

Writing Cities: 'When spaces speak, what do they say?'

Third Writing Cities Workshop

Cambridge, MA, USA

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The purpose of this workshop is to reflect on how the way in which we view cities has a bearing on how we write and ultimately produce knowledge about the city, and how our words in turn might have an impact on cities.

We are inviting graduate researchers from LSE, MIT School of Architecture and Planning, MIT Science Technology and Society Department, Harvard Graduate School of Design and Harvard Law School, who have the city as their object of investigation to engage in a reflection on the views, understandings, and sensibilities that underpin their research and writing on the city, and the implications of their writing for the city.

What we write about cities, and how we write about cities? The built environment is both a product of design that we speak about at all stages of its life, from planning to use, reuse, and destruction, and an exterior thing that speaks back to us. When spaces speak, what do they say? What are the semiotics of space that make the built environment readable? In the realms of art, law, activism, and design, what are the codes in which space performs? How do spaces serve as memory, as artifacts of past thought that condition both the present and possibilities for the future?

Equally important, how do we write about cities? Writing Cities invites reflexive manuscripts that address issues of urban space from a multitude of perspectives. In examining how we talk about space across various disciplines – the methodologies we use, how evidence is presented, how truth is established, how space is translated – we seek to communicate more productively about our common interest across our several disciplines. By engaging each other's work, we seek to gain critical and productive perspective on the limitations and assumptions of our own disciplinary habits of writing.

Writing Cities encourages experimentation, and welcomes novel and cutting edge stylistic and substantive work, running the gamut from the strictly academic to fictional narrative, and including all the many forms that lie between. Together we will push the envelope of how we think and write about cities.