

II SPOTLIGHT Seminar

More-than-humans in the semi-peripheries
A SPOTLIGHT Summer School seminar on
ways of seeing and being-seen-as other species

Sept 29, 2025, Bucharest, Romania

Venue: Cinetic, UNATC (I. L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film)

Tudor Arghezi Street 3B, Sector 2, Bucharest, 020941, Romania

Organizers UNATC & University of Opole

Contact persons, Dr. Michał Wanke, UO, Dr. Anna Vlad, UNATC

Background

SPOTLIGHT Summer School will be held in Bucharest¹ again, funded by the University of St. Gallen and co-hosted by New Europe College and UNATC (I. L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film) on 21 - 28 September 2025. This is the fourth edition of SPOTLIGHT, which deals with audiovisual capturing of social phenomena in urban spaces in Central and Eastern Europe, such as identity of place (Opole, PL in 2022), migration and diversity (Józsefváros, Budapest, HU in 2023) and architecture and city dwelling (Bucharest, RO in 2024) or more-than-human relations (Bucharest, 2025). Co-organized interdisciplinarily between visual anthropology, human geography, sociology, and documentary filmmaking, it offers an immersive experience for the participating students from all over Europe.

For the second time, the SPOTLIGHT Summer School will conclude with a **conceptual seminar** held at UNATC on Monday, September 29, 2025.

Partners



University
of St. Gallen



New Europe
College



Free University
of Bozen-Bolzano



Organizația Națiunilor
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Catedra UNESCO pe
Bună Guvernare și
Universitatea din Buc

UNESCO Chair in Interculturality,
Good Governance and Sustainable
Development, University of
Bucharest

¹ SPOTLIGHT. Audiovisual capturing of dynamics of place attachment and identity in Central and Eastern Europe. Summer school on documentary filmmaking in social sciences

More-than-humans in the semi-peripheries.

On ways of seeing and being-seen-as other species

Semiperipheral status of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) creates path dependencies and renders knowledge produced in the region in an epistemologically handicapped position, further marginalizing the vulnerable voices, and especially those whose intersectionalities systematically drag them away from public vision or recognition. If humans of the non-dominant genders, races, ethnicities, or classes are out of sight, then the non-human actors tend to be rendered invisible, or acutely misrepresented. Similar arguments and distinctions - nature vs culture, humanity vs animality - have been used to dominate others - both human and non-human (Mullin 1999) and can be said to have contributed to the climate crisis we find ourselves in (De Castro and Danowski 2018). Other species' relationships to humans, the ultimately dominant group is defined by neglect, coercion, or exploitation. Also, their presence is often romanticized or aestheticized, depriving them of agency, let alone dignity.

Scholars argue for a transformative approach to urban studies that incorporates multispecies justice, which acknowledges the rights and needs of both human and non-human residents in the city (Wang 2024). The right to the city, traditionally focused on human residents, is also being reevaluated through a multispecies lens. Current research seeks to explore non-human placemaking in cities, enabling the planning of multispecies-friendly urban policies (Van Patter 2022), and address the rights of non-human urban residents, advocating for their access to urban spaces (Singhe 2022).

Some multispecies encounters are undesirable, creating unintended, feral (Tsing 2015) effects of human activity - colonialism, segregation, hyper-inequalities. These agents are making their agency known in a way that evokes disgust or detest. Another group of non-humans is anthropomorphised and enclosed in apartments, whereas others appear only as already processed meat or fur. Proposing that human and more-than-human interests are not at odds, but can benefit from being considered together, through the lens of multispecies justice (Chao et al. 2022), we look for proposals on city dwelling, planning, and inhabiting that serve a multispecies interests analysis of multispecies marginalisations.

This seminar delves into multilayered epistemological injustice against non-human actors of the social life in the CEE. We seek contributions accounting for the years of neglect of non-human actors who have been under attack in the region, but also those under threat due to the populist backlash throughout the region.

There is no participation fee. Organizers do not provide catering or other services.

Programme

Bucharest time (CET+1 hours)

09:15 Registration and build up

09:30 Welcome (Rector of the I. L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film, Professor Liviu Lucaci, Dr. Ana Vlad, Dr. Michał Wanke)

Session 1. Multispecies encounters in urban-rural contact zones

moderator: Ágnes Erőss

10:00 Drying Landscapes, Disrupted Flows: Visualizing Water and Its Absence in a British Columbia Park (Clara Kleininger-Wanik, University of Exeter, UK)

10:20 [online] Urban-rural entanglements – mapping asparagus fields as multispecies enquiry (Anna Tüdös, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy)

10:40 [online] Haunted Flows: Listening to Non-Human Witnesses of War from the Drains of Delhi to the Bridges of Mitrovica (Soma Basu, Tampere University, Finland)

11:00 discussion

11:20 coffee pause

Session 2. Seeing in urban spaces

moderator: Karina Gaibulina

11:40 [online] Visual Encounters in a Multispecies City: On the Rights to Privacy and to the City of Urban Pigeons (Isabel Pastor Fernandez, Universität Basel, Switzerland)

12:00 The wild in the city – beyond tamed nature in the case of urban nature protected areas in Bulgaria (Radoslava Kuneva, Centre for Advanced Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria)

12:20 Managing invisibility in semi-peripheries. People who use cannabis in Poland and Turkiye (Michał Wanke, University of Opole, Poland)

12:40 discussion

13:00 coffee pause

Session 3. Visibilisation/instrumentalisation/memorialisation

moderator: Michał Wanke

14:00 Use of Animals in Polish 21st-century National Discourse: Case Study of Krzysztof Kotowski's *Trzech gości w łódce plus wampir* (2022) (Patrycja Pichnicka-Trivedi, University of Warsaw, Poland)

14:20 Meat Modernity and Interspecies Injustice: Industrial Animal Agriculture in Socialist Poland (1945–1989) (Gabriela Jarzębowska, University of Warsaw, Poland)

14:40 Urban Riverhood in the Semi-Periphery: Prishtina as a Site of More-Than-Human Affirmative Memory (Olga Łojewska, German Centre for Integration and Migration Research, Germany)

15:00 Dacia the Automobile: More-than-Human Archives and the Ecology of Ruin (Ana-Cristina Irian, Bucharest, Romania)

15:20 discussion

15:40 Seminar closure

19:00 Social dinner (facultative, self-paid, venue: Simbio)