

Habitus in Habitat III:
Synesthesia and Kinesthetics

The third conference in the series: *Habitus in Habitat*, will address *Synesthesia and Kinesthetics* as two key concepts for the understanding of the interface of habitat and experience, of engaging, presenting and perceiving phenomena of habitus as a component of a shared environment. *Synesthesia and Kinesthetics* will strive to engage questions of sensual embedded interaction and their habituations – and moreover it will expand this interdisciplinary inquiry to questions about the sociality and the cultures of sensory habitus.

In engaging with the environment, myriad sensations inform and direct us. To understand the influence on the development of our habitus it is futile to address them by just focusing on five discrete senses – but it is rather important to focus on the unifying process in the sensing and thereby to include phenomena exceeding this narrow view. While the five basic senses stand as the categorically distinct inroads to human perception, the focus mostly has been on the visible sense organs and vision rather than on complete subjective experience and the phenomena of the binding of different sense modalities in our experience. Beyond that, other senses have been proposed, which rely not of the immediate sensory material, but instead on the way in which we sense our surrounding habitat; senses such as memory, kinesthesia, or balance. By asking about their formation and their habituation in and by a culturally shaped habitat we wish also to address the question if there is something like sensual habitus – and if there is, how it could be defined.

Starting from this premise means to include different forms of sensing on the verge of emotionality and the coordination of the moving body – and most of all, it includes phenomena of synesthesia, as it is related to all kinds of sensorimotor capacities and binding phenomena. Synesthesia, though, is not just a neurological phenomenon – in the neurosciences, in phenomenological philosophy and in studies on phylogenetic and ontogenetic human development, and in linguistics it has been more and more recognized as a phenomenon of cultural relevance as well. Even the development of sensorimotor capacities seems to include states of synesthetic experiencing, which often are ephemeral, sometimes persistent – and sometimes perhaps even acquired. Synesthesia accordingly seems to relate to a phenomenology of cultural meaning as well as to artistic practices of modeling

perception in sensorimotor activity – and, moreover, it seems to share some significant traits with other phenomena of the embodied mind (such as metaphorical reasoning).

The cultural dimension in this process, is far from being exhaustively described in the neurosciences – and on the other hand, cultural concepts of synesthesia, arts and literatures implying it, are so divergent, that the phenomenon itself sometimes risks to disappear: Synesthesia here seems to confine with cultural phenomena ranging from the aesthetics of signification and metaphorical expressions to the basics of artistic experience. This double impasse leads us to the conviction that a phenomenon as complex as synesthesia and its relations with kinesthetics *can* only be addressed appropriately in an interdisciplinary exchange including both the humanities and the sciences.

In focusing on this phenomenon, though, the focus cannot be *only* on the development of a *personal* kind of experiencing. While subjective qualia may appear as the chasm that denies shared experience, development within a cultural habitat offers a path by which we may come to a collective sharing of sensory experience.

In order to get a focus on the phenomena at stake, we propose the following topics as points of departure: How does our spectrum of sensorial possibilities generate our habitat, and how does our habitat structure the boundaries of those sensorial possibilities, thus allowing for the development of community, as well as defining the boundaries of the individual sensing body? Is an embodiment under the condition of interfering sensuality in an environment an important point for conceiving of the relation of body schema and body image? How do habits emerge from repeated daily sensations? How does one define a sensual habitat as 'natural'? What is the base for the experience of sensual harmonies and disharmonies (of colors, pitches, smells etc)? What is the relation between our personal choreographed movements and orchestrated senses, and the spaces which we occupy, and thus in turn create as a sensual habitat for others? How might a perceptual and kinesthetic habitus arise from, and be a necessary component of shared habitats? How does the embodied knowledge implied by such a sensorimotor habitus relate to cultural meaningfulness – and how is it experienced as such?