There is a long academic history of reflecting on and imagining individual and collective human nature as situated in space. Indeed, the core issue in the history of human-environment relations has seen the development of competing definitions of place as either an abstract, geometric conception of space or as a more holistic and phenomenological understanding of place as a process of “distinct coming together” in space. Four major theoretical perspectives can be discerned in attempts that have been made to merge geographical/static and processual/dynamic description of space to date. Neo-Marxist thinkers, best represented by Henri Lefebvre, have focused on the social production of the spaces within which social life as lived. Then, agency-oriented scholars such as Robert Sack emphasize that places are inherently dependent on human experience and how network ties that produce places as changing constellations of human commitments, capacities and strategies are woven together through space by movement. Feminist thinkers such as Doreen Massey embrace pluralism and emphasized places as sites in the flow of social relations. Finally, drawing on the post-humanist ‘actor-network theory’, scholars such as, inter alia, Nigel Thrift have advocated the performative perspective on place, claiming that the latter is associational and emphasizing the materiality of places as open spaces created through fleeting practice. Building on the aforementioned variety of perspectives on space/place in contemporary societies, this one day international symposium looks at the variety of ways in which various communication-oriented social science and humanities disciplines approach space as the object of critical inquiry. During the symposium, scholars present ongoing work on diverse cases, historical as well as contemporary, that in different ways discuss the social imaginaries and meanings and/or material power of place and question the binary distinction described above. As the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has inspired scholars to rethink social practice as well as dynamic ways in which it is represented and communicated, we look at a variety of modes in which space is constructed as well as mediated as the key subject/object of social action. We cover topics as diverse as private property, commemoration and counter-monuments, place-making, workplaces as participatory in shaping educational practices, and the space of cinema in multipurpose community venues or use of space in neoliberal economy. The symposium forges a dialogue on place between scholars of media- and communication studies, film studies, gender studies, educational sciences and linguistics and aims at creating new, interdisciplinary avenues for thinking about place-space in the context of communication and social practice.

Confirmed Speakers/Discussants (in alphabetical order):
Helen Andersson, Örebro University, Sweden
Małgorzata Fabiszak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland
Sofia Hort, Örebro University, Sweden
Åsa Jernudd, Örebro University, Sweden