Space, place and territory are concepts that lie at the core of geography and urban planning, environmental studies and sociology. Although space, place and territory are indeed polysemic and polemic, they have particular characteristics that distinguish them from each other. They are interdependent but not interchangeable, and the differences between them explain how we simultaneously perceive, conceive and design multiple spatialities.

After drawing the conceptual framework of space, place and territory, the book initially explores how we sense space in the most visceral ways, and how the overlay of meanings attached to the sensorial characteristics of space change the way we perceive it – smell, spatial experiences using electroencephalography, and the changing meaning of darkness are discussed. The book continues exploring cartographic mapping not as a final outcome, but rather as an epistemological tool, an instrument of inquiry. It follows on how particular ideas of space, place and territory are embedded in specific urban proposals, from Brasilia to the Berlin Wall, airports and infiltration of digital technologies in our daily life.

The book concludes by focusing on spatial practices that challenge the status quo of how we perceive and understand urban spaces, from famous artists to anonymous interventions by traceurs and hackers of urban technologies. Combining space, place and territory as distinctive but interdependent concepts into an epistemological matrix may help us to understand contemporary phenomena and live them critically.

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SPACE, PLACE AND TERRITORY
A CRITICAL REVIEW ON SPATIALITIES
Fábio Duarte
‘*Space, Place and Territory* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the processes of urbanization. It is equally adept in describing the qualities of the built environment as it is the conceptual tools that bring about its transformation.’

**Mohsen Mostafavi**, Dean and Alexander and Victoria Wiley Professor of Design, Harvard Graduate School of Design, USA

‘In this book Fábio Duarte makes a novel and important contribution to the understanding of the core concepts of space, place and territory in urban studies. The core problematic USPT addresses is the distinctive uniqueness of each concept whilst simultaneously exploring the complex interdependencies between them. Creatively empirical analyses of sensing, mapping, conceiving and contesting the city USPT builds and populates the metaphor of the spatial matrix – a novel framework for analyzing how society is profoundly shaped by spatial features.’

**Professor Simon Marvin**, Director of the Urban Institute University of Sheffield, UK
Space, Place and Territory
A Critical Review on Spatialities

Fábio Duarte
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1 Introduction

... il n’y a pas un espace, un bel espace, un bel espace alentour, un bel espace tout autour de nous, il y a plein de petits bouts d’espace, et l’un de ces bouts est un couloir de métropolitain, et un autre de ces bouts est un jardin public; un autre (ici, tout de suite, on entre dans des espaces beaucoup plus particularisés), de taille plutôt modeste à l’origine, a atteint des dimensions assez colossales et est devenu Paris, cependant qu’un espace voisin, pas forcément moins doué au départ, s’est contenté de rester Pontoise.


Space, place and territory are concepts that lie at the core of disciplines such as geography and urban studies. Despite or perhaps because of this, such concepts are both polysemic and polemic. However, although space, place and territory are indeed polysemic and polemic, they have particular characteristics that distinguish them from each other, making them unique. They are interdependent concepts, but not interchangeable. They share the same conceptual substratum, but the differences between them explain how we simultaneously perceive, conceive and relate with multiple spatialities. Therefore, the conceptual and methodological approach proposed in this book aims to maintain the balance between a common conceptual core and the uniqueness of each term.

There are other ‘spatial’ terms that have deep-rooted conceptual lineages which have been employed to understand the relationships between humans and their surroundings. These include land, terrain, region, landscape and a few others. They are neither more nor less important than the concepts discussed in this book. However, these concepts are more closely tied to specific disciplines. Region is frequently discussed in geography, economics and sociology, but is seldom mentioned in architecture or urban design – and when it is mentioned, it is either as a fait accompli or as a concept derived exactly from geographic, economic or sociological work. Landscape,
on the other hand, is an important topic for architecture, urban planning and urban design, but is rarely discussed in economics or sociology with the same scholarly conceptual accuracy as region, or for that matter, space, place and territory.

In this book I argue that space, place and territory are the key concepts that form the spatial matrices with which we can analyze how humans establish relations with each other and with the world, namely their physical and social surroundings.

Even though authors have been acknowledging the importance of each term, projects that make an effort to simultaneously embrace, differentiate and relate them are rare. Yi-Fu Tuan is an exception because of his profound and extensive oeuvre covering two of these concepts: space and place – although not much territory, and sometimes dealing with them interchangeably, which might hamper the analysis of some spatial phenomena. More recently, scholars have published in-depth studies of each concept individually, shedding new light on the definition of each term and their roles in understanding contemporary events. Authors such as Edward Casey, Stuart Elden and Rob Shield offer in-depth studies on place, territory and space. Although they do see commonalities and relations between these concepts, these analyses often deal with one or a pair of these concepts, and sometimes treat them as if they were opposites. If this strategy might help to make one concept clearer, it diminishes or does not take advantage of the complementarities that exist between them.

In his insightful work defining place and indicating its conceptual relevance and independence from other similar concepts, Edward Casey mostly builds his arguments by discussing the importance of place in relation to time, or almost a counterpoint to space. Casey (1993: 288) argues ‘the dual dominance of Space and Time is an expression, as well as an original and continuing cause, of the neglect of Place in human experience.’ His books not only focus on place, but also advocate for place in a world dominated by long narratives built upon space and time. As I discuss further on, this is a common feature of theories of place, which often mix conceptual and political worldviews, aiming to promote place before other ontological concepts.

Stuart Elden acknowledges Casey’s efforts to present a historical account of the concept of place, and himself adopts a similar incumbency focusing on territory. Elden stresses the crux of the concept of territory as the political features which establish power relations over portions of space. On one occasion, Elden (2013: 17) points out that ‘[t]erritory is not simply an object: the outcome of actions conducted toward it or some previously supposedly neutral area. Territory is itself a process, made and remade, shaped and shaping, active and reactive.’ I fully agree with Elden,
and I add that the same is true for space and place. And as I discuss in this book, as processes that involve sensorial, cultural and social aspects, a portion of space is not a territory in itself, but becomes a territory depending on how it is appropriated by a certain group, and how the values impinged over this portion of space direct the way those who occupy it must behave. One difference that becomes clear between the literature on place and territory is that often the former focuses on affects, and the latter on politics. Where there is an evident advocacy in the literature related to place, there is political criticism underpinning the literature on territory.

It is generally accepted that space is the baseline of any other spatial concept, and there is extensive scholarly literature on space. Two recent examples in English come from Doreen Massey and Rob Shields, both of whom rely on the work of Henri Lefebvre, a key author on space as a social and political construction. The social and political aspect of Lefebvre’s approach to space is the focus for the great majority of authors dedicated to the theoretical treatment of space, from Manuel Castells to Neil Brenner. But there is another body of literature, exemplified by a recent book by Shields (2013), that aims to combine multispectral approaches on the definition of space, ranging from sociology and philosophy to mathematics and astronomy. Yet as with other books on space, other spatial concepts are seldom mentioned. And on the rare occasions when they are mentioned, they do not receive the same careful conceptual treatment.

In all these accounts, the authors continue an important lineage of scholars seeking a balance between philosophical inquiry and everyday experience in the discussion of space, place and territory. This lineage includes authors as varied as Martin Heidegger and Milton Santos, Yi-Fu Tuan and Gaston Bachelard. The main strength of each of these books is an in-depth theoretical discussion of each term, stressing that the concepts of space, place and territory have been transformed throughout history, according to different temporalities within different disciplines. The downside of most of them, though, is that they commonly focus only on one of the terms. In the rare cases where the other concepts are mentioned, either a certain philosophical advocacy emerges, implicitly or explicitly giving prevalence to one of the concepts over the others, or space, place and territory are treated as synonyms (which they are not). As a consequence, similar phenomena are exclusively analyzed in some of these books through one specific conceptual lens. Although this strategy helps to refine each concept individually, it flattens the complex conceptual relief that these phenomena have. Space, place or territory do not yield inherent or unchangeable characteristics, but rather are defined through the relationships we establish with portions of spaces according to individual and social values.
In this book I discuss that the use of multispectral lenses that combine space, place and territory without making them interchangeable may bring different perspectives to the study of spatial phenomena. Additionally, in this book I give special attention to urban phenomena.

In order to define space, place and territory as particular concepts sharing common features, I begin the book with a chapter entitled *Constructions*. Here I present the conceptual construction of these three terms, stressing their common roots but also their uniqueness as well as their interdependence. Space is the substratum of all the other concepts, but must not be confused with any of them. Space is simultaneously the most immediately perceived of the concepts discussed here and the most abstract. Space is visceral and cerebral at the same time; we feel space before we rationalize it, but in order to explain it, we need well-defined, clear and singular concepts. Place and territory have space as their substratum, and both are portions of space to which we attribute personal or social values. But while place is defined by affective values, territory tends to be demarcated through imposed values; while place is chiselled by subjective values, territory tends to reign over those who occupy it. The goal of this chapter is to mark the singularity of each concept, and at the same time make it clear that they share core features.

Space, place and territory are interdependent but not interchangeable. They are related to each other in such deep senses that they can coexist harmoniously or acrimoniously in the same portion of space. I propose to discuss these relationships between space, place and territory as spatial matrices. In this chapter, I pair up the concepts and explore what happens when they occur simultaneously in the same portion of space. Space and place, space and territory, place and territory, and also space and space, place and place, and territory and territory form the spatial matrices. Sometimes one does not interfere in the existence of the other, sometimes their mutual existence is reciprocally beneficial, and sometimes coexistence triggers conflicts that often lead to the elimination of one form of spatial appropriation by another.

Constructions and matrices form the conceptual core of this book. Both mix theoretical inquiries with examples selected with the intention of illustrating the arguments. Once the conceptual ground is established, the book enters a second portion, divided into four sections. Although concepts of space, place and territory are crucial to different geographic scales and disciplines, in this book I mostly focus on one particular phenomenon: the city. City is defined as the material manifestation of a multi-scalar and cross-disciplinary phenomenon which is equally dependent and transforms the natural environment, scientific-and-technological artefacts, and social arrangements.
In the chapter *Sensing the city*, I explore how we sense space in the most visceral ways, but also how the overlay of meanings attached to the sensorial characteristics of space change the way we perceive it. I begin this chapter by exploring smell. Smell has not been codified, and is arguably the sense that yields the most profound and involuntary memories of space. Like an olfactory madeleine, a particular smell can remind us of spaces and spatial experiences, but the opposite is not true. Think of a portion of space: you probably can envision it, but not recall its smells. Our olfactory memory is as volatile as smells themselves. But once we smell something, the recollection of a particular situation or space is powerful. Smell has been mostly removed from our daily urban experience, the same has happened with other sensorial phenomena, such as complete darkness or touch. Our lives and cities are becoming bland-scapes. A myriad of smells were omnipresent in cities. Smells did not carry moral values, and functioned simply as distinctive characteristics of portions of spaces. Today, there are good and bad smells – and preferably, for shared spaces, no smells. However, as recent as the early twentieth century, cities were still full of odours and neighbourhoods were recognizable by their smells. True, in a bland-scape, it is easy to draw a romantic picture of a rich and complex landscape of smells. The fact is that the urban smell-scape encompassed untreated wastewater, trash in the streets, slaughterhouses and factories near houses, and vehicles burning fossil fuels. For these reasons, it is not uncommon to see connections drawn between unpleasant smells (the definition of which is also contentious) and poverty and specific ethnicities, which are often grouped in specific areas of cities, strengthening the correlation between smells and social prejudices.

Smell has a long history of overlapping meanings, showing how sensorial and cultural filters influence each other. In this sense, visceral experiences of space are rapidly influenced by cultural values. When we describe how we sense space, another layer of meaning is superimposed: we have to interpret these experiences, which inevitably involve other cultural layers such as language. I continue the chapter on *Sensing the city* by looking at research that analyzes brain activity in different spatial experiences, paying special attention to electroencephalography (EEG). This technology is not better than others at exploring how spatial experience is reflected in brain activity, but researchers have been using portable EEG devices to map brain activity in real time, creating cycles where the user responds directly to his or her spatial experience based on how the brain processes space.

I finish this chapter highlighting how a sensorial aspect of the urban environment has been impregnated with cultural values: the night. What happens to space in complete darkness? Whether describing or concept-
ualizing space, we usually take for granted that we see space. However, even for sighted people, darkness is a common experience and affects spatial perception. Darkness influences how people sense space, not only by changing one’s perceptual sensibilities – when sight is impaired, people use other senses – but also by the meanings that darkness has acquired throughout history. And night is the natural empire of darkness. Nevertheless, the connotations of night have changed throughout history, along with the ways in which people deal with the spatial characteristics of darkness. In Medieval Europe, night had conflicting meanings: it was either seen as the realm of God, symbolizing the world before creation (‘And God said, Let there be light: and there was light’), or the realm of the devil and witchcraft in the late-Middle Ages. Modernity and electrification of streetlights have brightened the night to the point of eliminating complete darkness. I finish this essay by discussing how the lack of darkness and changes in the meaning of night influence our perception and understanding of space.

Mapping the city deals with one form of representing space, place and territory: maps. As any other representation, maps are profoundly ideological, and are also affected by the available scientific knowledge and technological tools. But my interest in this chapter lies not so much in maps as outcomes of processes of representing portions of space, but in the mapping process itself. As a highly descriptive tool, mapping deals primarily with including all features of space. However, the representation of any object or phenomenon necessarily involves deciding which features to select and which features to leave out. Different methodologies have intentionally or implicitly favoured certain features, which consequently influence the way we perceive and conceive space, place and territory. In this chapter, I explore mapping as an epistemological tool; cartographic mapping not as a final outcome, but rather as an instrument of inquiry. Maps are not passive representations of reality, but mapping is an active way of investigating the multiple dimensions of space, place and territory. Maps attempt to convey new spatial understandings of the world, and also serve as social and political tools, such as the navigational maps used during the golden age of European navigation. Maps can also operate as a territorial technology aimed at reinforcing particular worldviews, such as world maps based on the clear limits of nation-states, which do not have any relation to geographical features. But mapping can also be instrumental to unveil the vibrant urban lives that are hidden under traditional maps of the city, such as cognitive or mental maps. More recently, locative and mobile devices are pushing the boundaries of mapping as an ephemeral and dynamic look at the urban phenomenon on both the micro and macro scales, from mapping individual use of the city to correlating urban flows on a global scale, flows that naturally
vanish on a daily basis, appearing and disappearing in different cities. The analysis of mapmaking, which is also entrenched with technological, social, cultural and political values, sheds light on how entities and flows are perceived and organized as they are filtered by sensorial and cultural filters.

The chapters on sensing and mapping the city help us to discuss how the concepts of space, place and territory are marked by sensorial and cultural filters, and how they are interdependent though singular; how space, place and territory have epistemological as well as political uses. In both cases, the baseline question of ‘what is . . .’ is supported by the existence of a certain space, place and territory. In the chapter Conceiving the city, I focus on what the city could be, and how particular ideas of space, place and territory are embedded in specific urban proposals. There is a long history of city plans as the materialization of how spatial features would advance proposals to change social, economic and formal aspects of urban life. Brasília is the constructed synthesis of how modern spatialities should be, and how this ideal space would reflect and foster an emergent modern society. When Brasília was inaugurated in 1960, the supreme modernist approach of an ideal space encompassing and fostering universal values had been harshly criticized, and other planning methodologies were emerging. Yet Brasília’s groundbreaking combination of aesthetically powerful urban design and architecture is a cornerstone of any reflection on how spaces, places and territories emerge from a virtually untouched terrain. Brasília was not an attempt to create new possible spatialities, but an urban and architectural statement about what a city should be. For this reason, any essay on Brasilia is risky, for this city is a concretization of a dogma. And yet when real life starts to permeate the modernist city, unexpected places and territories emerge.

Derived from the least creative part of the modernist canon, land-use planning based on the definition of functional zones with strict construction parameters became a mantra which is still practiced and taught around the world. This form of bureaucratic and authoritative planning divides the city into precise territories, and neglects the emergence of spontaneous spaces and places which gives life to the city. However, while zoning has pervaded the least-inspiring realms of urban design, experimentation has been a constant for planners. Experimentation feeds the way we analyze present cities, and the way we envision the future of cities. Indeed, only 10 years after the inauguration of Brasilia, Peter Cook (1970: 14) stated that he saw the ‘emergence of a truly international “underground” or network’, and gave examples of architects and urbanists proposing ephemeral infrastructures, portable cities, and the use of telecommunications and early computers as components of future cities.
Fifty years after the climax and inevitable decline of the ideal modernist space, 50 years which saw a mix of bureaucratic planning and provocative urban design experimentations combining underground and networked approaches, the design of cities as a way of indirectly changing society is still engrained in architectural and planning practices on different scales. In the second part of *Conceiving the city*, I propose to understand the construction of spaces, places and territories that underlies contemporary urban proposals. The construction of the wall dividing Berlin during the Cold War is a pivotal element in urban design, although it is barely recognized among urban designers. The wall is a territorial device *par excellence*, but was also iconic of spatial elements that were shaping urban life throughout Europe, and the meaning of the wall to eastern and western Berliners involved different ways of constructing place in the city, during and after its existence. I continue by discussing airports. Rather than an example of a meaningless place, whose historical and social distance from local values make them the epitome of a *non-place*, I argue that airports may be quite the opposite: the *über-place* of the contemporary global space. Finally, I discuss the infiltration of digital technologies in the urban space. Since McLuhan’s insightful and stimulating ideas that media was at the core of social transformations (and not any particular content), communication technologies would connect the whole world in a global village, and computation would ultimately change the way we think, several urban scholars and designers have been debating similar ideas. For some, information and communication technologies efface space; for others, they give rise to globally unified spaces; and for others, a network of places exchanging information is the future of global urban spaces.

In the final chapter before the final remarks, I focus on spatial practices that challenge the status quo of how we perceive and understand urban spaces. Artworks play a major role questioning how we perceive, conceive and understand space, place and territory. These may range from well-known artists to anonymous interventions. Conspicuous artists have shown how artefacts may play a subversive role in cities. Christo and Jeanne-Claude have been proposing large-scale interventions that question preconceived ideas we have regarding which elements are part of the urban and regional spaces, and how they should be arranged. By wrapping bridges, buildings, promenades and islands with synthetic fabric, Christo and Jeanne-Claude make us aware of our blindness towards them. They highlight their physical qualities by temporarily suppressing their symbolic values. By wrapping up the Pont Neuf, in Paris, Christo and Jeanne-Claude stifle its historical and ornamental symbolisms, turning it into a sculpture – but rather than carving the stone, he covers it. But at the same time he muffles the bridge’s symbolisms –
which daily users do not really pay attention to – the artist highlight them through a sense of loss: what if these symbolisms were removed from this portion of space, would this space be the same even if the physical element of the bridge were still there? Krzysztof Wodiczko’s interventions are even subtler: they last only a couple of days or hours, and do not leave any trace – somehow, they do not even touch the city. Wodiczko projects steady images and films onto monuments and buildings. Aware of the territorial symbolisms that some of these elements have, by conveyed particular social and cultural values, Wodiczko choose provocative topics related to these values. But tense relations emerge, such as when live testimonies of immigrants and low-paid labourers are projected onto the façade of a museum in San Diego facing the United States. Wodiczko challenges the natural and uncritical integration of such monuments and symbolic buildings into the daily life of a city.

Besides these well-known artists, equally important are anonymous figures like skateboarders and practitioners of parkour (traceurs), who use the materiality of the city to question the cultural values embedded within it, or media artists who hack surveillance cameras to expose how daily life is controlled through territorializing technologies. This chapter aims to show that there is an ongoing movement to challenge the concepts of space, place and territory before they crystallize, and to remind us that their conceptual power lies precisely in their malleability and continuous transformation.

I conclude briefly reminding key ideas discussed throughout the book, and argue that spatial matrix, intertwining space, place and territory, may be a methodological tool to shed light in cultural conflicts, environmental crisis and technological changes. Indeed, these topics provoke cyclical and deep spatial transformations. But claiming they create non-places, provoke deterritorialization, or produce virtual spaces detached from our daily experience give only momentary intellectual help. Moment passed, here we are, in space: living space, discussing space. Combining space, place and territory as distinctive but interdependent concepts into an epistemological matrix may help us to understand such phenomena and live them critically.