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Zurich University
of Applied Sciences

Typical Situations

Symposium on Phenomenology and Urban Morphology

Inter- and Transdisciplinary Workshop at the Husserl-Archives Cologne (onsite)

Date: 12.-13.04.2024

Speakers: 12

Participants: 20 to 30

The world we live in is manifold, full of surprises, and constantly changing. Fortunately, it also offers a range of recurring and typical situations, thereby enabling us not to get lost, to experience the novel through the lens of the familiar and hence to develop a sense of feeling at home in the world. We aim to sharpen our understanding of the underlying notion of type as a fundamental structural property of the human lifeworld from complementary viewpoints. For instance, architecture, urban morphology and heritage studies on the one hand, and philosophy, phenomenology, experience and artefacts on the other.

The study of typical situations in buildings and in the city has been a central contribution of Italian architects and urban researchers in the second half of the twentieth century. Subsequently, this line of inquiry has greatly influenced the debate on and the production of architecture and urbanism, among other places in Switzerland. Meanwhile, the related question of the role of typification in human experience has been underdeveloped from within architecture and urban studies in general, and urban morphology in particular. This question touches on fundamental, philosophical issues regarding the relationship between subject and object, and taking it seriously imposes a broader approach, including research on orientation, affordances and memory.

Perhaps surprisingly, such a broader approach seems to be just around the corner. More than a century ago, the Austrian philosopher and founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl had applied the notion of type to denote a fundamental structuring element of human experience. In recent years, his approach has gained renewed attention within research on human cognition and particularly on dementia, where it has been applied to the limiting case of almost entirely losing the sense of orientation and belonging in the world.

The workshop should include a number of activities that would enhance the discussion on the role of typification for human experience and the studies of urban form with the ultimate goal of addressing the issue in further interdisciplinary research and practice.



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Day one: 12.04.2024 (11.00–19.00 CET)

11.00–11.45	Short Introduction of the Speakers and the Idea (Thiemo Breyer, Erik N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen, Sylvain Malfroy, Urs Primas and Daria Belova)
11.45–12.30	Sylvain Malfroy (Neuchâtel): “Situations: What They Do with Us and What We Do with Them. About Agency and Structural Tendencies”
12.30–13.15	Federico Vercellone (Torino): “Glossary on Morphology”
13.15–14.30	<i>Joint (Lunch) Break</i>
14.30–15.15	Erik N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen & Daria Belova (Cologne): “Bridging Phenomenology and Urban Morphology: the Case of Situational Typification”
15.15–16.00	Tina Röck (Dundee): “Types of Ideas and Essences – From Being to Becoming”
16.00–16.45	Irene Breuer (Wuppertal): “The Sublime Experience of Architectural Space Morphology”
16.45–17.30	<i>Joint Discussion with Coffee on the Way to Kolumba Museum</i>
17.45–19.00	<i>The guided architectural tour at Kolumba Museum</i>



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Day two: 13.04.2024 (10.00 CET - ...)

10.00–10.30	Short Introduction of the Day
10.30–11.15	Julian Kiverstein & David Habets (Amsterdam): “Trusted Urban Places”
11.15–12.00	Penny Lewis (Dundee): “Arendt, the World and Architecture”
12.00–12.45	Urs Primas (Zurich): “On Typical Streets”
12.45–14.00	<i>Joint (Lunch) Break</i>
14.00–14.45	Luca Lanini (Pisa): “The Permanence of Type. Mies van der Rohe’s Patio Houses”
14.45–15.30	Fabio Tommy Pellizzer (Venice): “The Interplay of Familiar and Unfamiliar”
15.30–16.15	Gabriella Cianciolo Cosentino (Cologne): “A-typical Situations”
16.15 - ...	<i>Joint discussion, potential project idea</i>
	<i>Farewell</i>