

EMERALD INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNEXIONS

RE-IMAGINING SPACES AND PLACES

Interdisciplinary Essays on the Relationship
between Identity, Space and Place



EDITED BY

Stefano Rozzoni, Beitske Boonstra
and Teresa Cutler-Broyles

Re-Imagining Spaces and Places

Emerald Interdisciplinary Connexions

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Re-Imagining Spaces and Places: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Relationship between Identity, Space, and Place

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Preface

Re-Imagining Spaces and Places: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Relationship between Identity, Space, and Place is the outcome of a brilliant conference organized by Progressive Connexions that took place in Bruges, Belgium, on April 13 and 14, 2019. The aim of the event was to create an inspiring, professional, and creative environment for intellectual exchange among international scholars and other professionals from very diverse research fields, experiences, and geopolitical contexts about space- and place-related issues.

The quality of the presentations and the generous transdisciplinary discussions among the participants immediately revealed the potentials of the preliminary studies offered during the event: therefore, the possibility of creating a collection of chapters based on the conference papers seemed natural. Yet this book should not be considered as a mere combination of conference proceedings; rather it represents a self-sustaining publishing project that includes work deriving from a full reelaboration, rewriting, re-thinking, and reimagination of the groundwork achieved in Bruges.

The ethos of Progressive Connexions reminds us that, “interdisciplinary experiences [are] rooted in the values of inclusiveness, egalitarianism, collegiality and critical inquiry [which are...] pushing the boundaries of perceptions and insights which shape the world.”¹ Along this line, this volume serves as evidence of how a dialogue – or, rather, a *multi*-logue – among different perspectives on key cultural concepts, such as space, place, and identity, is highly productive and greatly needed when reflecting on the world that we inhabit.

Over time, the concepts of spaces and places have been widely debated in the academic and professional world. Yet there remain opportunities and margins for (ever-) new understandings and reframings of well-established assumptions regarding these themes. This belief clearly emerged from the authors when they met physically in Belgium in 2019, and a similar consideration accompanied the editorial process of this volume. Moreover, the recent pandemic has made it even more relevant how familiar notions, habits, and rooted knowledge concerning spatiality can become objects of sudden, crucial transformation. Writing, editing, and finessing the chapters during the pandemic has thus fostered the idea that reimagining spaces and places is a fundamental operation for responding to the

¹Progressive connexions. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.progressiveconnexions.net/ethos/>. Accessed on August 25, 2021.

many crises of our times. In this sense, the present book stresses the idea of reimagining spaces and places as a way for inspiring its readers to find unexpected strengths and overcome the ever-new challenges that they face.

In spite of all these challenges, editing the present volume was a particularly motivating and engaging process, especially due to the positive attitude of the contributors and to the great assistance provided by the publishing team. Therefore, this book, which is the result of an unexpected *connection* of minds and bodies, has come to represent a *progressive* collective work as well as the end of a journey that will hopefully inspire future studies and encourage innovative encounters for discussing spaces and places among scholars from all over the world.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgment is due to Emerald Publishing Ltd. for believing in this project and for giving the editors the unique opportunity to materially (and digitally) bring this book into the world. The work of all the publishing assistants and copy editors has been wonderful. Thanks to Susanne Schotanus for her attentive readings of the chapters and valuable suggestions regarding the book's structure. And thanks to Lorraine Rumson for the manuscript revisions, and to all the people involved in the publication of this book: your prompt and kind support has been integral to its successful completion.

We also exhibit our gratitude to Progressive Connexions, which allowed for the inspiring Spaces and Places Conference in Bruges, Belgium, in April 2019. This gathering provided the initial spark for what became this collection. In particular, many thanks to Teresa Cutler-Broyles, the soul of this event, and the first fan of the wonderful presentations delivered during the conference: it is due to your intuition that nine of these preliminary studies on spaces and places have now become brilliant chapters in the present book. Thanks as well to Beitske Boonstra for your insights and perceptions which lent us clarity as we moved forward. And to Stefano Rozzoni for your tireless work, your inspiration in ensuring that these chapters came together in wonderful conversation, and for your always encouraging words, thank you. Without you, we would not be here.

Finally, we would like to thank all the contributors of this collection. Even though the years since the conference have been challenging – especially due to the twists and turns caused by the pandemic, which has prolonged the timing of this publication – the contributors of this volume have exhibited a tenacity that can only be admired. Their openness to our suggestions and their promptness in embracing our requests has not only been inspiring, but it has also been greatly appreciated. Finally, it has made our editorial job easier, allowing for our own personal and professional growth as well.

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Introduction

Stefano Rozzoni, Beitske Boonstra and Teresa Cutler-Broyles

“Deterritorialization is never simple but always multiple and composite,” as well as “inseparable from correlative reterritorializations.”¹ Through these words, which rely on space-and-place-related metaphoric language, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari summarize some key issues of their philosophical perspective: on the one hand, they shed light on the importance of negotiating established conceptual structures, viewpoints, and assumptions regarding cultural phenomena (deterritorialization); on the other hand, the two philosophers highlight how a similar intellectual operation always involves the reassessments of new truths and beliefs, which, in turn, also deserve to be rediscussed through ever-new perspectives (reterritorialization). Beyond offering a useful presentation of Deleuze and Guattari’s critical scope, this quote also serves as a valuable tool for reflecting on the process of constant transformation that entails important cultural concepts – such as space and place – especially when their complexities are analyzed under specific analytical lenses.

Studying controversial notions such as “space” and “place” through the logic of de-/reterritorialization is particularly useful because it allows for scholars to embrace the plethora of different, idiosyncratic interpretations that the critical investigation of these controversial concepts has revealed throughout history. Along the line proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, the notions of space and place also become visible as being inextricably intertwined with continual transformative dynamics, and, consequently, as particularly profitable tools of knowledge production. The contributions in this collection are engrained with this awareness, and they propose a scrutiny of the changing dynamics of space and place in different disciplinary fields and through different theoretical approaches: in this way, this book also becomes a way of discussing many concerns of our times connected to spaces and places, from more political to more environmentally related topics.

Since the so-called “spatial turn” in the study of culture in the 1970s, increasing attention has been dedicated to the relevance of spatial concepts when evaluating phenomena around us. Even though a few years have passed since the establishment of this scholarship, inquiries revolving around spaces and places are still prominent and far from having reached a definitive understanding: among the

many possible opportunities for investigation that these concepts of space and place offer, this collection revolves around the relationship with the notion of identity.

While identity is often called into service when discussing subjectivity and adopted for scrutinizing human beings, this book applies it to space and place for investigating how certain spaces and places are represented and conceived, and how the dynamics of their constant transformations inform us about the very essence of material and imaginary locations. Just like providing a univocal definition of “space” or “place” would serve as a limited, contentious point of departure for this study (different authors here employ different theoretical frameworks), this collection also does not aim to have all the chapters provide a cohesive conclusion. Instead, each contributor proposes their own perspective and understandings of space and place, as well as their own methodology: this aspect led to different outcomes regarding these concepts. Among them are methodologies deriving from well-established disciplinary fields such as architectural studies, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, and urbanism as well as from more recent scholarly areas such as ecocriticism or new insights from contemporary political studies. Rather than seeing this combination as a symptom of a lack of cohesion, the diversity that this project embraces should be regarded as an asset: in fact, it underlines the *progressive connections* among different fields, minds, and outlooks according to a pluralistic vision which determines a fruitful example of methodological hybridity: this approach, we believe, appears to be fundamental for scholars interested in exploring spaces and places today.

Despite their diversity, however, all the chapters of this collection are linked by a thread that highlights the changeability and transformative power of the spaces and places discussed. As editors, we considered that an(other) umbrella concept was needed for better highlighting these aspects: therefore, we deployed the notion of *reimagining*. The concepts of de- and reterritorialization are particularly effective for expressing the scope of this collection; however, we did not aim to limit this book to the theoretical implications of poststructuralism, or to give too much prominence to philosophy over other disciplinary perspectives. Reimagining, as a transversal concept, works well for embracing several different viewpoints that spaces and places entail: as the Oxford English Dictionary reminds us, reimagining refers to “the action or an act of imagining something again, a reconstruction; [...] which is a reinterpretation of another; a remake.”² Therefore, discussing reimagining spaces and places allows for the development of the idea that rooted understandings concerning spatialities can – and should – be considered as objects of many possible (re)interpretations. The emphasis on “re-” as a hyphenated prefix stresses this unsettledness even more.

This effect is discussed in the chapters in different ways: with an emphasis on the linkages between public participation and resilience, Nakul Nitin Gote and Wolfgang Wende’s study, *How Public Participation Can Lead to The Place-making of Space and Resilience of Place*, investigates what kind of public participation is beneficial for resilience. Specifically, by focusing on the resilience of the community in the Ramnadi river corridor in Pune, India, the two authors

underline the contribution that spaces and places transformation offers in determining and empowering public participation through institutions.

With a more attentive political view, Khaled I. Nabil discusses the transitions of public spaces, such as Tahrir Square, in Cairo, Egypt, during the 2011 Arab Spring. In *Al-Tahrir Square, Cairo During 2011: From Undefined Space to Interactive Place*, Nabil investigates the mechanisms and the motives that transformed what he considers a “noisy, uncomfortable space” into a “liveable interactive place,” by observing the transition of Tahrir Square from a symbol of authoritarian control to a site of demonstrations. Using a similar critical perspective, albeit focusing on a different socio-cultural context, Esra Akbalik, observes how the concept of “imprisonment” can be used metaphorically to define the urban or architectural practices of governments, which have the power to transform the daily use and the symbolic meaning of public spaces. Specifically, in *Imprisonment of Public Space*, Akbalik focuses on two case studies in Istanbul, Turkey – the construction of a mosque and the reconstruction of a cultural center, and an urban square that has facilitated the sit-in protests of the Saturday Mothers movement since 1995 – for discussing how public space and its transformation relate to political dynamics as well as to the population’s response to authoritarian governments.

Alongside this political discussion concerning spaces and places, Anas Alo-maim and Dana Alhasan analyze how the composite symbols associated with the National Assembly building in Kuwait serve to produce an image of democracy and independence that resonates with both local and international narratives. More specifically, in *Kuwait National Assembly Building: The Holy Assembly*, the two authors explore how religion and spirituality were integrated in the design process of the Assembly building in various ways, although these issues are not usually associated with the civic nature of modern democracy and nationalism. Therefore, Alomaim and Alhasan stress how the history of the Kuwait National Assembly embodies a dichotomy between the laws of the sacred and the liberating concepts of spirituality.

While dissecting the implications of transforming spaces and places in contemporary culture, Sami Chohan expands on the process of investigating overstated and spatially exclusive venues of art and culture, which have appeared in many cities during the last two decades, in order to reclaim and reimagine these locations as more open and inclusive. In *Place before Form, People before Profit: Reclaiming Venues of Art and Culture in the Midst of Tourism-centered Reimagining of Cities*, Chohan reflects on both the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain, and the Bharat Bhavan (or India House) in Bhopal, India. Chohan observes how the first structure fails to represent the people of the city, despite its world-wide fame; contrarily, the initiative of the Bharat Bhavan, as an institution to celebrate the artistic and cultural output of the nation, is discussed as fostering the idea of sites of artistic and cultural value that demonstrate strong notions of publicness and inclusivity.

Elisabete Mendes Silva elaborates on the transformative dynamics of the urban world through a retrospective glance at the rise of shopping malls in London between the nineteenth and twentieth century. In, *Power*,

Cosmopolitanism, and Socio-spatial Division in the Commercial Arena in Victorian and Edwardian London, Mendes Silva demonstrates how department stores in the late Victorian and Edwardian ages dictated new approaches to commercial culture; moreover, she observes that they favored the construction of inclusive spatialities bolstered by advantageous social, economic, and political circumstances despite the social and moral strictness of the time. The Victorian period is also the background of Olivia K. Krauze's "A place perfectly accordant with man's nature": *Violent Spaces in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy*, which illustrates how the perversion of space caused by violence contributes to understanding Hardy's literary aims. In fact, Krauze suggests that Hardy's situation of acts of violence in a range of spaces, natural and domestic alike, is purposefully disorienting: it allows him to interrogate defined social ideas of "moral" indoor spaces and "wild" outdoor landscapes during the late Victorian period by emphasizing how spaces are neither safe nor dangerous, but rather are ambiguous, "perfectly accordant with man's nature."

Stefano Rozzoni's chapter takes a further step in the conceptualization of a dominant and well-rooted understanding of space and place in Western culture: the country/city dichotomy, which the pastoral has made evident in the contrast between the urban and the rural, is rediscussed through an ecocritical perspective. In *Rising Cittagna(s): A Dialogue between Literature and Urbanism in Contemporary (Post-)Pastoral Cityscapes*, Rozzoni negotiates perceptions of ontological separateness between the country and the city, while reflecting on their interconnectedness by using the neologism "cittagna" (a blending of the Italian words *campagna* – country – and *città* – city): observing this concept both as a phenomenon in contemporary urbanism and as a tool for re-discovering neglected ecocritical narratives in pastoral literature, Rozzoni delineates a trend in contemporary culture that enhances the sense of continuity between humans and nonhumans.

Angela Specht's chapter closes the collection along a similar, environmentally oriented stance, but focusing on three stories about (her) family relationship to the land, and her participation in a community service organization: these accounts discuss notions of attachment and the creation of relationships of care through gardening practices, such as rewilding, in the area of Alberta, Canada. In *Re-Wilding my Garden and other Community Activities*, Specht thus offers an intimate, deep, and creative piece of writing on the relevance of building relationships with – and sharing spaces with – the nonhuman realm, as a way for "imagin[ing], creat[ing], and mak[ing] a hopeful and wild path forward to a different and sustainable future."

Reimagining spaces and places is therefore here to be intended as an intellectual operation that offers a critical glance over a wide array of phenomena, occurrences, and urges characterizing our times in crises. A totalizing diversity and complexity cannot be fully embraced by the scope of this book: through our collection, instead, we wish to spark initiatives in our readers to embark on reimagining trajectories while continuing investigations into the ever-changing potentialities of concepts such as space, place, and identity, while

acknowledging them as powerful tools for critically reflecting on the world(s) that we experience.

Notes

1. Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 508–509.
2. Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Reimagining. In *oed.com*. Retrieved from <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.uni-giessen.de/view/Entry/249456?redirectedFrom=reimagining#eid40807183>. Accessed on August 25, 2021.

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Chapter 1

How Public Participation Can Lead to the Placemaking of Space and Resilience of Place

Nakul Nitin Gote and Wolfgang Wende

Abstract

Chaotic growth and climate change have led to increased uncertainty in social-ecological systems, like urban areas, and have lowered their thresholds to withstand shocks, thus increasing their vulnerability. To reduce this effect, the concept of resilience is increasingly being applied in urban governance and planning. Public participation is seen as an attribute, which potentially increases the resilience of social-ecological systems.

What kind of public participation leads to resilience, and how, are questions which this chapter addresses. To answer these questions, this study focused on relevant literature regarding resilience and governance, and investigated the events related to the flooding of the Ramnadi river corridor in Pune, India. The governance structure within the Ramnadi river corridor was then analyzed using a causal loop diagram. By studying its nodes, linkages, and feedbacks, this chapter explores how public participation affects the resilience of the social-ecological system of the Ramnadi river corridor.

Public memory, a minimum sustained level of perpetual participation, and the presence of proactive institutions which can effectuate various levels and types of participation, have emerged as the qualities of public participation which increase the resilience of social-ecological systems. Based on the presence or absence of these qualities, a new typology of public participation is proposed here, namely the binary of continuous public participation versus event-based public participation. This distinction proves to be an effective indicator of whether an instantiation of public participation can lead to resilience. The applicability of this classification for designing interventions for placemaking has also been discussed.

Keywords: Causal loop diagram; flood resilience; governance; placemaking; social-ecological system; systems approach

Introduction

The concept of resilience has gained wide acceptance amongst the scientific community as well as among policymakers due to its clarity.¹ Resilience is a tool for sustainability (Anderies, Folke, Walker, & Ostrom, 2013). It provides a framework in which cross-scale interactions between systems can be studied, while the idea of sustainable development refers to the actions which are taken after considering these interactions. Thus, one can conclude that if sustainability is an *end*, resilience is a *means* for achieving it (Gote, 2019).

Public participation is increasingly being seen as a fundamental component of democracy. This is because, in modern democracies, the decisions are taken by bureaucrats who are not elected through adult franchise. Public participation creates a direct link between the public and the decision-making bureaucrats (Creighton, 2005). This research aims to examine the linkages between public participation and resilience in order to study what kind of public participation is beneficial for resilience.

Resilience

Resilience is a term used in medical science, materials engineering, psychology, and more recently in urban planning. By and large, the term implies a capacity to return to a previous state or recover after a deformation or disturbance. Holling (1973) pioneered the resilience concept in ecology by defining it as “a measure of a system’s ability to absorb change and still persist by maintaining the concerned relationships within it” (PG). This understanding was a paradigm shift compared to the earlier, engineering-based definition of resilience which was primarily concerned with the ability of a system to return to a previous state (which Holling termed as “stability”). If a system is to survive change, it needs to adapt to changing environments. This process of incorporating change continuously gives rise to resilience (Holling, 1996).

As defined by Walker, Holling, Carpenter, and Kinzig (2004, p. 2), resilience is

...the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks – in other words, stay in the same basin of attraction.

This definition can be applied to social-ecological systems as well. To make any measurements or comparisons while using the resilience concept in social-ecological systems, the questions “resilience of what” and “resilience to what” need to be answered (Carpenter, Walker, Anderies, & Abel, 2001).