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UNIVERSITÀ  
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Università  
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di Verona

**CORSO DI DOTTORATO IN STUDI STORICI, GEOGRAFICI, ANTROPOLOGICI**

**Seminar**

**From the spaces of perception to the spaces of politics.  
Collisions, changes and resonances in times of pandemic crisis**

**Padova, 22nd-23rd June, 2021**

The Seminar is organised by the PhD students, cycle XXXV of the PhD Programme  
in Historical, Geographical and Anthropological Studies  
(University of Padova, University Ca' Foscari Venezia, University of Verona)

## Introduction

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year of the spread of SARS-CoV-2, a virus capable of deeply undermining the supporting structures of our social systems: the Covid-19 pandemic has represented much more than a health crisis, with far-reaching political, cultural, social and economic effects. The current situation raises fundamental questions about our very individual and collective existence, and shatters many narratives and interpretations. The crisis has not only highlighted a series of unprecedented problems and issues, forcing us to make an effort to reflect, but has also acted as a strong accelerator of social and economic processes, triggering changes and conflicts, while opening up new possibilities.

The pandemic has brought entire economic sectors - one among all, tourism - to their knees, forcing us to radically rethink consolidated, exclusive and "frictional" models and processes (Rabbiosi, 2019). This crisis has caused impacts on mobility, on activities and work modes, on social relations, on the management of collective and production spaces; it has justified the creation of new forms of discipline and "perceptual fencing" (Ascari, 2019), placing local, regional and national governments in front of difficult choices, attempting to face the enormous health, economic and social challenges.

The measures put in place to contain, slow down and mitigate the spread of the virus have radically disrupted society and the economy, transforming socio-spatial relationships down to the most intimate threads of daily life, delimiting mobility, reconfiguring the production of space and territory, and finally altering perceptions of place.

And while the Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing, it is very difficult to hazard a meaningful assessment of the cultural, political, socio-economic, environmental, security - just to name a few - consequences of the crisis. A dramatic picture is emerging, in which inequalities are exacerbated, precariousness and unemployment have exponentially increased, and new spaces of social distress and marginalization have been created.

In this context of radical uncertainty, we can only sketch future scenarios, analyzing the phenomena underway and trying to interpret them as signs of a possible world to come. Foreseeing clear directions, however, is currently impossible.

In this situation of precariousness and indeterminacy, we are aware that the pandemic has not acted in a socio-political vacuum; on the contrary, it has exacerbated the pre-existing contradictions of an unbalanced and predatory model of development. The pandemic event represents the crisis of a world, and as such, it is revelatory: it has the ability to bring to light the scaffolding that supports our social world. A plausible approach, therefore, seems to us to be that of deciphering the signs that come from the past, although "without inauthentic nostalgia" (Teti, 2020), in order to anticipate what seems unpredictable.

Similarly, the pandemic confronts us with the need for new paradigms in order to be able to understand the present time, characterized by the inexorable sign of uncertainty. Michele Lancione and AbdouMaliq Simone (2020) have proposed, for example, to reflect on the concept of *bioterity*, a renewed form of biologically structured austerity, which helps to explain how the various war strategies deployed against the virus have clearly contributed to strengthen the already existing and latent mechanisms of austerity and repression, normalizing them.

In such a scenario, it seems more urgent than ever to carry out collective reflections to read the pandemic in all its complexity, as a phenomenon of rupture of existing balances and as a possible engine of new assemblages.

Even though it is hard to understand the complexity of the situation, it is now essential to be able to develop a critical knowledge that can help us understand the circumstances, open new avenues of investigation in the face of the unprecedented "geographies of Covid-19" (Rose-Redwood et al., 2020) and thus make sense of what is happening, building new future possibilities.

Through a geo-anthropological perspective and starting with exchanges between and with young researchers, the seminar aims to reflect on the meaning, the territorial impacts and the possible future scenarios of the Covid-19 pandemic, on a local and global, individual and collective scale.

How the pandemic has changed the way we feel and perceive the world? How did the crisis and its governance act in the spatial dimension? What have they caused? Did the upheavals and adaptations of perception take on a primary role in configuring the possibilities of inhabiting the crisis and resemantizing it outside of a paradigm of normalizing disaster and noxiousness? Or have they bowed to the increased structural violence of an inherently unjust model of development?

In order to highlight the circularity between theory and field research, typical of the geographical and anthropological disciplines, we chose to address the discussion towards **three wide-ranging critical nodes**, which can be a stimulus for contributions framed in a theoretical-interpretative nature with references to case studies and research experiences having a strong territorial characterization:

1. **collisions, clashes and contrasts** between spatial practices - perceived, experienced and/or narrated by politics;
2. **changes and re-configurations** of economic, social and environmental scenarios already underway, accelerated or decelerated by the pandemic;
3. **resonances and assemblages** of signs and traces of the past that resurface in the present suggesting, perhaps, paths of restart.

Adopting a mobile gaze, able to move on different scales, with the seminar we intend to try to give an answer to these questions, in the hope of opening new, fertile collective paths of reflection and study.

### Information, deadlines and how to apply

The conference will be held **online** on **Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd June 2021**.

The sessions will be introduced by:

- **Pierpaolo Ascari**, Università di Bologna, Dipartimento di Architettura
- **Valentina Bonifacio**, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici
- **Michele Lancione**, Politecnico di Torino, Dipartimento interateneo Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio
- **Chiara Rabbiosi**, Università di Padova, Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche Geografiche e dell'Antichità
- **Vito Teti**, Università della Calabria, Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali

PhD students, post-docs, academic and independent researchers, from different disciplines, Italian and international, are invited to send their proposals. Contributions from any field of study will be accepted; the Organizing Committee will privilege proposals with a geographical and/or anthropological slant, but will not limit its selection to these. Contributions in Italian and English will be accepted.

The purpose of the seminar is to stimulate an interdisciplinary discussion that, starting from territorial analysis, can bring out conceptual knots useful to deal with the pandemic event; to bring to light problems too long and culpably neglected; to highlight traces of social, economic and cultural processes that reappear under the sign of urgency and uncertainty; to sketch possible new paths and directions of interpretation and action.

Those who wish to submit their proposal should send a **pdf file via email** to **seminariopercezionipolitiche@gmail.com**, specifying:

1. First and last name
2. University, institution or context of origin and position
3. Short biography (500 characters maximum, including spaces)
4. Title of the intervention
5. Abstract (1500 characters maximum, including spaces)
6. Indication of 1 to 2 among thematic nodes to which the abstract could be associated

The **deadline** for submission of abstracts is **May 20th, 2021**.

The Organizing Committee will notify acceptance of abstracts received by **June 4th, 2021**. Selected presentations will have a maximum duration of 20 minutes.

### **The Organizing Committee (Phd Course in Historical, Geographical, Anthropological Studies - XXXV Cycle)**

Silvy Boccaletti, curriculum Geographical Studies  
Antonia De Michele, curriculum Geographical Studies  
Sabrina Meneghelli, curriculum Geographical Studies  
Enrico Milazzo, curriculum Anthropological Studies  
Chiara Spadaro, curriculum Geographical Studies

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