

\*\*\*OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT\*\*\*

INTERNATIONAL SEMIOTICS INSTITUTE: FAREWELL TO KAUNAS, WELCOME TO  
OLOMOUC

Dear all,

After a long silence, time has finally come for an important announcement, something I do with a mix of emotions that range from great excitement to a hint of (positive) melancholy, but mostly a sense of hope, trust and optimism for the future. Starting from this Autumn 2022, the new home of the International Semiotics Institute shall be Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, under the direction of Assistant Professor [Tyler James Bennett](#).

As you all know, in 2013, after many shining years in Finland, under the guide of our dear Prof. [Eero Tarasti](#) and his team, the International Semiotics Institute moved to Lithuania, at Kaunas University of Technology, under my direction and with the invaluable help of a group of researchers and administrators that grew in number as the years went by.

During the "Lithuanian years", I'm very proud to say that we achieved many and more of the goals we had set. The institute became an actual unit within the university, equivalent to a department; it won projects, published countless articles and monographs; organized national and international events; established partnerships with academic and non-academic institutions; launched a multidisciplinary platform, called Numanties, whose outlets include a book series for Springer and the three editions of the International Congress of Numanties ICoN, to which many of you participated; and of course, ISI also hosted the 13th edition of the IASS-AIS World Congress of Semiotics. As we just concluded the 15th congress in Thessaloniki a few days ago, it is always a great reward to hear from my colleagues how much they enjoyed the Kaunas edition, its organization, its social events and how we made a bit of history by arranging the first plant-based, local and plastic-free catering (an example that is now followed by many universities around the world, and hopefully, one day, by IASS-AIS as well).

Then, as we reached that peak and started setting new goals, a number of institutional reforms and circumstances in our university, too long and boring to explain, suddenly made it impossible to maintain ISI at the conditions we had worked so hard to establish. So, here we were, facing the same situation that Eero and his team had to face back in 2013: we had to let ISI go, but at the same time we had to make sure that it could survive somewhere else in ways that would keep its tradition and would introduce significant innovations.

In the last five years, we began negotiations with many academic institutions around the world, in the attempt to ensure academic and historical continuity to the Institute. Our demands were few but extremely important: 1) keeping the same name: it was always "International Semiotics Institute", and it had to continue to be so; 2) keeping its precious library intact; 3) keeping its original logo (courtesy of our colleague and friend Prof. Altti Kuusamo); 4) keeping the institute alive and active, which also meant committing to relocate it in case problems occurred; and more generally, but not less firmly, 5) keeping

its vital scholarly spirit, its friendly atmosphere, its strive to balance tradition and innovation, and of course its effort to promote and advance semiotics.

Along the way, numerous universities showed interest in taking over the institute, but none of them was ready to commit to all five requirements. Some wanted to change name, some wanted to split the library among different departments, some were not in the condition to make long-term promises. And some, I regret to say, were simply not serious enough, making us waste a lot of time in delayed communications that led to nothing. As this was not enough, COVID-19 came into the scene, slowing things down even more.

Therefore, you may easily imagine our great joy and relief when Palacký University, thanks to the mediation of Prof. Kalevi Kull (to whom we are very grateful), stepped in. For the first time, someone was willing to commit to all our requests, with (just as importantly) the addition of an abundant quota of enthusiasm, competences, eagerness, and ideas that instantly convinced me that ISI was going to be in very good hands.

With Tyler and his team (from which I'd like to single out Dr. [Ludmila Lacková](#), whose help has been crucial throughout the whole process), ISI promises to continue its growth on solid ground, adding more "pins" to the map of semiotics (after having done so with cities like Imatra and Kaunas), and introducing new ideas, events and projects.

The Kaunas era of ISI thus finishes here. I wish to express my gratitude to everyone who has been involved in it, from those staff members and leaders who have supported it to all the students who have helped in congresses and other initiatives, up of course to each and every colleague around the world who have joined our events and/or been with us in any other form.

But, more than anything, I want to thank the team I had the privilege to lead. In no other order than alphabetical: [Alin Olteanu](#), the late Andrew Stables, [Audra Daubariene](#), Aušra Berkmanienė, Derek Pigrum, Mindaugas Gapševičius, Rima Povilionienė, [Simona Stano](#), Ulrika Varankaitė. I thank them for the work, the conversations, the laughs, the coziness, the coffees, the snacks... but most of all I thank them for being always supportive of each other, and genuinely happy of each other's successes. To whoever paid attention, we showed that it's possible to achieve academic excellence in a friendly, non-competitive, non-selfish and enjoyable way.

And now, over to you Tyler. 😊 We wish you and your colleagues all the best for this new (ad)venture.

Dario Martinelli,  
Outgoing Director of the International Semiotics Institute