



Architecture  
and the space  
of information,  
intellect and  
action

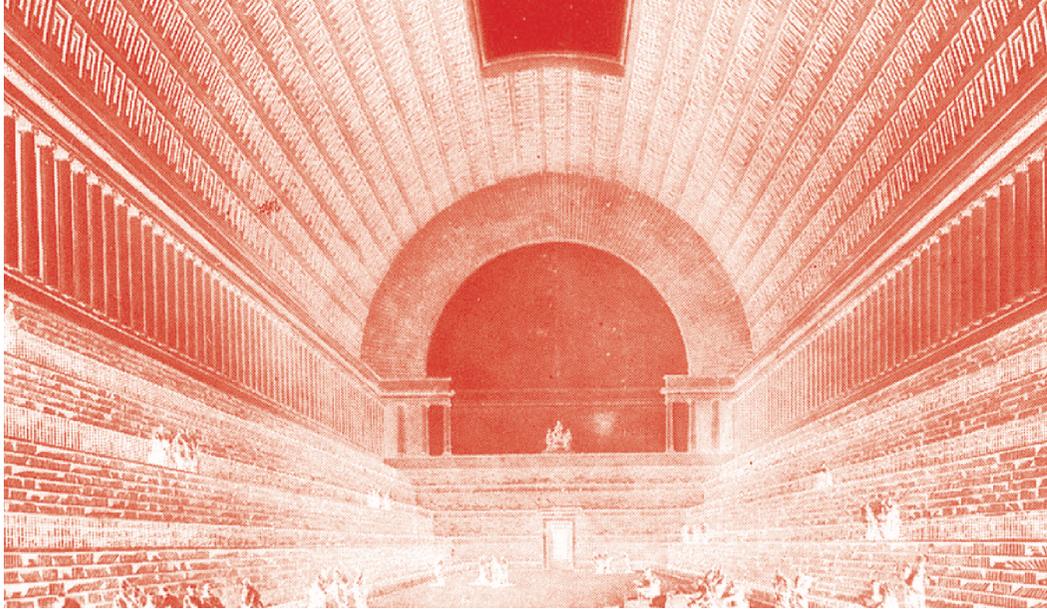
# ANALOGOUS SPACES

15–17 May 2008

Ghent University

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The International Conference on Analogous Spaces interrogates the analogy between spaces in which knowledge is preserved, organized, transferred or activated. Although these spaces may differ in material, virtual, or operational ways, there are resemblances if one examines their 'structure,' 'form' and 'architecture'. How do these spaces co-exist and interrelate?



The conference seeks papers on the following types of spaces:

architecture and elements of the built environment (museums, libraries and archives, warehouses, ministries, administrative towns, world capitals, physical infrastructure, functionalist urbanism, etc.);

information storage and data processing (databases, information retrieval, data mining, conceptual maps, scholarly communication, search engines, etc.);

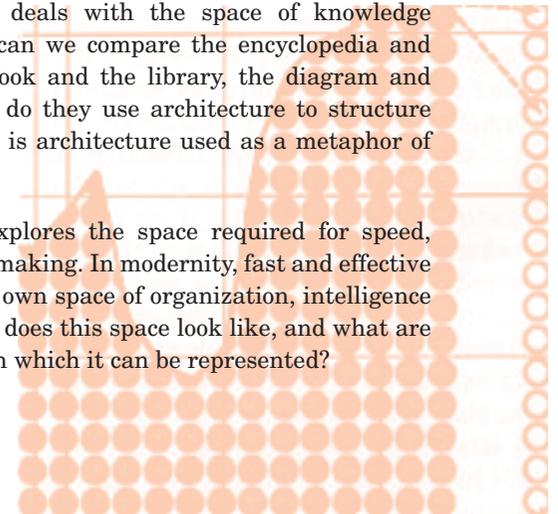
the architecture of “the book” (contents and layout of atlases, scientific and scholarly treatises, encyclopedias, guides, manuals, children’s books etc.);

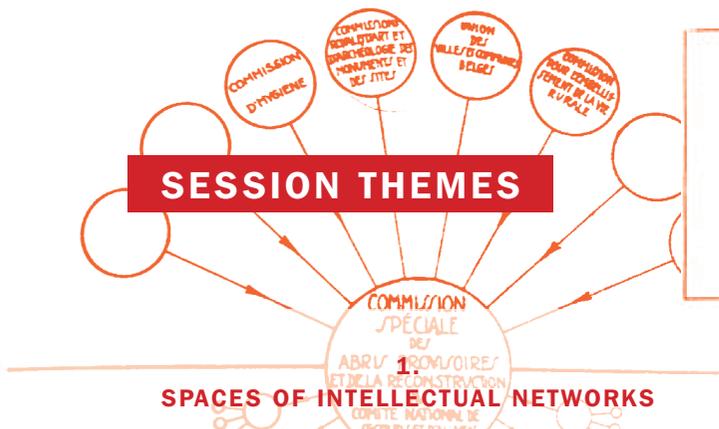
organizational schemes and diagrams (organigrams, functional diagrams, visual language, interfaces, artificial intelligence, taxonomies, classification systems, itineraries, etc.).

Conference papers should examine analogical relationships between these types of spaces by investigating how they produce, accumulate, order, conserve, distribute, classify, and use knowledge.

The conference will be organized around three main themes:

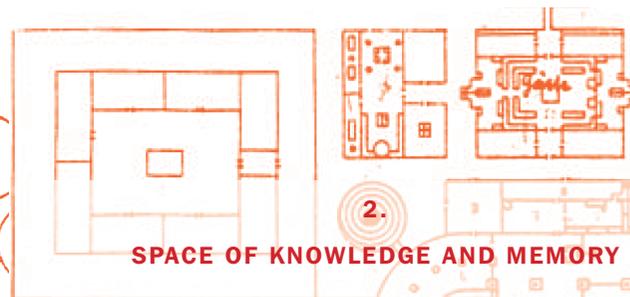
1. The first theme explores spatial analogies in terms of social and intellectual networks. What are the geographic relationships and/or technological affordances that support or inhibit the development of such networks? What constrains their development and effectiveness and how do different kinds of network models help in understanding their formation, evolution and dissolution.
2. The second theme deals with the space of knowledge and memory. How can we compare the encyclopedia and the museum, the book and the library, the diagram and the database? How do they use architecture to structure knowledge and how is architecture used as a metaphor of memory?
3. The third theme explores the space required for speed, action and decision making. In modernity, fast and effective action generates its own space of organization, intelligence and feedback. What does this space look like, and what are the different ways in which it can be represented?



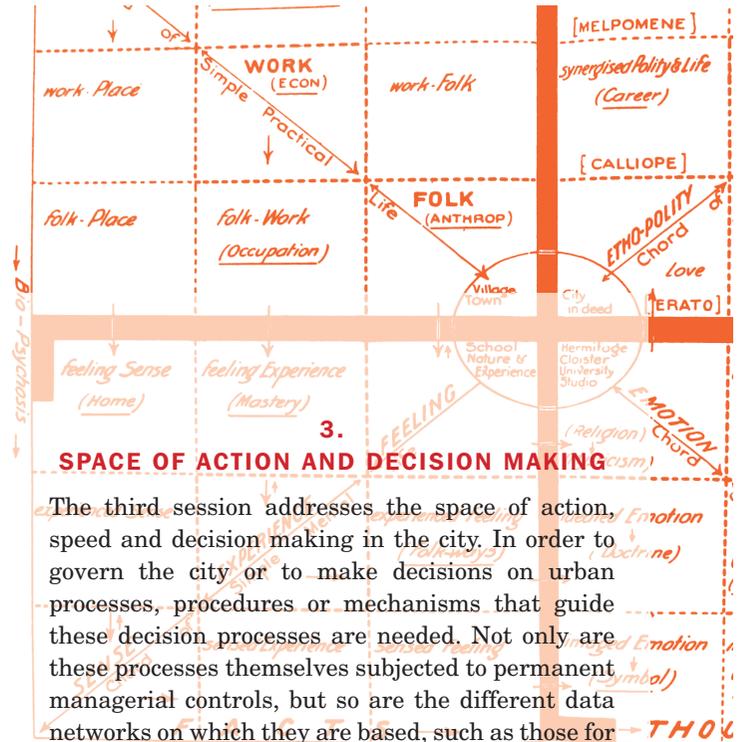


### SPACES OF INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS

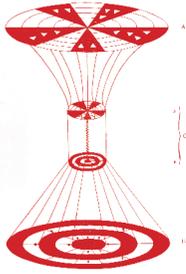
Papers in this session of the conference will examine theoretical and historical perspectives on intellectual networks. The focus is on (but not limited to) the early twentieth century when European intellectuals such as Paul Otlet, Edmond Picard, Emile Vinck, René Worms, Patrick Geddes, Wilhelm Ostwald, Otto Neurath and Le Corbusier not only participated in, but also founded and developed different (trans-)national networks. How are we to capture the dimensions and interconnections of the networks in which figures such as these were involved? And how do other intellectual and cultural networks centered in different nations function in terms of cooperation or competition? How can we map or describe the space of these networks which was often physically operationalized by the creation of institutions and associations, scholarly journals or bibliographical services, conferences, lecture series, and (world) exhibitions, but which also had an informal, interpersonal dimension? What was the impact of geographical scale on the development of these networks (local, national, transnational, international)? How were they influenced by changing technologies of communication (rail networks, the telephone, the telegraph, postal services, periodical publications, news bulletin, etc.)? How did individuals position themselves within these networks? Papers may utilize new conceptual tools to help us understand the modern physical and organizational spaces of intellectual networks, and authors are encouraged to include more recent theories of network analysis and social transformation stimulated by the virtual and online technologies of information.



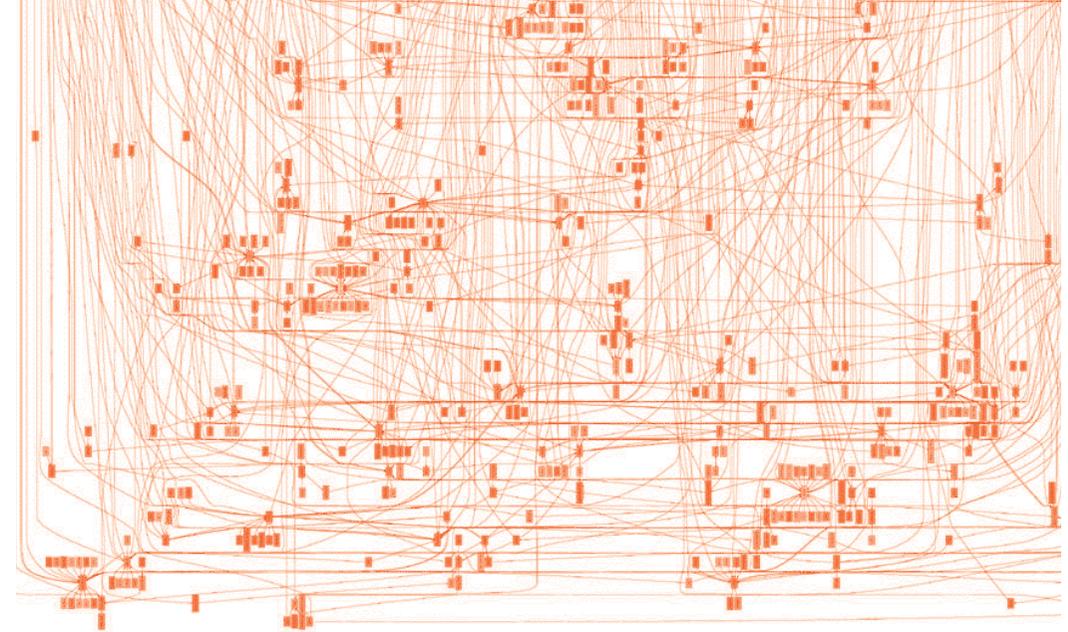
Papers in this session of the conference will examine spatial analogies related to the architecture of accumulation (archives, warehouses, etc.), the document as a space of knowledge (books, objects, image documents, statistical data, etc.) and the space of memory (libraries, museums, databases, records, etc.). The museum can be considered as an atlas or an encyclopedia. The space of the library is organized in part by systems for the classification and arrangement of documents. The space of the book is like that of a library where knowledge, texts and images are differentially situated and interrelated physically by conceptual structures (indexes, lists of figures, tables of contents, footnotes, bibliographies and so on). The architecture of databases is made comprehensible by means of diagrams. Architecture can be used in all of these cases both as a means of and a metaphor for storing and making information accessible. As a means, architecture expresses the function of an archive: the structuring, putting and holding of things in place and providing routes of access to and between them. But buildings and towns are also metaphors for information space, as reflected in, for example, Castells's concept of the informational city, information highways, and modern notions as information architecture or website architecture. Moreover, architecture, the city, information, and even philosophical texts and psychological theories have been represented in spatial terms by maps, guides, diagrams, classification and index systems, etc. How do requirements for the storage, management and accessibility of knowledge produce their own spaces? How are these spaces represented? What has been the impact of the development of artificial memory sciences and computer technology on the art and discipline of architecture itself?



The third session addresses the space of action, speed and decision making in the city. In order to govern the city or to make decisions on urban processes, procedures or mechanisms that guide these decision processes are needed. Not only are these processes themselves subjected to permanent managerial controls, but so are the different data networks on which they are based, such as those for water, electricity, telephony, traffic, meteorology, sewage, roads, land ownership, police, etc. To develop these networks with high precision, to legitimate choices in town planning practice or to develop effective urban planning policy, information and data must be gathered from different places, practices, institutions and disciplines. The descriptive tradition of the survey in the history of town planning for example, illustrates the importance of accumulating documented evidence. Its aim is not only to amass extensive knowledge about the city, but to synthesize and organize it in a goal-oriented way in order to be able to take action. The speed of information processing becomes a strategic dimension of decision making. Government bodies and administrative institutions look for ever more rapid and effective monitoring tools and expert systems. The papers in this session will deal with such questions as: How do these systems influence the organizational, legislative, bureaucratic and political structures responsible for city planning? How is this space of action and decision making supported, organized and represented?



**THE PAUL OTLET CASE STUDY** The conference considers Paul Otlet (Brussels 1868-Brussels 1944), Belgian intellectual, utopian internationalist and visionary theorist about knowledge organization, as a stepping stone. The life and work of Otlet are an inspiring case study, however they certainly do not delimit the issues addressed in this colloquium. Otlet, together with Henri La Fontaine, developed the Universal Decimal Classification system for bibliography and documentation, and founded the International Institute for Bibliography and the Union of International Associations. He and La Fontaine were also influential in the movement that led to the creation of the League of Nations. Otlet was also the co-founder of the Union Internationale des Villes. In the field of architecture he is especially known for his collaboration with Le Corbusier in creating plans for a Mundaneum or an international centre for information, education and science in Geneva. He was also a leading figure in the architectural design and urban planning of a model seaside community at Westend before World War I. All of his endeavours aimed at the international development and centralization of scientific and cultural networks.



## ABSTRACTS

**Papers:** Participants in the conference will submit abstracts for the papers they wish to present. Abstracts will normally be not more than 750 words. Abstracts will explain the methodological or conceptual goals of the papers and may use a combination of text, diagrams, illustrations, schemes, etc. to do so.

**Posters and multimedia presentations:** however this call is not only for formal papers but also for abstracts for posters, slideshows, movies, installations or other types of visual media relevant to the themes of the conference. Provision will be made for their display and presentation in the conference venue and for their authors to explain their work to the public.

The International Conference on Analogous Spaces aims to provide an interdisciplinary forum for researchers and practitioners from different disciplines such as Art and Architectural History, Urban Planning, Library and Information Sciences, Computer Science, Cultural and Urban Studies, Cultural History, Sociology, Knowledge Visualization, Information Architecture, and Cognitive Art.

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## CALENDAR

- 31 July 2007 ..... Deadline submission of abstracts  
31 October 2007 ..... Selection of papers  
31 March 2008 ..... Submission of final papers and other contributions  
15-17 May 2008 ..... Conference Analogous Spaces

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- > *Conference language:* English
- > *Conference venue:* Ghent (Belgium)
- > *Publication:* A selection of conference papers will be published
- > *Information:* [www.analogousspaces.com](http://www.analogousspaces.com)
- > *E-mail:* [analogousspaces@architectuur.ugent.be](mailto:analogousspaces@architectuur.ugent.be)

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Guy De Tré, Pieter Uyttenhove, Wouter Van Acker and Sylvia Van Peteghem of Ghent University.

*The International Conference on Analogous Spaces is an initiative of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning in cooperation with Ghent University Library and Computer Science Laboratory, Ghent University.*

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