

CALL FOR PAPERS

2024

“LIMINALITY: THRESHOLDS & RITUAL”

We're delighted to introduce and invite you to explore our theme for Semiofest Porto 2024. Liminality will be our central topic, including multiple subthemes that occur within liminal thresholds, rites, and rituals.

Semiofest is a rich cultural ritual, a symbolic act whereby liminality and human ritual have always been earnest and playful. Liminality, an anthropological concept, represents a state of ambiguity and disorientation that marks the transition between different stages of life or social statuses, creating a liminal space where the individual or collective undergoes a transformation; they no longer hold their previous status but have not yet transitioned to the new one. This liminal period is a unique state where life stands still or is reversed, creating a betwixt and between experience, neither here-nor-there, this-nor-that, one-thing-not-the-other (Turner, 1977). Being both 'this and that' mirrors Semiofest's rite on its own terms.

Rites and rituals play a significant role in the experience of liminality, providing a structured framework for navigating the liminal space and facilitating the process of personal and collective transformation. Think of your own transitions through puberty, marriage, funerals, festivals, harvest, initiation rites of passage, etc. Liminal thresholds can exist as entry points through portals, doorways, arches, caves, psychological states, cultural contexts, or symbolic representations. They provide freedom for agency and choice, pushing boundaries, opening and closing doors, and expanding the frontiers.

Semiotics plays a crucial role in decoding the intricate language of signs and symbols in these transitional states for marketing and branding purposes. Unraveling the deeper layers of meaning embedded in liminality can inform the creation of meaningful experiences, facilitate brand transitions and foster collective engagement. We encourage you to consider how semiotics allows us to analyze the signs, symbols, and rituals that are employed within liminal contexts and explore their cultural significance. We would especially welcome contributions within the identified liminal subthemes:

- 1. The pandemic:** a liminal period, a limbo moment when the normal hierarchies disappeared.
- 2. AI:** on the intersection of everything else and all at once, along with playing a crucial role in shaping the future of humanity.
- 3. Climate crisis:** within an epoch of permanent liminality.

- 4. Migration:** social minorities, the disadvantaged and displaced, live on the periphery and are perceived as dangerous and holy.
- 5. Emergent rituals:** which events are marking time, and which experiences of passage host them?

More so than case studies within commercial semiotics, we encourage a broader exploration of liminality, i.e., open framing on how it might be a valuable approach in areas such as branding, categories or cultural exchange, design, and new media. Furthermore, we encourage its integration into areas such as education, welfare, and social enterprise. **Please submit your proposal of no more than 500 words in length by our NEW DEADLINE: Friday, September 18, 2023, at [easychair](https://www.easychair.com).** In your proposal, please clearly indicate the following:

1. Your name, organization, and job title
2. The title of your presentation
3. Indicate whether you would like to present a think piece, a position, a methodological innovation, or some other kind of format
4. Academic research/critique a 500-word abstract of your presentation
5. Three takeaways the Semiofest audience will benefit from in your work

Here are some recommended readings (and a short lecture) to familiarize yourself with Victor Turner's theory of liminality.

[Victor Turner: Liminal Experiences as the Grounding of Social Theory \(Chapter VII\)](#)

[THOMASSEN, Bjorn, 2014, "Liminality and the modern", Routledge \(Chapter I\)](#)

[A short introduction to Liminal and Liminoid](#)

And stay tuned! Our venue is an architectural threshold full of liminal spaces and ritualistic contrasts. Semiofest's purpose is well-aligned with the building's structure and philosophy; meeting within the gap between what's inside and outside will welcome attendees to enter the threshold of excitement and anticipation.

May 22nd – 24th, 2024, is when we'll gather to partake in chains of interactive rituals akin to something transformational.