

EDITORIAL

Urban culture

With the rise of popular culture, hastened by electronic media, the distinction between high culture and culture has gradually collapsed, along with the blurring of boundaries among art, culture and commerce (Featherstone 1995, apud Barker and Jane 2016: 447). At the same time, the increasingly blurred lines between channels of transmission make it complicated at present to distinguish clearly between cultural forms. In this respect, urban culture seems to be a central site of cultural negotiation and brings to attention the most eclectic collection of cultural products.

“Urban”-related topics have been a long-standing concern of cultural studies and have been submitted to successive reconsideration, reevaluation and reconceptualisation in order to project *urban scaping* as a cultural phenomenon. As indicated by Cmeciu (2016), the identity of urban spaces is shaped through specific discourses indicative of location, delineation of territory, horizontal and vertical stratification, naming, cultural practices and functionality (e.g. some are industrial, academic, religious, commercial spaces etc.).

Contemporary urbanism is also configured by the relations established between technology and socio-human behaviour, given that communication takes place, most of the time, through technology. The urban space remains a permanent school of life in which the urban dwellers learn to adapt to new challenges, to orient themselves in the great urban agglomeration according to different signs (especially names of streets, historical monuments, institutions, shops, etc.) and experience daily contact with an extremely large number of people. When oriented by superficial reference points specific to mass culture, both indigenously urban and urbanized inhabitants are liable to manifest prejudices and stereotypes. Fortunately, behavioral norms emerge along the way and their coexistence with other ethnic groups engage in intercultural communication make the fear of foreigners (otherness) disappear.

The papers of this issue point at the enduring or emerging symbolic meanings and cultural practices associated with physical landscape and social cityscapes. Moreover, they encompass specific aspects of linguistic landscapes along with emotional and spiritual scapes. Some of the authors are interested in the way in which issues of class, race, gender intersect of spatiality of the city to create a cultural politics of difference and identity (Soya 1989).

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