

AR-681

**Space, Life, and Politics**

Mantziaras Panos, Pietropolli Tommaso, Viganò Paola

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture et sciences de la ville		Opt.

Langue d'enseignement	français / anglais
Crédits	1
Session	
Examen	Mémoire
Charge	30h
<b>Heures</b>	<b>24</b>
Cours	9
Exercices	15
<b>Nombre de places</b>	<b>20</b>

**Fréquence**

Cette année uniquement

**Remarque**

October 28-29, 2024

**Résumé**

The Habitat Research Center and the Fondation Brailard Architectes, in the framework of The Eco-Century Project®, organize the 7th Bernardo Secchi Working Seminar. An international, interdisciplinary forum addressing key urban questions for the socio-ecological transition amid the climate crisis.

**Contenu****SPACE, LIFE, AND POLITICS: COUNTER-PROJECTS AND THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION**

At the initiative of the Brailard Architects Foundation and the Habitat Research Center of the EPFL, the Bernardo Secchi Working Seminar has been established yearly since 2015 as an international and interdisciplinary meeting, bound to debate the main issues related to cities and regions in favor of the ecological transition as a coordinated action in the context of climate emergency.

Dedicated to the urbanist Bernardo Secchi (1934-2014), Professor at the Schools of Architecture in Geneva and Venice, the seminar honours his intellectual legacy. As an internationally acclaimed urbanist, Secchi consistently advocated for a critical understanding and innovative action, shaping the just and optimal development of the urban realm through his writings and projects. Marking Bernardo Secchi's 10th memorial anniversary, the JBS 2024 extends the reflection initiated in 2022th edition, focusing on the ecological, social, and spatial transition of contemporary urbanized territories. Delving into the interplay between socio-ecological Transition and radical adaptations in our practices, policies, and projects, the seminar aims to unravel the inherent tensions in navigating these complex dynamics.

As per Bernardo Secchi, European democratic culture forms the canvas for a "vaster biopolitical action" [1]. This endeavour intricately shapes and transforms urban spaces with the goal of safeguarding, educating, and emancipating its people. Consequently, the planning and design of the 19th and 20th centuries are characterised as techno-scientific and creative extensions of this enduring tradition.

Today, this contemporary initiative concerning space and life, often pejoratively labelled "biopolitical" by Michel Foucault [2], grapples with profound economic, social, and environmental challenges such as threats to ecosystems from excessive extraction, societal divisions, escalating spatial injustices, weakened economies, and global health risks. Redirecting designers' focus on space, life, and politics becomes a pivotal approach to devise planning and design tools for a habitable, equitable, and healthy planet amidst these complexities. Enabling this socio-ecological and spatial transition necessitates a fresh start, marked by a fundamental conceptual shift favouring novel connections among space, time, and politics.

The international seminar aims to share, challenge, and delve into the hypothesis that a Transition project demands a distinct epistemological and operational framework. As the social and ecological Transition shapes a novel "biopolitical regime" [3], now is the opportune moment to contemplate alternative initiatives - counter-projects.

A counter-project goes beyond merely proposing an alternative hypothesis to an existing project; it entails a redefinition of its objectives, structures, and implementation strategies. Significantly, counter-projects can introduce entirely different systems - alternative worldviews - thus legitimising positions currently marginalised by mainstream or dominant

discourses. They serve as plausible alternatives, not due to their avant-garde nature, but because they represent radical hypotheses crafted in spatial contexts, offering insights into how we can reimagine our evolving urban life and landscapes during times of profound transformation. Counter-projects establish the groundwork for contemplating alternative lifestyles, a crucial endeavour in this Transition period where traditional projects and ideas are still progressing toward fruition. Active involvement in dismantling paradigms, decisions, and projects misaligned with today's risks and priorities is imperative. The future shaped by such projects frequently diverges from the aspirations for a habitable, just, and healthy future inherent in current discussions. Therefore, an engaged approach is necessary to reshape the trajectory towards more fitting visions of the future.

Hence, the seminar will delve into concerns such as socio-spatial conflicts, strategies for mitigating climate change, counteracting its impacts, and the emergence of new ecologies in modern urbanised regions. All these considerations pivot around the fundamental issue of design and its execution.

The seminar is organised into three main axes:

1. Concrete utopias. Throughout history, visions, utopias, and future imaginaries have been instrumental in dismantling prevailing paradigms and reimagining the world from a different perspective. Through tangible, measurable, and debatable utopias, this axis facilitates an exploration of the necessary steps to progress in a specific direction. It delves into visions and utopias as effective tools for counter-design and negotiation.
2. Counteractions and activism. This axis scrutinises contemporary moments and design dynamics that don't necessarily wait for consensus to act, but instead strive to achieve it through the power of exemplarity. Here, the counter-project adopts a perspective centred on direct actions, operating at various scales and engaging diverse stakeholders. Counteractions play a pivotal role in shaping and advancing policies and regulations, challenging the inertia often associated with planning and established procedures.
3. Radical policies. The third axis focuses on navigating the space defined by current conditions. It contemplates projects that not only operate within existing policies but also challenge and stretch them to their utmost limits, aiming to counter them from within. Addressing the need to adapt to current conditions, this axis explores radical policies capable of advancing and cultivating counter positions.

Conditions of participation

Registered doctoral students will

- a) attend an introductory session in the days preceding the international seminar,
- b) attend the two days of lectures and panel discussions, and
- c) write a term paper that they will present during a discussion session in the weeks following the seminar.

Attendance with profit in these activities will entitle students to 1 ECTS credit.

1. Secchi, B. (2014). A tradição europeia do planeamento: culturas e políticas. In E. Ribeiro Peixoto, M. F. Derntl, P.P. Palazzo, R. Trevisan (eds.). *Tempos e escalas da cidade e do urbanismo: quatro palestras, XIII Seminário de história da Cidade e do Urbanismo* (SHCU). Brasília: Universidade de Brasília.
2. Foucault, M. (2007). Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978. In Senellart, M. (ed.) (2007). Palgrave Macmillan
3. See Viganò, P. (2023). *Il Giardino Biopolitico. Spazi, vite, transizione*. Torino: Donzelli (fr. transl. Viganò, P. (2023). *Le jardin biopolitique. Espaces, vies et transition*. Geneva: Metispresses)

## Note

The detailed program of the seminar will be published in the Habitat Research Center website (see below)

## Mots-clés

Urbanism, urban theory, design oriented knowledge, action-oriented design, socio-ecological Transition

## Ressources

### Sites web

- <http://www.brailard.ch>
- <https://www.epfl.ch/research/domains/habitat/>

### Liens Moodle

- <https://go.epfl.ch/AR-681>