

Research Article

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Space...for alternative space

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The alternative space is not just a different kind of material space, a physical location as alternative to conventional space, nor a simple passive and neutral territory. It is a relational framework concept, active and, most of all, social. It is a space defined by relationships, created and recreated through the significances given by people. It becomes a space of social practices that require the involvement of sensory, cognitive and emotional individual decoding and assigning specific meanings. Perceived space, mental space, the third space are some possible names of this entity that interacts constantly with each of us. From this perspective only one approach, one science is not able to coherently study such a space. Contributions of many related areas are needed in order to have a holistic approach to the subject.

„Kaleidoscope” is an informal academic group created in order to gather interdisciplinary researchers interested in the subject of alternative spaces. Fascinated by the research potential of the concept, under the auspices of Kaleidoscope, in partnership with the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest and supported by the ARCUB (Cultural Center of Bucharest), an international Conference „*Kaleidoscope Space. Interdisciplinary perspectives on alternative spaces*” was organized in December, 2015, in Bucharest. Researchers from different fields such as sociology, anthropology, geography, urban planning, arts, psychology, architecture, literature, history have been invited to present papers that address the multifaced aspects of alternative spaces. The aim was to offer a space (what else!) for vivid discussions on the concept of space, to promote the concept of alternative/nonconventional/informal space and to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration in the future.

We suggested a large spectrum of possible themes to be discussed: mental geography-perceptions on the space; social space and sociability; imaginative geography; methodological innovations in studying

alternative spaces; geoteology; spaces in arts/the art of space; geocritics; gendered spaces; intersectionality of space; non spaces/trans-spaces/in between spaces/meta spaces; smart places, etc.;

This issue of the Journal *International Review of Social Research* is a follow up of the conference, representing a selection of the papers presented during the meeting. The articles included come from various domains and offer just a starter to the great research potential offered by the theme.

The volume opens with the paper produced by the invited key note speakers in the Kaleidoscope Conference-professor **Craig Young** and Dr. **Duncan Light**. Their article

(„Interrogating spaces of and for the dead as ‘alternative space’: cemeteries, corpses and sites of Dark Tourism”) deals with the study of spaces associated with death, dying and bodily disposal and the dead body itself, spaces that have been marginalised in most academic disciplines. By focussing on three interlinked spaces: cemeteries, corpses and sites of Dark Tourism the article argues that due to increased presence of death and the dead body in a range of socio-cultural, economic and political contexts „both studies of, and some spaces of, death, dying and disposal are becoming less ‘alternative’ but remain highly ambiguous nonetheless”.

Anda Becut maps in her article “Alternative Spaces of Cultural Consumption. An Analysis of Bucharest Urban Culture” the independent cultural urban spaces in Bucharest highlighting the specificity of these hybrid spaces and also analysing the customers’ attributes depending on age, education and occupation. The article discuss also the manner of negotiating the culture-business relation between the participants, the established limits and the tensions and strategic alliances give more information on how economic and cultural spheres are and can be integrated.

A sociological approach to the subject is offered by **Adina Manta** in her paper „Fluxus Spaces as Alternative Cultural Spaces. A social cartography of the urban cultural scenery”. Through the methodological lens of bricolage and by mixing methods from mental geography, psychology and sociology, this study explores

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the alternative cultural spaces in terms of its pluralism, managing to identify a new conceptual framework, namely the fluxus space- cultural spaces situated at the intersection of public-private, old-new, informal-formal, legal-illegal expressions, playing an important role in artistic development and in the urban and community regeneration processes.

Considering that the literary works represent a genuine source for researching and understanding the geographical space **Theodor Cepraga** brings literature into the discussion on alternative spaces. The paper (“The Uprising” Novel Map. Real and Imaginary Space in Liviu Rebreanu’s Vision”) explores the map used by the writer Liviu Rebreanu for one of his novels using cartographical, historical and literary sources with the aim of understanding how the author reshaped the real space in conformity with his needs and explaining how

these kind of maps could be interpreted using a geocritical approach.

Cristian Ciobanu’ s article “Space and Time Perception and the Geopark’s Communities. From Mythical Geography to Heritage Interpretation” starts from presenting a good practice of protecting a geographical areas–the Hațeg geopark in Romania and moves on to the discussion of the theoretical framework for working with popular geographical knowledge, its practical uses in heritage interpretation: strategy, infrastructure, identity and perpetuated cultural values.

We thank the authors for their participation in the first edition of the Kaleidoscope Conference and for their contribution to this issue of the Journal. We hope many others will join our fascination with the theme of alternative spaces and invest time, energy and creativity in researching them from an interdisciplinary perspective.