



Special Session Proposal

Regional Science, outside of its Borders. How does space matter in fiction, media, and politics?

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Abstract

Space is a constituting element of our reality, a pervading continuum affecting individual and collective experiences.

The lens of regional science have allowed space to be recognized as pivotal in understanding the economic organisation of communities and societies. Indeed, today's interest of institutions and policy makers to the role of places in influencing both socioeconomic outcomes and behavioural outcomes is also due to the ongoing research carried on in regional science showing that the "world is spiky".

Physical space has always mattered in our social organisation; the importance of space for the socio-economic structure surrounding us is so internalised that often the concepts and processes investigated by regional science echo in the fictional production of Arts and media. One of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* central themes is the conflict between opposite ideas on changing the shape and geography of places. *Star Trek* and *Dr. Who* have fascinated generations of fans narrating the power of contact among diverse populations using spatial distance as metaphor. *Mad Max* and *Dune* pivot on the power structures deriving from spatial features from access to water to proximity to the socioeconomic spatial core.

The role of these regional science approaches in media is not just related to famous fictional works, many mediatic artcraft creating collective visions can be analysed from a regional science perspective: political speeches, newspapers, visual arts, games, education techniques, or marketing products. As well as the reverse process, although this is a more explored field, it is relevant for our discipline: how these works have shaped our spatial policies or economic dynamics? As Orwell's *1984* designed, in a dystopian way, our urban surveillance techniques.

The audience reach of these works is impressive, to the point that they are widely referred to in political discourses to disseminate ideas and in political science to analyse relevant research questions, indeed these massive cultural products help shape the individuals' perception of the world and the surrounding socio-economic organization.

This special session aims at offering a platform for presenting papers and contributions on how impactful fictional works have represented topics that are central to regional science.

The potential contributions to this session include:

- reflection on “places that do not matter” in high-impact fictional works
- similarity in framing of the core/periphery relationship between regional science and fiction
- territorial injustice in media and arts
- cultural diversity and space in fictional works
- impacts of fictional space representations on our real world

Concluding, this special session is open to all the works reflecting the potentiality of regional science to speak beyond its canonical spaces. Scholars interested in any representation of spatial social and economic dynamics coming from and going to larger audiences are warmly invited to present.