



9-10 November 2023, Florence, Italy

TERRITORIES AND IDENTITIES

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON BELONGING

Conference description

The issue of identity often brings to mind that of territorial affiliation. However, today, the connection between place and identity is increasingly expressed in terms of exclusivity, nationalism, localism, and even xenophobia and aggression. In other words, the question of identity appears to be dominated by right-wing perspectives. Leftist critical and radical thinking often avoids discussing themes of territorial identity, out of fear of slipping into right-wing discourses. However, these themes remain fundamental pillars of many radical social movements around the world, from the No TAV protests in Italy to the resistance of the Standing Rock Sioux in the US, from the defence of urban commons and neighbourhoods in Western metropolises to struggles for autonomy and self-determination in places like Chiapas and Kurdistan.

How can we develop a critical understanding of the relationship between identity and place? Are territories and identities fixed in space and time, or do they change over time? How can we define identity, given its multifaceted and dynamic nature? What methods can we use to investigate territorial belonging across different geographical scales and cultural and political contexts? Finally, what kind of identity and territorial belonging emerge in emancipatory and anti-colonial struggles, and how do these movements challenge dominant discourses?

In 2004, geographer **Doreen Massey** explained the reason for a **relational understanding of place**:

The aim initially was to combat localist or nationalist claims to place based on eternal essential, and in consequence exclusive, characteristics of belonging: to retain, while reformulating, an appreciation of the specific and the distinctive while refusing the parochial.

To approach the relationship between identity and place from a critical and radical perspective, we need to navigate a delicate balance between **acknowledging the importance of territorial specificities and avoiding the risk of parochialism**. This requires recognizing the complex interplay between universal and situated knowledge, and between fixity and change. We must also be mindful that every struggle takes place within a web of discursive, material, social, emotional, and historical practices and relations that are constantly in flux. As a result, identities and territories are shaped by ongoing negotiations between the local and global (and what is often in the middle, like the nation), the past and future, and various other forces that influence our sense of self and place.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This conference aims to explore critical perspectives on the relationship between identities and territories, including theories, methodologies, practices, and tools for understanding this complex interplay. We encourage the submission of both theoretical and empirical papers, and we are particularly interested in the following themes:

- Social movements and the importance of place
- Local struggles (environmental, anti-gentrification, etc.) and their relation to local identity
- Left-wing patriotism
- Identity politics and nationalism on the Left
- Strategies for home-making among migrants
- The relationship between local struggles, migration and identities
- Anti-neoliberal glocal movements
- The role of space, place, movement, and belonging in shaping identities
- Grassroots internationalism and its relation to territorial belonging

We welcome papers that examine both European and non-European contexts and encourage early-stage researchers and young scholars to participate.

The conference is scheduled to start at 10 am on November 9th and end at 1 pm on November 10th. In the afternoon of November 10th, a **workshop** will be held to explore the feasibility of establishing a *Network of Critical Studies on Territories and Identities* in Italy. All participants are welcome to join the workshop and share their thoughts and ideas.

WHEN AND WHERE

9-10 November 2023

Department of Social and Political Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS). Palazzo Strozzi, Piazza Strozzi – 50123, Florence, Italy.

IMPORTANT DATES

21 July 2023: Deadline submission of abstracts

25 August 2023: Notification of selection

27 October 2023: Submission of papers

9-10 November 2023: Conference

10 November 2023: Workshop

HOW TO APPLY

To submit your paper, please email an abstract (400 words maximum) and a short bio (100 words maximum) to territories.and.identities@gmail.com. Please attach the abstract and short bio as two separate PDF files, with the former named after the title of your paper, and the latter named after your name and surname.

If your paper is accepted, we expect to receive the paper (even if it is a draft or a work in progress) by 27 October 2023. Your short bio and paper will be circulated among the presenters before the conference.

There is no registration fee, but accommodation and travel costs are to be covered by participants.

Attendance is free and open to anyone

Organising Committee: Francesco Ventura, Jacopo Custodi (SNS), Aida Kapetanovic (SNS), Manuela Caiani (SNS).