

Call for Papers

SHAPING THE FUTURE LIVING PLACES

ACT 3. BALANCING AND ALIGNING: POLYPHONIES OF AMBIANCES 1 - 2 DECEMBRE 2026, ATHENS, GREECE.

We are pleased to invite researchers, practitioners, decision makers, and scholars from across disciplines to submit proposals for our upcoming international conference **SHAPING THE FUTURE LIVING PLACES, Act 3. BALANCING AND ALIGNING : POLYPHONIES OF AMBIANCES**, that will take place at the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center** on December 1-2, 2026, **in ATHENS**. As societal challenges become more complex, the concept of “ambiance” has emerged as a critical lens for understanding how the sensory, cultural, and spatial dimensions of built environments interrelate to shape human experience. Rooted in the fields of architecture, urban studies, and ambiance research, this event — the third conference of COST Action CA23145 — seeks to explore the polyphonies of remarkable and ordinary ambiances through the plurality of voices, practices, and sensitivities that shape contemporary environments. We invite submissions that engage with the sensory, social, ecological, technical, and more-than-human dimensions of lived spaces, creating an opportunity to hear and confront the perspectives of ambiance specialists, engineers, architects, artists, inhabitants, institutions, and local stakeholders, in order to deepen our understanding of how ambiances are experienced, negotiated, and collectively shaped through everyday life and spatial transformations.

Main Conference Focus and Guiding Questions

Within the general theme of **WG3 — Balancing and Aligning: Polyphonies of Ambiances**, the conference explores how ambiances are collectively produced through the coexistence, negotiation, and confrontation of multiple perspectives, practices, and sensitivities. Rather than seeking consensus or a single definition of ambiance, the conference approaches ambiances as relational, plural, and evolving processes shaped by scientific, technical, architectural, artistic, social, ecological, and situated forms of knowledge.

The conference particularly encourages contributions that examine how diverse approaches to ambiances enter into dialogue, articulate differences, and open new ways of understanding lived environments. It seeks to create a space where remarkable and ordinary ambiances, expert knowledge and everyday experiences, measurable phenomena and sensitive perceptions, human and more-than-human perspectives may coexist within a shared polyphonic framework.

Submissions may address (but are not limited to) the following questions:

Polyphonies of Knowledge and Practice

How can scientific, technical, architectural, artistic, and situated practices contribute to shared yet plural understandings of ambiances? How do quantitative approaches, sensory experiences, narratives, and performative practices interact, complement, or challenge one another in the study and creation of ambiances? What forms of dialogue, mediation, or translation are needed to foster collaboration across disciplinary languages, methods, and sensibilities?

Ordinary and Remarkable Ambiances

How can ordinary everyday ambiances be understood alongside exceptional, remarkable, or intentionally designed atmospheres? In what ways do ambiances emerge through daily practices, uses, gestures, adjustments, conflicts, rituals,

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN AMBIANCES OF EUROPEAN CITIES

CONFERENCE SERIES OF COST ACTION CA23145

LAST UPDATE 06/07/2026 @ 08:00 AM

and collective experiences? How can architectural and urban ambiances reveal overlooked, fragile, or marginal forms of presence and sensibility?

Situated, Participatory, and More-Than-Human Approaches

How can inhabitants, local stakeholders, artists, engineers, architects, institutions, and researchers collectively participate contribute to in the understanding and shaping of ambiances? What methods and practices support the inclusion of situated, embodied, and non-expert forms of knowledge? How might more-than-human perspectives — including animals, ecologies, infrastructures, climates, materials, and technical systems — contribute to the polyphonies of ambiances?

Balancing Measurement and Experience

How can measurable environmental phenomena (acoustics, light, thermal comfort, air quality, movement, etc.) be articulated with lived and sensory experiences? What tensions, complementarities, or negotiations emerge between technical expertise and sensitive perception? How can ambiances be approached simultaneously as environmental conditions, social constructions, and lived situations?

Ambiances, Design and Transformation

How can workshops, experimental pedagogies, collective inquiries, and participatory processes inform architectural and urban design practices? What conceptual tools, vocabularies, or frameworks may help articulate convergences, tensions, and differences without erasing plurality? How can ambiances become operative within processes of spatial and environmental design? How can the field of ambiances continue to evolve as an open, adaptive, and polyphonic space of research, design and practice?

General Conference Focus and Guiding Questions

1st Topic | Defining an Ambiance

Potential topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Epistemological and philosophical foundations of Ambiance Theories
- Methods for in-situ observation and data collection (e.g., sensor networks, ethnography, mapping)
- Case studies of researching ambiance in architecture, urban planning, or public space design
- Comparative analyses across cultural, geographical, or historical contexts
- Technological tools for simulating or visualizing multi-sensory experiences
- Policy implications for more human-centred urban design
- Ethical dimensions of measuring, modelling, or manipulating ambiances.

This call for papers invites contributions that interrogate “ambiance” through a range of complementary lenses, including (1) the *Ambiances, Architectures, Urbanités* Laboratory and Cresson research group works, which foregrounds situated, multisensory and culturally embedded spatial experience; (2) Central-European and North American architectural phenomenology, which frames ambiance as an existential bond with place; (3) Japanese aesthetics, attentive to *ma*, light, void and spatial fluidity; (4) the Scandinavian “lived space” tradition, which examines domestic, climatic and sociopolitical atmospheres; (5) postcolonial and critical perspectives, viewing ambiance as a terrain of power, exclusion and resistance; (6) cognitive-science and neuro-architectural studies that quantify emotional and sensory responses; (7) interaction design and immersive arts, which stage technologically mediated sensory environments; and (8) transversal, ecosystemic approaches that conceive ambiance as a dynamic interface between material, symbolic and living systems. Proposals adopting other perspectives on ambiance are likewise warmly welcomed.

2nd Topic | Data collection and archiving

To build a shared corpus that sustains our inquiry into architectural and urban ambiances, we invite submissions that address the challenges of gathering, organising, and preserving resources, which aim to tackle some of the following questions:

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN AMBIANCES OF EUROPEAN CITIES

CONFERENCE SERIES OF COST ACTION CA23145

LAST UPDATE 06/07/2026 @ 08:00 AM

- What types of resources are essential for advancing our understanding of architectural and urban ambiances?
- How can we ensure that the corpus collected is diverse, inclusive, and representative of historical, contemporary, and interdisciplinary perspectives of ambiances?
- What sources (case studies, articles, interviews, regulations, oral history, etc.) offer the most reliable and relevant materials for our study of architectural and urban ambiances?
- How can we best structure, categorise, and index these resources for easy access and effective use?
- What quality criteria should guide the collection and validation of resources?
- How can we ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of these resources?
- What strategies can enhance user-friendly access for project members and researchers?
- How might we assess the broader impact of “Data Collection and Archiving” on the project’s goals and activities?

We invite submissions showcasing innovative data collection and archiving approaches, such as methodological reflections, workflow proposals, or case studies demonstrating their impact on architectural and urban ambiances.

3rd Topic | Balancing and aligning: Polyphonies of Ambiances | Main Topic

In this third topic, the upcoming first conference on defining Ambiance offers an important opportunity for members of the working group to begin reflecting on key challenges in our collaborative exploration of architectural and urban ambiances. To foster a coherent and inclusive framework, we invite submissions that directly address the following questions:

- How can diverse scientific, technical, architectural, artistic, and situated approaches enter into dialogue while sustaining plural understandings of architectural and urban ambiances without reducing their differences?
- What forms of tension, complementarity, negotiation, or resonance emerge between different perspectives on ambiances, and how can such differences become productive for research and design?
- How can concepts, vocabularies, and methods related to ambiances circulate across disciplines and practices while preserving the specificity and sensibilities of each approach?
- How can points of convergence between measurable phenomena, lived experiences, sensory perceptions, and everyday practices be identified and articulated within a polyphonic framework?
- What are the potentials and limitations of developing shared methodologies for ambiance research that remain open to plurality, situated knowledge, and disciplinary diversity?
- How can collective learning processes, experimental pedagogies, and participatory formats foster dialogue and mutual understanding between researchers, practitioners, inhabitants, artists, and stakeholders?
- How can participatory and iterative processes of validation contribute to the collective construction of knowledge on ambiances while remaining open to expert, situated, and more-than-human perspectives?
- How can the “Balancing and Aligning” task contribute to the emergence of ambiances as an open, evolving, and polyphonic field of research and practice, capable of connecting environmental, social, architectural, ecological, and sensory dimensions of lived environments?
- How can the “Balancing and Aligning” task create productive relations between the diverse concepts, methods, and perspectives developed across the working groups while sustaining the plurality of approaches to ambiances?

Contributions may propose conceptual frameworks, comparative studies, terminological tools, training methods, or collaborative practices that facilitate alignment without sacrificing diversity. Submissions may also present case studies, methodological experiments, or reflections on previous collaborative experiences that shed light on any of these challenges.

4th Topic | Innovation scouting

To broaden our understanding of sensory design and ambiances through concrete practices, we invite submissions that explore and document exemplary projects, tools, and methodologies that can inspire future developments. Contributions are encouraged to address the following questions:

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN AMBIANCES OF EUROPEAN CITIES

CONFERENCE SERIES OF COST ACTION CA23145

LAST UPDATE 06/07/2026 @ 08:00 AM

- What about sustainability, inclusiveness, and low-cost solutions derived from traditional or innovative design techniques? Are there under-recognized practices that deserve to be highlighted?
- How can we bridge the epistemological gap between engineering sciences and phenomenological approaches to process both quantitative and qualitative data?
- How are artistic practices, such as dance, performance, music, and art in general, relevant to ambience-oriented design?
- How can participatory methods-such as interviews, sensory walks, and co-design workshops-be useful for ambience-oriented design?
- What digital or analogue tools and technologies are relevant to Ambience-Oriented Design? (e.g., simulation, modelling, virtual and augmented reality)
- How are ambiances included-or imposed-in project specifications, and what are the consequences for designers?
- What tools do we have to consider the interspecies complexity in the design of ambience?
- How can we identify and select outstanding projects related to sensory experiences and ambiances?
- What criteria should guide the categorization of these projects (e.g., domain of application, scale, geographic location, sensory or methodological approach)?
- What methods and sources can ensure comprehensive documentation of these projects (including texts, photos, evaluations, and user feedback)?
- How can we evaluate and prioritize the selected projects based on their innovation, sensory relevance, impact, and sustainability?
- How should the documentation of selected projects be organized and made available as a useful database for the working group and broader research community?
- How can exemplary projects be effectively showcased through publications, exhibitions, presentations, or workshops within the network?
- What impact can this “Innovation Scouting” task have on the broader understanding and practical application of sensory design and ambiances in architectural and urban contexts?

Contributions may include project documentation, analytical comparisons, design research methods, or reflective critiques. We welcome both academic and practice-based inputs that support the identification and diffusion of innovative, ambience-sensitive approaches.

5th Topic | Outreaching and training

To expand the reach and applicability of our collective work on ambiances and lived spaces, we invite contributions that explore strategies for effective communication and knowledge transfer to various target audiences. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- How can we communicate what has been achieved so far in the most comprehensible and practicable way?
- What and how should we communicate about ambiances and lived spaces to **designers**, so that it supports design-oriented thinking and practice?
- What and how should we communicate about ambiances and lived spaces to **researchers**, to build transdisciplinary bridges and stimulate further studies?
- What and how should we communicate about ambiances and lived spaces to **end users**, to ensure their experiences, needs, and perceptions are acknowledged and integrated?
- What and how should we communicate about ambiances and lived spaces to **policymakers**, to foster better-informed decisions regarding spatial and urban policies?

Contributions may include communication tools; web-based content and digital platforms; public communication activities; training models; didactic formats; co-creation experiences; exhibitions; participatory media; policy briefs; stakeholder partnerships; the valorisation and transfer of research results; and any other innovative form of outreach adapted to specific audiences. Contributions may also support the identification of international best practices in the dissemination of knowledge on ambience-sensitive public space design. Another possible theme is the development of conceptual frameworks to improve understanding of ambience, comfort, experience design and sustainability. We particularly welcome reflections on how to make ambience-based knowledge actionable across disciplines and social roles.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN AMBIANCES OF EUROPEAN CITIES CONFERENCE SERIES OF COST ACTION CA23145

LAST UPDATE 06/07/2026 @ 08:00 AM

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts (500) should clearly state the research question, methodology, and anticipated findings or arguments. Presentation Papers (2000 words, up to 6 pages) are expected for accepted contributions and must align with the conference's central themes.

Accepted abstract for presentations and submitted papers before the deadline will be eligible for travel and accommodation funding, subject to available places and according to COST reimbursement rules!

Please submit your abstract or proposal via our online submission portal by 31 August 2026. Notifications of acceptance will be sent within 15 days of abstract submission, and full papers must be submitted by 30 October 2026..

Important Dates

Opening of the Portal for Abstract Submission:	First weeks of July 2026
Abstract Submission Deadline:	31 August 2026
Acceptance Notification:	Within 15 days after the abstract submission.
6 Pages Full Paper Deadline:	30 October 2026
Conference Dates:	1-2 December 2026

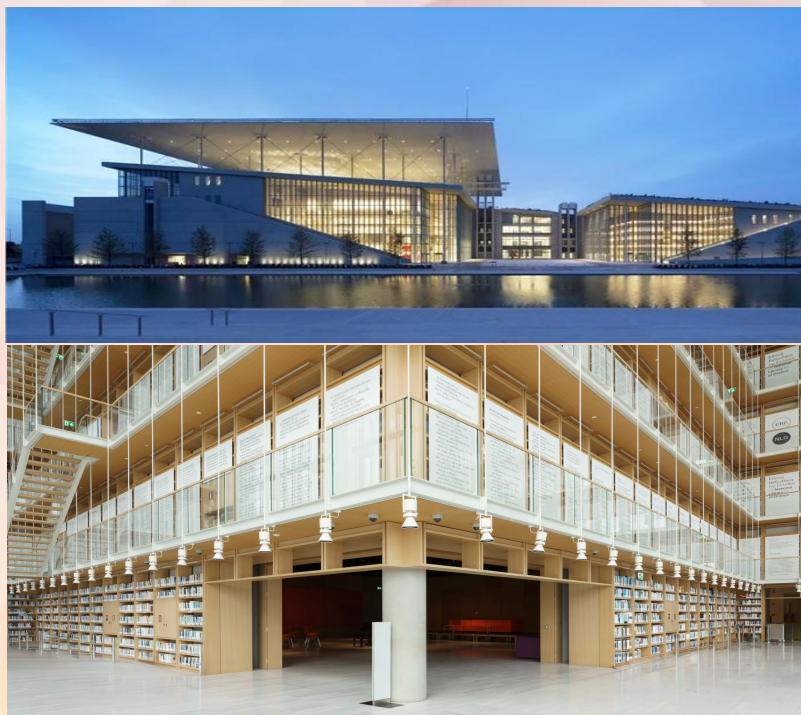
No registration fee

IMPORTANT: According to the COST rules, all reservations must be made on a refundable basis, so that they can be cancelled or modified in the event of changes to plans or dates. Under no circumstances should the conference dates be used as a condition for purchasing airline tickets or booking accommodation. We strongly recommend that you complete these arrangements as early as possible to benefit from reduced fares.

Please do not leave these bookings until the last minute, as reimbursements may be subject to capped amounts.

Contact and Further Information

For questions or more details, please visit our website at www.citysenz.eu or contact the conference organizers nremy@uth.gr, evangelia.paxinou@gmail.com and infos@citysenz.eu. We look forward to your contribution to this vibrant discussion on how to define, study, and create ambiances that meaningfully shape the future living places.



Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (left) and The Book Caste (right) (source : <https://www.snfcc.org/en/>)