

**International Conference on Space and Cinema (28-30 November 2016, Lisbon)  
Conference report**

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The three-days conference was organized by a research project entitled *Cinema and the World: Studies on Space and Cinema*, fostered by the Interart and Intermedia Studies Research Group at the Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon. With around 60 participants and four keynote speakers – academics and artists, with a special participation of James Benning – the event aimed to map and interpret the cinematic representations of space, with special focus on contemporary, fragmented, shrinking perceptions of the world. The wide range of topics debated in parallel sessions, in English and Portuguese, included both historical and theoretical approaches of cinematic space: presentations dealt with the issues of classical film and inner spaces, geographical and phenomenological spaces in cinema, archival spaces, international spaces and exile, science fiction and mental spaces, queering spaces, cities and the urban space, memory and the ruin, body, space and perception, Female spaces of representation, cinema, architecture, the museum and (Dis)placing film genre.

While film historical and stylistical approaches included genre analyses of thrillers and noirs (e.g. the representation of interiors, houses, staircases and corridors in films of Hitchcock, von Stahl or Ozu), the theoretical spectrum consisting of anthropological, geophysical, architectural, political, phenomenological, psychological, psychoanalytical discourses focused on the constructedness of cinematic space that, as a flexible material, increasingly becomes itself a discourse on contemporary experiences, „senses” of space. This experience is mainly conveyed by a mapping impulse of images, along with dichotomies like home and exilic space, urban and rural, inclusive/exclusive space, place and space, mental and physical space. The great variety of examples and case studies, including Hollywood classical, American independent and documentary, South American, West, East and South European, Iranian and Japanese films were used to reiterate and reinterpret in a contemporary, rapidly changing political and ecological context concepts like home and domestic space, urban alienation, rural mysticism, collective memory and space, heterotopia, cinematic

mesography and subject construction, , landscape, non-place, spectral space, anonymous spaces, multiple spaces and embodied spaces.

Besides a smaller number of presentations dealing with formal aspects of cinematic space representations, the majority of topics raised the issue of identity, national, sexual or individual, mostly in a Third World, European, East-European and post-communist context. If we define identity, with Tom Conley, as "the consciousness of belonging, (a longing to belong) to a place and of being at a distance from it" we accept that place shapes identity, mainly confirmed by the films depicting the melancholic rootlessness of the migrant experience. In terms of European cinema, inexpressible spaces of otherness and isolation, mind-topographies of the unfilmable hallucinations, obsessions, dreams were discussed in a presentation on mental landscapes of Ingmar Bergman that became an imprint of European modernism. As another participant would argue, this style was reloaded later in films of Michael Haneke, mapping a European space going beyond the concept of national, in his preoccupations with European cultural memory.

Post-communist, Eastern-European, Balkanic cinema was well represented through interpretations of spatial constructions and identity performances in Baltic, Greek, Hungarian, Macedonian and Romanian films. Milcho Manchevski's films were coined for constructing a very specific image of place and national identity, also thematizing the absence of the "other", the Albanian Macedonians. The correlation between social space, architecture and crisis was identified in the neo-noir aesthetics of contemporary Greek cinema. Contemporary Hungarian cinema was represented by two presentations on sexual identity and space: dichotomies of rural / urban, inclusive / non/inclusive space were reiterated in the context of queer identity representations, while the quest of female identity was analysed as a spatial performance of mobility and stasis, both in the mirror of an altered notion of "home". Soviet urban architecture was interpreted as representative of spectral spaces and shared spaces of memory in Post-Soviet Baltic films, and inner framing solutions used in the representation of interior spaces in the Romanian Cristi Puiu's films were coined as a „cruel phenomenology of space”. The three keynotes and the invited artist reflected upon and completed the debated topics in a synthetic way. Teresa Castro (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3) in her talk *Cinematic Cartographies of Urban Space and the descriptive spectacle of aerial views (1898-1948)* demonstrated how the aerial point of view turned the modern metropolis into a quintessential cinematic object, also arguing that the pleasure of the cinematographic gaze lies in the

oscillation between visual and kinesthetic perception. Maurizia Natali (New York University), in her talk *Catalandia, the Cinematic Space of the Anthropocene*, explored the notion of Catalandia, a „hyper-object” that can be interpreted allegorically, ironically, politically and ecologically. As she argued, bringing examples from mostly science fiction and catastrophe-films, no art than film has pre-mediated the ruinous and spectacular space of the capitalist way of life. She interpreted Catalandia as the catastrophic cinematic mode of production of the Anthropocene (the two centuries long geological age in which destinies of life on earth have increasingly depended on our heavy anthropic footprint. Tom Conley (who delivered his talk in a video conference) added to these approaches a philological perspective with a presentation on relations between space and writing in literature, cartography and cinema, with special focus on examples from films of Jean-Luc Godard. The participation of James Benning, synchronized with screenings of his films at the Cinemateca Portuguesa represented an essayistic, philosophical discourse on most topics debated in the conference (space, time, memory, identity, race, gender), with special focus on duration, framing and contemplation. His films presented in the program of the conference – *One Way Boogie Woogie / 27 years later* (2005) – dealt with the work of time on space and human lives, while *Time After Time* (2016), a compilation of several of his films, made especially for this conference, explicitly thematized, as the chosen title suggested, the spatialization of time and dissolution of space into a temporal flow: the very essence of cinema.