SICK CITY 2026

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SICK CITY — REPROGRAMMING PATHOLOGIES OF URBAN SPACES

INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE / SPLIT, CROATIA / DECEMBER 3—4, 2026

SICK CITY: Reprogramming Pathologies of Urban Spaces

Locations: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Poljička cesta 35, 21000 Split, Croatia
https://maps.app.goo.gl/kduAcAAXq9W4dhm56

Museum of Fine Arts,
Ulica kralja Tomislava 15, 21000 Split
https://maps.app.goo.gl/VLFR3k2aVjDJR5t47

Dates: December 3–4, 2026

Organizers: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Postgraduate Doctoral Studies in Humanities, University of Split

Arts Academy, University of Split

Museum of Fine Arts, Split

Conceptual Framework

Every city carries its own symptoms. Urban space is continually shaped by tensions between preservation and transformation, memory and oblivion, growth and decay. Cities are living cultural ecosystems in which inherited structures encounter emerging realities. Each historical layer leaves material traces, while every intervention redistributes visibility, access, value and belonging. To speak of an urban pathology is therefore to ask how a condition comes to be perceived as harmful, who has the authority to diagnose it, whose experiences are excluded from that diagnosis and which futures a proposed cure makes possible.

Every pathology contains the possibility of transformation, just as every neglected space contains the possibility of a new urban future.

The concept of the “sick city” serves here as a critical and productive framework rather than a fixed medical analogy. Henri Lefebvre’s understanding of space as socially produced and his insistence on the right to the city reveal urban space as a field of collective struggle. Michel Foucault draws attention to the spatial organisation of power, discipline and exclusion; Marc Augé identifies the anonymity and disconnection of contemporary non-places; and David Harvey connects urban transformation to capital, inequality and competing claims over the city. Taken together, these approaches underscore how urban pathologies are produced through policies, economic pressures, cultural narratives, spatial design and unequal participation. Such pathologies can therefore be challenged, redirected and reimagined.

Sick City: Reprogramming Pathologies of Urban Spaces examines cities as sites of injury and possibility. "Reprogramming" encompasses critical diagnosis, repair, reuse, adaptation, counter-mapping, artistic intervention, collective care and speculative design. It does not call for the erasure of difficult histories or a total urban reset. It asks how inherited structures might be reconfigured or activated differently, how unresolved conflicts might be worked through, and how transformation might proceed without reproducing the exclusions it seeks to overcome.

Against this background, the conference asks how urban pathologies become visible and which symptoms remain hidden or normalised; who defines what is dysfunctional, obsolete, unsafe or out of place, and whose interests shape that judgement; how memory, heritage and cultural erasure influence the diagnosis and treatment of urban space; whether abandoned, marginalised or contested sites can become laboratories for more inclusive forms of urban life; how art, architecture, design, research, activism and community participation might generate counter-geographies that challenge dominant spatial regimes of visibility, access, value and belonging; and how cities might be transformed while retaining complexity, historical depth and the right to difference.

Thematic Areas

Urban wounds and visible symptoms: abandoned or unfinished buildings, ruins, infrastructural decline, pollution, environmental damage and climate vulnerability.

Public space under pressure: privatisation, securitisation, surveillance, the erosion of the commons, restricted access and the regulation of bodies and behaviour.

Tourism, capital and displacement: overtourism, gentrification, housing crises, extractive development and the transformation of historic centres.

Fragmentation and inequality: divided neighbourhoods, peripheries, informal settlements, segregation, invisible borders, unequal mobility and uneven access to resources.

Counter-geographies and spatial resistance: alternative cartographies, counter-mapping, informal routes, embodied mappings, subaltern spatial narratives and practices that challenge dominant regimes of visibility, access, mobility and belonging.

Memory, trauma and erasure: contested monuments, difficult heritage, suppressed histories, post-conflict landscapes, collective memory and urban forgetting.

Non-places and transitional spaces: transport hubs, shopping environments, temporary zones, vacant sites and spaces shaped by circulation, anonymity or waiting.

SICK CITY CONFERENCE INTRO

Artistic and cultural reprogramming: public art, performance, curatorial practices, tactical and site-specific interventions, community archives and urban storytelling.

Repair, care and participation: adaptive reuse, ecological restoration, commoning, citizen-led initiatives, inclusive planning and collaborative governance.

Speculative and digital futures: smart-city systems, data infrastructures, algorithmic governance, virtual space and alternative imaginaries of resilience and belonging.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

The conference is designed as an interdisciplinary forum for scholars, practitioners and artists working across architecture, urban studies and planning, art history, visual and cultural studies, heritage and museum studies, geography, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, literature, media and performance studies, landscape architecture, design, digital humanities and related fields. The conference aims to connect practice-based research, artistic research and critically grounded case studies, fostering dialogue across different disciplines and approaches.

SICK CITY asks how urban symptoms can be read as evidence of structural conflict and how diagnosis might become the starting point for collective transformation.


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→ **SESSION 2**
Urban Health, Care and the Politics of Space
Moderator: Anđelko Mihanović (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

11:05 – 11:25 **Eva Ferrari** (UCLouvain, Belgium):
Mapping Cholera: Statistics, Cartography, and Urban Space, 1830s–1860s

11:25 – 11:45 **Filip Bubalo** (International Scientific Society for Drystone Interdisciplinary Study, France):
The Marjan Palimpsest: Architectural Traces, Submerged Landscapes and LiDAR Revelations

11:45 – 12:05 **Solmaz Kive** (University of Oregon, USA):
Whose Symptom, Whose Cure? Gender and the Diagnosis of Urban Homelessness

12:05 – 12:20 **Discussion**

12:20 – 12:35 **Coffee break**

12:35 – 14:05 **Project REPER / Duška Boban**: *An Ecotone of Hope: The Blue Highway* (*Ekoton nade: Plava magistrala*)

12:35–13:05 Opening of the art installation as part of the Reper project
Location: Northern façade of the Faculty building

13:05 – 14:05 In conversation: **Duška Boban** (visual artist) and **Dalibor Prančević** (project founder and curator, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

14:05 – 15:50 **Lunch**

→ **SESSION 3**
Contested Landscapes: Urban Development, Heritage, Ecology and Spatial Experience
Moderator: Vedran Barbarić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

15:50 – 16:10 **Božo Kesić** (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia):
The Diagonal of Compromise: Three Cases of Capitalist Urbanism in Split, Croatia

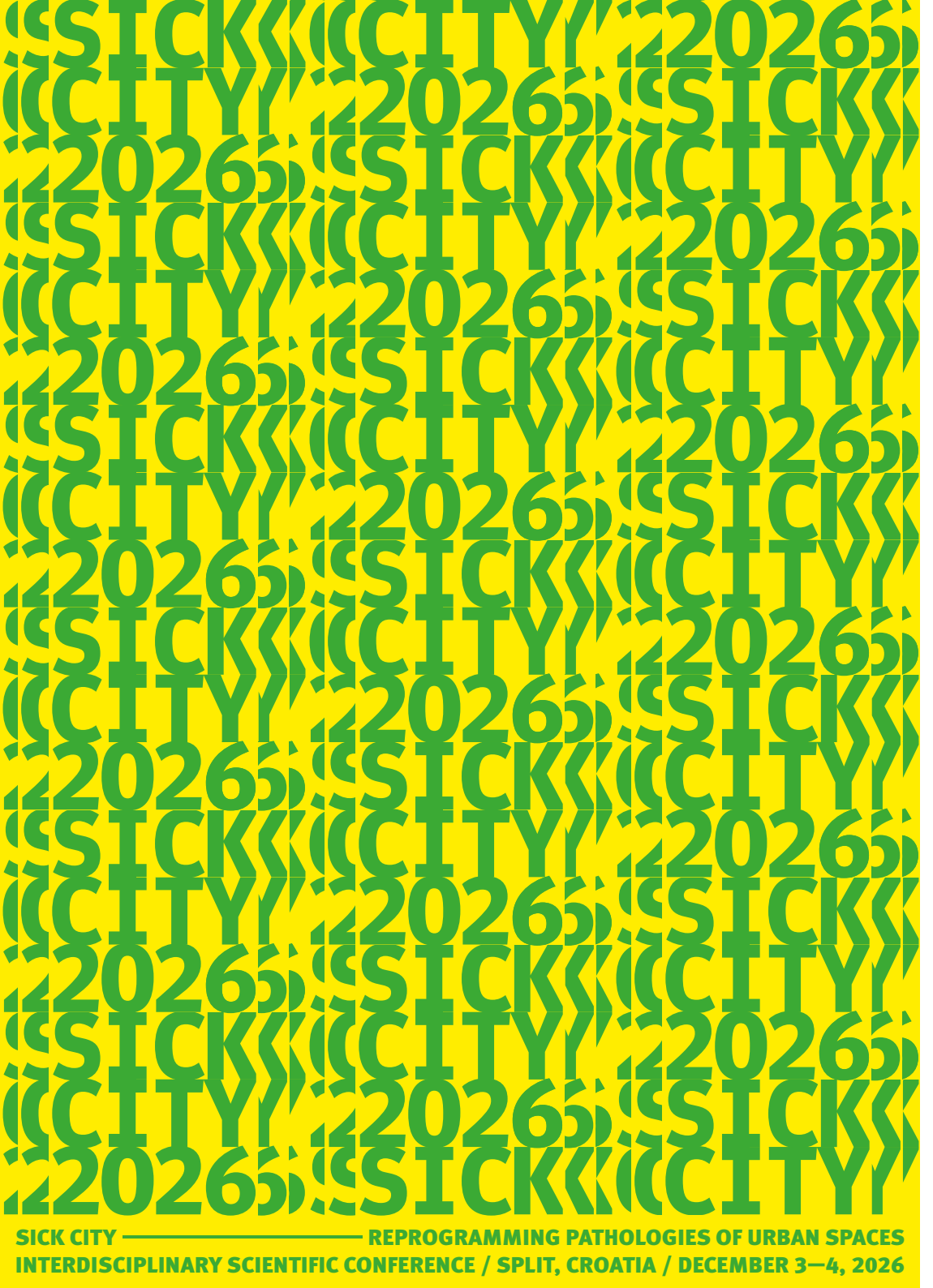
16:10 – 16:30 **Lana Stojićević** (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia) and **Sabina Oroshi** (Lapidarium Museum, Novigrad, Croatia):
At the Edge of Construction

16:30 – 16:50 **Patricia Počanić** and **Željka Miklošević** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia):
Contemporary Art as a Practice of Negotiating Urban Heritage

16:50 – 17:10 **Anđelko Mihanović** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Protecting Historic Centres from Overtourism: An Art-Historical Approach to the Case of Split, Croatia

17:10 – 17:25 **Discussion**

19:00 **Social gathering and optional dinner**
Location: *Allora Restaurant*, Poljička cesta 28A, Split



PROGRAMME DAY 2

Friday, December 4, 2026
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Poljička cesta 35, Split

10:00 – 11:00 **PLENARY LECTURE**
Toma Plejić (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy, University of Split, Croatia):
Großstadt
Moderator: Ana Grgić (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy, University of Split, Croatia)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

11:00 – 11:15 **Coffee break**

→ **SESSION 4**
Art, Participation and the Reclaiming of Urban Life
Moderator: Jasminka Babić (Museum of Fine Arts, Split)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

11:15 – 11:35 **Ivica Mitrović**, **Dora Vanette** and **Oleg Šuran** (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia):
Communities and Futures: Jadran 590

11:35 – 11:55 **Jasmina Šarić** (Culture Hub Croatia, Split, Croatia):
Empowering Communities through Art: The New Patrons Model in Croatia

11:55 – 12:15 **Ivana Vukušić** (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia):
After the Diagnosis: What Performing Arts Do with This City

12:15 – 12:30 **Discussion**

12:30 – 12:45 **Coffee break**

→ **SESSION 5**
Urban Memory, Ruins and Reimagined Histories
Moderator: Božo Kesić (Arts Academy, University of Split)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

12:45 – 13:05 **Ana Šverko** (Cvito Fisković Centre, Institute of Art History, Croatia):
Terms of Place: Ruin, Locus and the Limits of Placelessness

13:05 – 13:25 **Kit Messham-Muir** (Curtin University, Australia):
The Afterlife of a Yugoslav Spomenik: Trauma, Memory and Erasure at the Kozara Memorial Complex

13:25 – 13:45 **Patrycja Ignaczak** (University of Warsaw, Poland):
The Archive as Space: Outdoor Artistic Practices and Local Memory

13:45 – 14:05 **Katarina Podobnik** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia):
Seven Faces of the City: Reprogramming Rijeka's Layered Histories through New Media

14:05 – 14:20 **Discussion**

14:20 – 16:05 **Lunch**

→ **SESSION 6**
Literary Geographies of the Wounded City
Moderator: Srećko Jurišić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

16:05 – 16:25 **Petra Božanić** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Reading Cities under the Sign of War in the Literature Classroom

16:25 – 16:45 **Danijela Dadić** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Industrial Ghost Infrastructures as Sites of Collective Care in Contemporary US/UK Fiction

16:45 – 17:05 **Ivana Bošnjak** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Urban Pathologies of Zagreb, Amsterdam, and Naples in the Novels of Dubravka Ugrešić

17:05 – 17:20 **Discussion**

17:20 – 17:35 **Break**

→ **SESSION 7**
Language, Communication and the Right to the City
Moderator: Antonela Marić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split)
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

17:35 – 17:55 **Paolo Nitti**, **Valeria Pecorelli** (University of Insubria, Italy) and **Marijana Alujević** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Emergency Communication in Medium-Sized European Cities: Findings from a Linguistic Landscape Analysis of the Cities of Varese and Como

17:55 – 18:15 **Marin Slugan** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia):
Language as Invisible Urban Infrastructure: Belonging, Participation, and the Right to the City among Learners of Croatian in Split

18:15 – 18:35 **Marin Keršić** (Faculty of Law, University of Split, Croatia):
Which Right to the City? A Hohfeldian Reconstruction of an Urban Slogan

18:35 – 18:50 **Discussion**

18:50 **Closing remarks**
Venue: Aula Magna Marko Marulić (Grand Hall), second floor

Saturday, December 5, 2026
Various locations

10:00 **Guided Tour and Coffee Gathering at the Museum of Fine Arts, Split**
Location: Ul. Kralja Tomislava 15, Split
Hosted by: Jasminka Babić, Director

A guided tour of the Museum of Fine Arts' permanent collection, focusing on the relationship between art and society and the social engagement of artistic practices, followed by complimentary coffee and light refreshments for conference participants.

12:00 **Walking Tour: *The Marjan Palimpsest: Architectural Traces, Submerged Landscapes and LiDAR Revelations***
Meeting point: Waterfront side of Hotel Ambasador, Split
Led by: Filip Bubalo (International Scientific Society for Drystone Interdisciplinary Study, France)

A guided group walk exploring Marjan as a layered cultural and natural landscape, focusing on its architectural traces, submerged historical landscapes, and the insights revealed through LiDAR technology.

Scientific Committee:
PhD Marijana Alujević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Vedran Barbarić, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Marijana Erstić, Full Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Angela Fabris, Associate Professor (University of Klagenfurt, Austria); PhD Andrea Gialloreto, Associate Professor (University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy); PhD Ana Grgić, Associate Professor (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Sara Izzo, Full Professor (University of Salzburg, Austria); PhD Srećko Jurišić, Full Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Antonela Marić, Full Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Sanja Matijević Barčot, Assistant Professor (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Anđelko Mihanović, Assistant Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Snežana Milinković, Full Professor (University of Belgrade, Serbia); Viktor Popović, Tenured Full Professor of Art (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Dalibor Prančević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Alfredo Sgroi, Full Professor (Università degli Studi di Catania, Italy); PhD Ivana Tomić Ferić, Tenured Full Professor (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Nives Zudič Antonič, Full Professor (University of Primorska, Slovenia)

Programme Committee:
PhD Marijana Alujević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); MA Jasminka Babić, Director (Museum of Fine Arts, Split, Croatia); PhD Antonela Marić, Full Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); Viktor Popović, Tenured Full Professor of Art (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Dalibor Prančević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)

Organising Committee:
PhD Marijana Alujević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); MA Jasminka Babić, Director (Museum of Fine Arts, Split, Croatia); MA Ivana Bojčić, Senior Lecturer in English (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Božo Kesić, Senior Assistant (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Antonela Marić, Full Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); Viktor Popović, Tenured Full Professor of Art (Arts Academy, University of Split, Croatia); PhD Dalibor Prančević, Associate Professor (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia); MA Marin Slugan, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia)

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