there is a genuine window of opportunity for the future of ambiances. In the light of traces, ratings and other representations, would any expression of ambiances not be an operative moment that forges a link with design and with this posture whose tricky task it is to design spaces and use these to produce experiences. What is actually representable in an ambiance? How and by means of which media may we produce an expression of ambiances?

3. Projecting and manufacturing the ambiances of tomorrow

The world around us is in a constant state of adaptation. People, places and sensorial information interact as part of an unlimited dialogue. The new ways of envisaging the materiality and virtuality of our still-gestating world will undoubtedly make it possible to produce unprecedented architectural and urban experiences in terms of both tailored solutions and more comprehensive offerings. What part will *mobiquity* (mobility + ubiquity) and augmented reality play in these restructured interactions of the subject with its sensorial environment? What adaptations may we expect for the sensorial citizen *vis-à-vis* his or her social environment? Is the future of the world all-*phygital* (physical + digital)?

How are these changes transforming design processes and project methodologies? How do they contribute to renewing the very framework of architectural production? How do designers

appropriate the hybridation of digital and physical universes in their projects and how do these new digital applications renew the conception of ambiances in tomorrow's world?

4. Ambiance, atmosphere, climate: theory, politics and criticism

Methodological issues on how to gauge ambiances are related to theoretical and critical imperatives. We invite participants to clarify them, especially the respective reach of the notions of ambiance, atmosphere and climate. Ambiances affect us politically. Certain atmospheric "dissonances" can sometimes trigger strong emotions and disagreements. In other words, a highly-charged atmosphere/ambiance affects our behaviour while remaining difficult to gauge and to describe clearly. Atmospheres are shared but they can divide. Cities, urban landscapes and countries are criss-crossed by atmospheric charges, powers and resistance. How can we describe, conceptualise, theorise and criticise these?

The Arab Spring, indigenous movements, Occupy Wall Street, Republican protests in France, anti-austerity protests in Europe, etc. – contemporary urban public spaces everywhere are being used to hear and relay the calls of citizens to "change the world". Although these peaceful occupations and/or collective marches enjoy a large media echo and lend a particular tone to the televisual or radio landscape or to the World Wide Web – other less obvious or proactive movements with a lower profile, and sometimes emanating from the private sphere, are helping to slowly reconfigure the sensorial framework of the urban experience and contemporary urbanites. How is it possible to gauge and describe these transformations at work when most of them are part of long, pending or incomplete processes underpinned by complex socio-political issues? How can a focus on the socio-political dimension of ambiances/atmospheres foster a critical reflection concerning the sensorial evolution of the urban world?

5. Ambiances and territories in transformation

Contemporary societies are now more than ever in a dynamic of change that impacts the production of space and lifestyles. In particular, globalisation and digitisation can be seen as two key vectors in this dynamic that ceaselessly transforms urban territories and their periphery as well as rural areas. We wish to tease out the sensorial dimension of these changes, firstly by analysing their impacts on the environment and practices and also in order to envisage the roles (technical, political, performative, etc.) of ambiances in the production of tomorrow's territories.

We believe three avenues are particularly worth exploring in this respect. The first concerns the production of territories and constructing approaches and images concerning their competitiveness. The second focuses on the spaces produced and the day-to-day situations rendered possible and seeks to analyse their capacity for including or excluding inhabitants. It also examines the overlap between different worlds and between real and virtual spatialities in the experience of places. Lastly, the third avenue focuses on the spatial and temporal scales concerned by these transformations and their implications for understanding how these territories are set to evolve.

6. Ambiance as heritage of the future

Can we make ambiance part of heritage? In other words, can we safeguard the ephemeral and intangible qualities of a place in order to transform it physically? Or, put another way, can we make a territory part of heritage through ambiance, i.e., transform certain physical aspects without destroying the spirit of the place and the way in which it "makes" territory?

We are familiar with the effects of folklorisation, dehumanisation or loss of authenticity that stem from over-exclusive comprehensive protective measures, radical changes in use or historical reconstructions that are just too perfect. We succeed in protecting the material itself but we have turned it into an image or a pure representation and we have destroyed the ambiance (take, for example, the use to which the notion is put in cultural tourism policies or in sensorial marketing).

But we also know of certain architectural reconversion or urban renovation projects that do succeed in preserving the quality of the original buildings or streets while also adding in the

improvements necessary for contemporary day-to-day living. They reinforce a sensorial memory in line with the necessary evolution of societies and their edifices. So, is ambiance not the instrument *par excellence* for constituting the heritage of the future?

To put it another way, the contention underlying this thematic focus could be expressed as follows: "Constituting heritage" previously consisted of classifying "architectural objects" to protect their tangible substance; nowadays, it involves identifying "urban entities" in order to preserve their intangible substrate, and tomorrow it may very well consist in enhancing "territorial ambiances" to safeguard them over time through contemporary forms and lifestyles.

Theme development

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Conference organisation

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Call for papers

Authors are invited to submit proposals (in French, English or Greek) of between 3,000 and 3,500 characters (including spaces) dealing with one or more of the six themes proposed.

Proposals must be submitted to the Congress website before 1 November 2015:

<http://ambiances2016.arch.uth.gr>

Proposals received will be vetted by the Scientific Committee (blind Review). Authors whose proposals are validated by the Committee will then be invited to submit a six-page article (based on the model provided – approximately 2,500 words) to be presented at a session to be organised during the Congress. Poster can be also submitted and will be published with a 2 pages paper in the proceedings of the congress.

Timetable

1 Nov. 2015	Deadline for receiving proposals (abstract)
20 Feb 2016	End of review phase, feedback to authors
3 May 2016	Deadline for receiving articles (6 pages)
21-24 Sept. 2016	Congress

Official languages of the Congress

The three official languages of the Congress are Greek, French and English and we welcome communications in all three languages (untranslated). Only guest speakers and full conference sessions will be translated. Authors presenting their papers in the theme-based sessions may do so in one of the three languages and all visual supports used must be written up in at least two of the official languages of the Conference. Sessions will be hosted by two coordinators and one of these people will be tri-lingual. His or her role will be to facilitate exchanges between participants.

Publication of proceedings

Articles received and validated will be printed by Thessaly University Press and distributed to participants on the first day of the Conference. Authors may have their articles published in English, French or Greek. A special issue will be proposed to the *Ambiances* Journal based on a selection of papers from the proceeding of the Congress (<http://ambiances.revues.org>).

Location and organisation of Congress

The Congress is being organised at the Department of Architecture of the Polytechnic Institute of the University of Thessaly (UTH) in Volos, Greece.

The Congress will be held at the university campus (Pedion Areos) in Volos in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism as well as in a number of public locations off-campus located within 10 minutes of the town centre.

Historically, the University of Thessaly is a relatively young Greek university and it is barely 30 years old. It owes its dynamism to its openness to Europe and the wider world. It is a pilot university in terms of research and publications and it has been involved in European Masters programmes for more than 10 years. The City of Volos (Βόλος) is the administrative capital of the Magnesia prefecture in the region of Thessaly. It is located at the foot of Mount Pelion at the innermost point of the Pagasetic Gulf. Volos was founded by Cretheus on the ancient site

of Iolkos and is reputed to be the point of departure of Jason and the Argonauts in Greek mythology. With a population of 144,000, it also has important connections to the nearby Sporades Islands. Volos is Greece's third-largest commercial port as well as being an important industrial centre.

The Congress is organised jointly by :

- the International Ambiances Network (www.ambiances.net), Scientific Thematic Network of the French Ministry for Culture and Communication, France
- the department of architecture of the Polytechnic School of the University of Thessaly, Greece

This initiative is supported by :

- Laboratory "Ambiances, Architectures, Urbanités", CRENAU-CRESSON, integrated research unit, CNRS - French National Centre for Scientific Research, French Ministry for Culture and Communication, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Nantes, École Centrale de Nantes, France
- LECAD, Laboratory of Environmental Communication and Audiovisual Communication, research unit which is part of the University of Thessaly's architecture department, Greece

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