

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

Our world is manifold, full of surprises and constantly changing. However, with the global trend towards the complication of urban life, environments and infrastructure, and the atomisation of society, different categories of people are suffering from being lost - both literally and figuratively. While intergenerationally inclusive places seem to be rare exceptions, the concept of 'multigenerationality' has great potential to define urban processes. The needs of different groups of people must be taken much more into account when understanding and planning urban environments.

Fortunately, the world also offers a number of recurring and typical situations that allow us not to get lost, to experience the new through the lens of the familiar, and thus to develop a sense of being at home in the world. But how can we build environments that connect different people and generations by means of typical situations, and facilitate the transfer of cultural memory? Typical elements, forms and patterns are the basis of morphological approaches, their formations and transformations with reference to types reflect culturally significant characteristics, embodying the topology of cultural memory. Phenomenology uses the concept of type to denote a fundamental structuring element of human experience. It also offers the number of insightful concepts, such as the notion of generativity, referring both to the process of "generation" and to a process that occurs over the "generations" (Steinbock, 1995, 55).

Generally, the clarification of typomorphological concepts such as type, process, spontaneous consciousness or territory, together with the insights of Husserlian philosophy, may extend the relevance of morphological concepts and methods beyond the study of physical urban form and point the way towards a more comprehensive understanding of physical urban form as intertwined with social or cultural form. On the other hand, phenomenological approaches, which have recently been gaining ground in various areas of the social or medical sciences, are likely to benefit from the body of knowledge about the spatial structure and temporal evolution of urban environments that has been accumulated within urban morphology.

The workshop on phenomenology and urban morphology (held at the Husserl Archive, Cologne, 12-13 April 2024), dedicated to typification in human experience, identified several areas of common interest among the diverse group of participants, which can facilitate the integration of disciplines and methodologies. Starting from the issue of typification, we went further. In general, a productive connection between (Husserlian) phenomenology, enactivism and anthropology with morphological methods such as the typological-processual or space syntax approaches can be established through the concepts of embodied cognition, familiarity, generativity, horizon, habit, type and lifeworld, paving the way towards intergenerational environments and cultural meaning transfer.

In general, the issue of creating better living environments for different generations and groups of people is complex, and the existing problems can't be solved within a single discipline, let alone a single institution. Moreover, the gaps between theory and practice and between disciplines should be bridged by the diversity of such interdisciplinary projects. Within our group we aim to develop research with the overarching aim of promoting inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue. Our aim is to identify methodologies that frame and facilitate the urban design process in ways that enhance quality of life, well-being and the multi- and transgenerational transfer of meaning of place in time, with a view to shaping intergenerational environments for the present and the future.

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

DAY ONE: 10.04.2025 (10.00–18.00 CET)

10.00– 10.15	Short Introduction of the Speakers and the Idea (Daria Belova, Thiemo Breyer, Luca Lanini, Erik N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen, Sylvain Malfroy, and Urs Primas)
10.15– 11.00	Luca Lanini Pisa Architecture as Typical Behaviour Inducing Machine. The Soviet Experiment and beyond
11.00– 11.45	Julian Kiverstein, David Habets Amsterdam Deltawerk//Dexis
11.45– 12.30	Fabio Pellizzer Venice Sharing Differences. On the Salience of Broken Places
12.30– 13.15	Fabrizia Bandi Milan Architecture as Performance: Embodied Experience, Installations and Virtual Reality
13.15– 14.30	Joint (Lunch) Break ¹
14.30– 15.15	Joint discussion
15.15– 16.00	Ragna Winniewski Cologne Synaesthetic Spaces in Dementia Care
16.00– 16.45	Thiemo Breyer, Daria Belova, Erik N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen Cologne Layers of Legacy: Why Form Matters to Us
16.45–...	Joint discussion and cultural program ²

DAY TWO: 11.04.2025 (10.00–18.00 CET)

10.00– 10.15	intro
10.15– 11.00	Tonino Griffero Rome Atmospherology. How do you feel here and now?
11.00– 11.45	Andrea Pinotti Milan Smemoranda. Paradoxes of externalised memory in public places
11.45– 12.30	Irene Breuer Wuppertal Topology of cultural memory: Ricœur on the possibility of a 'just memory' – The case of Berlin
12.30– 13.15	Urs Primas Zurich Spatial Networks and the Emergence of Meaningful Places
13.15– 14.30	Joint (Lunch) Break
14.30– 15.15	Joint discussion
15.15– 16.00	Gabriella Cianciolo Cologne Defragmenting Pompeii: The Heritage Environment System and the Object of Interdisciplinarity
16.00– 16.45	Sylvain Malfroy Neuchâtel Splendour and misery of the hotel room: typology and phenomenology of the Sassi di Matera and a number of lofts and motels, with a digression into the work of painters (Edward Hopper) and film-makers (Alfred Hitchcock)
16.45–...	Joint discussion and cultural program

DAY THREE: 12.04.2025 (10.00–15.00 CET): Cultural program and site visits

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

EXTENDED PROGRAM: ABSTRACTS

Luca Lanini | Pisa | “Architecture as Typical Behaviour Inducing Machine. The Soviet Experiment and beyond”

In the history of Architecture, buildings and their spaces have often been used as instruments of control, as manifestation of power and as educational machines.

In that great and dramatic experiment of social engineering that was the Soviet Union until its propulsive thrust as an autonomous culture ended, some buildings were conceived as proactive machines to transform a largely peasant population into citizens of an industrial superpower led by form of government never before seen in the history of humanity. In this global project of mutation and “redemption”, the functional organization and the architectural features of buildings play an important part, they are like factories that process semi-illiterate peasants into citizens perfectly aware of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

This paper is a small summary of this cultural history, of a class of intellectuals and designers who were part of it, of some prodigious buildings. And of their failure.

Julian Kiverstein, David Habets | Amsterdam | “Deltawerk//Dexis”

We will present a multi-modal analysis of visitor experience of the Waterloopbos national monument and the public artwork Deltawerk // (by RAAAF | Atelier de Lyon). Using deixis analysis alongside spatial data—such as 360-degree video footage and GPS tracking—the study examines how visitors engage with and bring forth two distinct kinds of place: a trusted place (Habets et al. 2024a) and an intimate place (Habets et al. 2024b). The research builds on previous phenomenological analysis, differentiating place experience between habitual and explorative/aesthetic engagement. By analyzing conversations we had with visitors of these spaces, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how natural recreation areas and public artworks, like Deltawerk //, shape well-being and enrich human experiences of place.

Thiemo Breyer, Daria Belova, Erik N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen | Cologne | “Layers of Legacy: Why Form Matters to Us”

In the first part, we introduce our joint book project, which is set to appear in the Cambridge Elements series. We are currently finalizing the proposal and welcome feedback.

In the second part, we begin our interdisciplinary dialogue by exploring the interconnection between layers and sediments. To do so, we first focus on three forms of sedimentation discussed in phenomenology: static, genetic, and generative.

In the third part, we want to flesh out the notion of generative sedimentation by reflecting the connection between meaning and memory. First, we explain the idea of encultured and embodied memory and, second, illustrate the interconnection of sedimentation, memory, and identity with two examples:

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

The first one examines the virtual reality simulation Krefeld im Wirtschaftswunder, which was developed with and for people in the early stages of dementia. This simulation immerses visitors in the lived world of their past, evoking personal identity through the connection of embodied habits and embedded types.

The second example looks at the development of a Siberian city, showing how characteristic architectural types connect the old with the new and thereby create a form of heritage.

Fabrizia Bandi | Milan | "Architecture as Performance: Embodied Experience, Installations and Virtual Reality"

The experience of architecture is not reducible to the built space, it could be also conceived as a performative act that emerges through the interaction between the body and space. This talk explores the relationship between performance and architecture through the concept of "lived spatiality", examining how movement, agency, and perception transform the environment into an event. Drawing from phenomenology, performance theory, and contemporary architectural discourse, the discussion highlights how spatial experience is continuously enacted and redefined. Case studies, from experimental installations to virtual realities, illustrate how architecture engages its users in an embodied dialogue, making space not only something to be inhabited but something that is performed.

Ragna Winniewski | Cologne | "Synaesthetic Spaces in Dementia Care"

Therapeutic atmospheres (Sonntag 2013) are most effectively created through multisensory environments (MSEs) which facilitate interbodily resonances and synaesthetic responsivenesses. These environments provide meaningful ways to share and engage with the embodied habits of people with dementia, ultimately improving their quality of life and social interactions. The research highlights the importance of designing spaces that support embodied cognition and intersubjective connection, demonstrating the profound impact of architectural and sensory design on dementia care. While architecture and urban spaces do not communicate through literal speech, they express meaning and evoke emotions, creating a synaesthetic experience of space. The research highlights how sensory-responsive spaces (i.e. synaesthetic responsivenesses) can reduce bodily doubts improve wellbeing, strengthen social interactions, and support embodied cognition in dementia care.

Irene Breuer | Wuppertal | "Topology of cultural memory: Ricœur on the possibility of a 'just memory' – The case of Berlin"

My proposal deals with the possibility of configuring a just memory that can reshape the future. Memory plays a key role in the working-through of a traumatic past, an issue that is central to Paul Ricœur's hermeneutic-phenomenological reflections, particularly those contained in his late works *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2000), *La marque du passé* (1998) and *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (2004). In these works, Ricœur ascribes a new function to historical research, namely a distancing function. An experience of distance, as described by Ricœur, plays a key role in coming to terms with the past, for the success of which the question of a just memory should be combined with the possibility of the gift of forgiveness. Only through forgiveness is it possible to work on memory and grief, which can bring about a 'general

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

catharsis'. This experience of distance opens the space for the imaginative reworking of the past: Far from advocating an impossible fidelity to the past, Ricœur emphasizes the necessity of an 'epistemological cut (coupure épistémologique)' that allows reinterpreting the facts in order to come to terms with the past. Any ethically justified decision on this can only be made against the background of a pre-ethical demand for fidelity, truthfulness and justice. For if history is regarded as 'finished' and 'self-contained', and the past or tradition takes the form of a 'dead stock' or time, it can do justice neither to the experiences of 'pathological' injury nor to traumatization, experiences to which collective historicity or societies are exposed. However, when historiography undertakes a critical examination of the truth and memory is integrated into the interrelationship between 'retrospection and future projection' by the work of imagination, it fulfils a 'therapeutic' and at the same time distancing function. According to Ricœur, bearing witness is suitable for this task: He considers it to be the phenomenon par excellence insofar as, by bearing witness, historical existence receives an appropriate, that is, ethical, response. In the horizon of this question there emerges the 'riddle of the icon': For image and imprint are testimonies to both a 'simple presence' and a 'reference to the absent'. In this context, Ricœur enquires into how a 'reconstruction' differs from an 'imaginary or even freely invented construction', that is, he raises the question of the necessity of the truthfulness of the truthfulness of the traces left behind. As a 'sign-effect' of the past, the traces are therefore no longer associated with the 'similarity of an image, but (with) the credibility of a testimony': Ricœur reverses the problematic by emphasizing that one must 'think the trace from the testimony'; thus, he links the question of the reliability of testimonies with the problematic of the trace. For Ricœur, the 'riddle of memory' boils down to the fact that 'the imprint reconfigures', insofar as the image aims for a 'truth by means of interpretation'. The 'how' of representation, which is expressed in an interrelation between 'memory and fiction in the reconstruction of the past', amounts to a refiguration or interpretation of the past. As a result of this interrelation between imagination and memory, the question of 'proof-truth' shifts to the question of 'fidelity-truthfulness', questions that arise from the 'undecidability of the status of truth-fidelity (vérité fidélité). Ricœur therefore does not emphasize a purely historical relationship to the past, but rather a reading of the past that allows imagination to open up new possibilities. For in order for historical consciousness to open up to the future, work on memory, which is ultimately a personal and imaginative work on historical experience, is indispensable. Only by explicitly distancing oneself from the past and thus avoiding being appropriated by what has happened can catharsis take place and consequently something new occur, reshaping thus the future: this is the task and the meaning of a just memory, which is then illustrated by Berlin's narrative handling of the past after the fall of the Wall.

Andrea Pinotti | Milan | "Smemoranda. Paradoxes of externalised memory in public places"

We entrust our memories to monuments to preserve them for us. Thus we can afford to forget them. This is the paradox that afflicts the memorial: built as a device of remembrance, it reverses into its opposite and becomes a machine of oblivion. Contemporary monumental art has contrived to find a therapy for this pathology. Beginning in the 1960s, a heterogeneous, often radical and not infrequently contradictory movement of artists involved in the design of 'counter-monuments', 'anti-monuments' or *nonuments* (according to Gordon Matta-Clark's terminology) has emerged: devices that interrogate us in the depths of our paradoxical relationship with memory and oblivion.

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

But does the nonument really do better than the monument?

These questions are more urgent today than ever before: the subject of the memorial is back in the limelight, at the very time when efforts are being made from many quarters to tear down as many as possible. At a time when statues are toppled as a result of the wave of iconoclastic violence inspired by the so-called *cancel culture*, my talk will propose a reflection, both aesthetic and political, on contemporary monumental art and on the contradiction that afflicts it: denying the monument, in order to reaffirm it. Making the *nonument*.

Sylvain Malfroy | Neuchâtel | “Splendour and misery of the hotel room: typology and phenomenology of the Sassi di Matera and a number of lofts and motels, with a digression into the work of painters (Edward Hopper) and film-makers (Alfred Hitchcock)”

At the end of the comedy *Gli anni ruggenti* (Roaring Years) by Luigi Zampa, filmed on location in the Sassi di Matera in 1962, the main character reads a letter that a local resident has entrusted to him for Benito Mussolini: “Dear Duce, I'm 56 years old and I've never looked out of a window in my life, since I live in a cave, which is worse than a Nativity scene, to be polite. Now I'm asking if I can have a house, not so much for the house, but for the window, since I've never had one.”

On reading this message, one cannot help thinking that it expresses more the somewhat consensual empathy of the self-righteous intellectuals of northern Italy than the anonymous voice of a genuine local.

Today, the windowless cave dwellings declared ‘a national disgrace’ by the secretary of the Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti, at the end of the war because the inhabitants shared the same space as their animals, have been transformed into five-star rooms with jacuzzies for luxury tourism. Tourism and a large part of Matera's economic income come from film shoots. One cannot help but wonder if Matera is not caught in a spiral of derealisation and fictionalisation that turns what was once a place of primal experience into an object of hedonistic consumption.

Based on Friedrich Georg Friedmann's more authentically empathetic approach to the peasant culture of the Mezzogiorno (he worked in Matera in the 1950s), which leads to a theory of ‘miseria’ as speculative realism, I hypothesise that this is not very far from the one depicted at the same time by Edward Hopper as he contemplated solitary individuals in their hotel rooms, their gaze lost in the landscape outside their window.

Urs Primas | Zurich | “Spatial Networks and the Emergence of Meaningful Places”

If we assume that meaningful places emerge from experiential interactions between humans and their environment, a twofold conclusion can be drawn:

- (1) The spectra of meaning associated with a given location by different individuals, by different social groups or at different moments in history may differ, sometimes even radically.

Intergenerational Environments and Meaning Transfer

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

- (2) Meanwhile, the possible range of such spectra is restrained by the environmental properties of the location in question. These properties may discourage or even exclude certain ways of experiencing a place while encouraging or giving rise to others.

A crucial property of any place pertains to the way it relates to other places, and to larger ensembles of places. On the one hand, such a web of relationships may be approached as a network of meaning: Places are connected, physical distance notwithstanding, through shared layers of meaning. On the other hand, place relationships are also fostered by the bodily experience of what can be seen, heard or smelled at a given location, and where to it might be possible to move from there. This latter group of relationships can be studied through the modeling of spatial networks, considering for instance accessibility or visibility. The historical evolution of these networks exhibits important invariants. Certain relationships, clusters of relationships and centralities persist over very long periods. Meanwhile, the historical study of urban form has also shown how spatial networks sometimes undergo far-reaching transformations. Relationships may break, clusters may disintegrate, and newly established relationships may foster the emergence of novel centralities while formerly meaningful places change their vocations or even fall into oblivion. This interplay of persistence and dynamics relates to a type of memory that is not tied to individual remembering, oral traditions or written, pictorial and other supports but that is embedded in the very fabric of our continuously evolving environment.