

Introduction to the Third International Symposium on Platial Information Science

– Editorial –

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Symposia are like places – no two symposia appear to be alike. And PLATIAL'21 is, indeed, very different from its predecessors. This is despite the fact that the planning in 2020 was quite similar to previous years and the euphoria was great. After the COVID-19 pandemic unexpectedly emerged in the course of 2020, however, we followed the example of other conferences to postpone the event to 2021 and the familiar format was turned upside down. Instead of a face-to-face meeting that would have been in a *place* never visited before by the attendees, an online format became necessary. What a surprise, especially for a symposium dedicated to the theme of 'place'. For now it is devoid of a place, which is a little reminiscent of the concept of *placelessness* coined by Relph (1976).

New formats also open up new possibilities. Perhaps most striking is the geographical coverage of the participants. Although the symposium is organized from Europe, a majority of the participants are from other continents. There are participants from Asia, North and South America, Europe, and Australia and New Zealand. However, this diversity is a challenge for participation too, as time zones hardly allow for manageable global overlaps. Accordingly, we have chosen a format that allows both synchronous and asynchronous participation. It is also pleasing that there is no typical bias towards male presenters, as female presenters form a clear majority with more than 60 per cent.

We have chosen *Places Across Cultures* as the motto of this symposium. The multitude of continents represented in the contributions vividly demonstrates the importance and great value of a multi-cultural point of view, in contrast to the limitations to which one-dimensional perspectives would succumb. If science wants to approach universal principles of platial information, cross-cultural approaches seem indispensable. The contributions to the symposium consider such principles, e.g., in the cases of unsafe places in Ames (IA, USA); evocative places in Hamburg (Germany), Ames and Grinnell (IA, USA), and Vitória and Belo Horizonte (Brazil); favourite places in New Zealand; sports venues in the Ruhr (Germany); the Chicago neighbourhood South Shore (IL, USA); the much-changing Beyoğlu neighbourhood in Istanbul (Turkey); university campuses in Moscow (Russia); London's green belt; tourist attractions in Canada; use of platial language in Western Pantar spoken in eastern Indonesia, Yindjibarndi and Manyjilyjarra spoken in the Pilbara region (Australia), Tokelau spoken in Tokelauan (Polynesia), Lardil spoken in Mornington (Australia), †Akhoe Hai||om spoken in Namibia; and the dispossession of the Wurrunjeri people of the Kulin nation in Melbourne (Australia). In this sense, the symposium can be considered a truly multi-cultural event.

The publications of PLATIAL'21 can be grouped into different themes. The first three publications following this editorial are dedicated to different characteristics of places. Kosacz et al. (2022) examine the emotions that respondents have about unsafe places in Ames (IA, USA) including underlying reasons. For this purpose, a community engagement festival was co-organized in conjunction with the local planning department, in the context of which surveys were conducted. Another publication addresses evocative places with their particular emotions, feelings, and memories. Poplin (2022)

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thereby uses a cross-cultural approach to compare case studies in Germany, the US, and Brazil. This reveals significant differences in some aspects. Finally, with the help of a New Zealand-wide study, Richardson and Stock (2022) identify a range of reasons that make people describe a place as their personal favourite one. They report that the influence of attractiveness, the intrinsic value of a place, and feeling safe are among the most important reasons.

Another focus of the symposium is the mediation of places. Mocnik and Köhl (2022) use a case study of sport venues from two popular traditional football clubs to investigate the influence that the experience of a place can have on its representation in map data and how this experience can be represented accordingly. Conversely, this influence also allows conclusions to be drawn about how information about places can be extracted from existing maps. However, a mediation of places also bears the risk of bias, as Werner and Schwarze (2022) show using the example of the South Shore neighbourhood in Chicago (IL, USA). This neighbourhood is often stigmatized in the media and portrayed as one-dimensional, but actual perceptions on the ground often oppose this portrayal. This case study shows how different and controversial the various views of a place can be.

A third focus is on the cartographic mediation of places. Dolma (2022) takes a closer look at the example of Beyoğlu, a neighbourhood in Istanbul (Turkey). This neighbourhood is undergoing a strong transformation, and its character and public places have strongly transformed in recent years. In particular, she investigates the extent to which counter-maps can bring the narratives marginalized by this transformation as well as the forgotten memory places back to life. Taking a more spatial perspective, Glebova (2022) investigates the cartographic communication of the boundaries of places. For this purpose, participants of an initial study were asked to describe the core, the domain, and the sphere of three university campuses in Moscow (Russia) in more detail. From these descriptions, different variants of cartographic representations of these places were generated and then tested and compared for their effectiveness in a second study.

The last focus is on modelling and analysing places. Caton et al. (2022) investigate corresponding urban planning related possibilities using natural language processing and the example of London's Green Belt policy. They show that specific community interests can be revealed more effectively and minorities' issues can be identified more quickly. Another approach was taken by McKenzie (2022), who investigates the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the check-in behaviour of tourist attractions in Canada. The overall aim of his described project is to show how spatial analyses, especially of user-generated data, can help to generate insights in the context of policies, but also to highlight existing limitations. Finally, Slivinskaya and Westerholt (2022) discuss possibilities for the inclusion of spatial aspects in the study of urban form. It is proposed that the field of urban morphology should widen its scope towards subjective and idiosyncratic domains through a deeper incorporation of meanings, affordances, functions, and relations between places.

The proceedings are rounded off with invited papers of the keynotes and workshops. Continuing the ideas of his keynote, Palmer (2022) discusses how the physical environment, sociocultural factors, and language are interrelated. Based on five case studies, it is proposed to extend the theory of sociotopography to include the concepts of landscape and place. In doing so, however, not only these concepts themselves are addressed, but even more so the manifold relationships between them. Central to this is the observation that sociocultural factors mediate between the physical environment and its conceptualization in terms of landscape and place, thereby manifesting themselves in corresponding sociocultural practices including language use and repertoire; and that these practices, in turn, also influence conceptualization. The First Workshop on Cyber Ethics in Spatial Research, organized by Zhang et al. (2022), addresses a very relevant and timely issue: how to establish a discourse in spatial research to address the ethical issues related to the use of computer technology and the Internet. In particular, the workshop organizers address the questions of what characterizes cyber ethics in spatial research and distinguishes it from a more general cyber ethics, and what role volunteered information can play in this.


We hope you enjoy reading the proceedings!


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