

Chapter 1

Being and Becoming: Emerging Relationalities with Space/Place and Socio-Technical Geographies



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Abstract Media technology has redefined our spatial relationship with the physical world as we are largely defined by locations and we no longer are mobile entities (Virilio in *The vision machine: perspectives*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, p 74, 1994). With the pervasiveness of media practices, at one end of the spectrum, debates and discourses in architecture and urban design delve into how the role of space and place in everyday spatial practices has been ensconced in superficial connectedness through ‘*virtual co-emplacements*’ (Casey in *The fate of place: a philosophical history*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, p XIV, 1998). And on the other end, scholars argue that performativity through spatial practices, is a compelling notion for re-inscribing oneself in the world (Butler in *Gender trouble*. Routledge, New York, 2006). This implies the need for understanding potential and emerging alternatives and possibilities of people–place relationships enabled through media technologies. Spaces and places serve as significant realms of becoming and unbecoming which are particularly crucial in contemporary dynamic spatialities. To delve into the complexity of emerging complex relations, this chapter as a first step, discusses how our relationship and engagement with urban environments in cities have been, and are understood and perceived by the changing conceptions of space/place relations and meanings within the urban environment.

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1.1 Introduction: Being-in-the-World, Becoming-in-the-World

Classically, the distinction was made between *space* and *place*, by considering *space* as purely metrical and *place*, as defined by Aristotle, the container of distinct potencies. ‘*In this sense, it can be said that places radiate out from the exact shape they possess in objective space, the spaces of sites. Places possess us—in perception as in memory—by their radiant visibility insinuating themselves within our lives, seizing and surrounding us, even taking us over as we sink into their presence.*’¹ In the above statement, the distinction is not made any more between *place* and *space*, but between *place* and objective space. The insertion of ‘objective’ as a source of differentiation between the terms is revelatory for the constant overlapping of the two in recent literature, and especially because phenomenology has introduced concepts such as lived space or inhabited space, which seem to subtly mediate between the Cartesian *space*, on the one hand, and the *place* which is portent of meaning, on the other.

Space/place is nevertheless separated from *site*, an essentially empty locus which cannot be inhabited and resists familiarisation, without possessing any character of interiority. ‘*For familiarity to begin to set in [place], we must project a state of already having inhabited it.*’² *Space/place*, unlike *site*, envelops and sustains *in-habitation*, and is one of the conditions for a phenomenological understanding of the world. *Being in place/space* and *inhabiting place/space*, were therefore key concepts in the unfolding of a phenomenology of *place*. Heidegger’s concept of *being-in-the-world*, for instance, is intrinsically linked to *being in place*: ‘*one of the features that defines phenomenology’s treatment of place is a commitment to the belief that lived spatiality is not a container that can be measured in objective terms, but an expression of our being-in-the world.*’³ Heidegger’s view implies a somehow static understanding of both the physical and the conceptual levels of *place*, his *being* overlooking the wide spectrum of realities unfolding within the realm of *becoming*. These precise multitudes of organic relations existing between the subject and the *space*, which circumscribe the domain of ‘lived space’, lead Merleau-Ponty one step further from Heidegger’s notion of *being-in-the-world*. For him, ‘*spatiality is not something we are inserted into, as though it has existed all along and awaits the subject’s arrival.*’ He therefore reverses the equation and says that ‘*rather, being-in-the-world means being placed.*’⁴

However, the classical conception of *space/place* as a fixed and unchanging reality has long and thoroughly been contested. ‘*Conceiving of space as a static slice through*

¹Casey, E.—*Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Indiana Univ. Press, 2000.

²(idem).

³Trigg, D.—*The Memory of Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Ohio Univ. Press, 2012.

⁴(idem).

time' is essentially a way of taming it. It enables one to ignore *space*'s '*real import: the coeval multiplicity of other trajectories and the necessary outward-lookingness of a spatialized subjectivity*'.⁵ There is an open challenge, then, to re-think and re-term the classical assumptions with which phenomenology has revealed the relation between subject and *space*. '*Conceptualizing space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics*'.⁶ Incorporating these current realities about *place* within a broader phenomenological understanding of self and the world, it would be more than revealing to conceptualize and define new meanings for *becoming-in-the-world* and *unbecoming-in-the-world*, *becoming placed* and *unbecoming placed*. Rather than bemoaning the loss of *place* in our present society, it has become vital to embrace and theorise the new, fluctuating, ever brisk and ever redefined nature of *place* due to the pervasiveness of media practices and find new paths for understanding *becoming-in-the-world* and *unbecoming-in-the-world*, a world characterized by instantaneous and depth-less experiences of *place*. *Being-placed* is no longer a prerequisite for knowing, or even navigating through remote places, spatiality itself is therefore constantly challenged, perception merges with representation and physicality is infused or even confused with immateriality; the prevailing feeling of uncertainty could thus better be grasped by exploring concepts of becoming and unbecoming, or rather the constant and almost imperceptible shift between them.

1.2 Space/Place Dichotomies and Interfaces

In earlier times, though the meanings of space and place have been consistently explored, argued and debated, there was a clear distinction between both concepts. Humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, in his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, offered an experiential meaning for both terms, stating that '*place is security, space is freedom: if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause*'.⁷ Edward Relph states 'places are basic elements in the ordering of our experience', and place associations are central in understanding identity as they become 'point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world'.⁸ A well-known description of the difference between the term space from place was given by de Certeau (2011) in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he explained that 'a place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence'. Place is thus 'an instantaneous configuration of

⁵Massey, D.—*For Space*. Sage Publications, 2005.

⁶(idem).

⁷Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, Reprint (University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

⁸Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, Research in Planning and Design 1 (London: Pion, 1976), 43.

positions. It implies an indication of stability' and space is 'composed of intersections of mobile elements'. De Certeau synthesized that 'space is a practiced place'.

Another perspective on the *space* and *place* differentiation was offered by Edward Soja in his work *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. He argued that '*the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translations, transformations, and experience*'.⁹ Coining the term 'spatiality', which reflects the dynamic nature of space, Soja untangles 'naturalness' from material conditions of *place* and suggests that spatiality dynamically affects our life experiences since there is 'an essential connection between spatiality and *being*'.¹⁰

The above definitions and explanations distinguish as well as explain the relationship between *place* and *space*, acknowledging the inherent qualities of the two concepts. Political geographer John Agnew considers that both *space* and *place* meanings are challenged in contemporary era, based on the idea that '*the world itself is increasingly 'placeless' as space-spanning connections and flows of information, things, and people undermine the rootedness of a wide range of processes anywhere in particular*'.¹¹ The theoretical viewpoint on *space* have also been altered as stated by cultural theorist and urbanist Paul Virilio, in his work *Polar Inertia*, quoting Werner von Braun: '*tomorrow, to learn space will be as useful as learning to drive a car*'.¹² Spaces tend to reflect the notion of absorbing *place* as subsumed and from the viewpoint of technologies, the notion of *place* is increasingly becoming obsolete, while *space* is gradually conquering *place*.¹³ *Space* carries several layers of embedded meanings, as it is '*not simply a container in which modern life is played out*'. The ways we conceptualise and operationalise *space* are products of political, economic and cultural processes. In turn, the organisation of *space* offers opportunities and constraints for the further development of these processes.¹⁴ With the increasing significance attached to *space*, *place* today is '*often associated with the world of the past and location/space with the world of the present and future. From one perspective, place is therefore nostalgic, regressive or even reactionary, and space is progressive and radical*'.¹⁵

With this changing perception of *space/place* understanding, it becomes challenging and difficult to subscribe to a specific notion. However, what needs to be acknowledged are the blurring and shifting boundaries defining *space* and *place*. From this perspective, the notion of *space* and *place* can be drawn upon the view explained by Robert Sack: '*Place implies space, and each home is a place in space*'.

⁹Edward W Soja, *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory* (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 80.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹John A. Agnew, "Space and Place," in *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (SAGE, 2011).

¹²Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 76.

¹³Thomas L Friedman, *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

¹⁴Richard Dennis, *Cities in modernity: representations and productions of metropolitan space, 1840–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁵Agnew, "Space and Place."

Space is a property of the natural world, but it can be experienced. From the perspective of experience, place differs from space in terms of familiarity and time. A place requires human agency, is something that may take time to know, and a home especially so. As we move along the earth we pass from one place to another. But if we move quickly the places blur; we lose track of their qualities, and they may coalesce into the sense that we are moving through space.¹⁶

Space and place are considered here as terms where the boundaries blur and are intertwined into one another, defined by activities and objects. The changing *space/place* concepts play a defining role in a way one understands and relates with the external world. In other words, emerging conceptions of *place* and *space* allow for newer ways of *becoming* and *unbecoming* in the contemporary context. Interestingly, in the present-day context *mobilities* can also be considered as sites of *becoming*, as the experience of *place* is increasingly turning into a process, a transformation. *Becoming*, one of the key concepts in philosopher Henri Bergson's writings,¹⁷ is the operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system that emerges or actualizes in time. *Becoming* can be understood as a constant process of reconstituting oneself through differentiation and negotiation with the physical world. This resonates with the views on *becoming* and *being* offered by architect Lebbeus Woods through an example of a person walking across the room. At any instance, he is 'only' at a particular place in the room, defined by Cartesian coordinates. In such a case, when we observe how the person crosses the threshold of the limits of the increment, it happens between co-ordinates; to logically describe such a system would be *becoming*. Woods further explains that simple motion or historical transformation cannot be divided into discrete increments of identity, but flows as a continuum so that at any one point a thing is simultaneously what it *is* and what it is *becoming*. Relating oneself with *place* is a process which is '*transformational, sliding and shifting in an ongoing complex stream of becoming*'.¹⁸ *Becoming/unbecoming* are interesting concepts in the emergent socio-technical geographies, as notions of urban identity in the mobile societies largely need to be understood more as concepts of *becoming* than of *being*.

1.3 Mobilities/Motilities

In the present urban context, different forms of mobility of material and immaterial entities, flows and circulations of goods or information, are bringing and offering new forms of connections and associations with places and objects and contribute more

¹⁶Robert David Sack, *Homo geographicus: a framework for action, awareness, and moral concern* (Baltimore [etc.]: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 16.

¹⁷For instance, in *Creative Evolution 1907: 'things and states are only views, taken by our mind, of becoming*'.

¹⁸Lebbeus Woods, "Everyday War," in *Mortal City*, ed. Peter Lang, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Archit.Press, 1997), 46–53.

than ever in the reconstruction of oneself within the physical world. Sociologist John Urry famously used mobility as an umbrella term that encompasses material and immaterial movement, distinguishing four different kinds of travel, as movement of: *objects, imaginative travels, virtual travels* and *physical corporeal travels*. He argued that urban society is a society on the move, and each mobility, whether it is material or immaterial, shapes specific configurations and relations, and by each reconfiguration of a person's relation to outside world, whether it is near here, or far there, one is exposed to a stage of *unbecoming* followed by the next phase of *becoming*.¹⁹ With urban mobility becoming boundless, the specific concept of *motility* has emerged. Canzler et al. (2008) distinguished mobility from *motility*: '*we use motility for the actors' mobility potentials*',²⁰ that specifically refers to '*geographical movement*',²¹ whereas the former entails a '*change of conditions*'; Thus, in the contemporary urban context people are in continuous exposure to transformation and reconfiguration of their relation with the tangible and intangible entities of urban environments.

Previous to the era of mobility, *place* was perceived more static: with borders, location, and was mainly perceivable as an area of *space* with less external connectivity²² and more as interior container. Correspondingly, the relation of a person with physical world was firmer and more stable. But now, because there are more possibilities to simultaneously connect to different places, objects, mediums and/or flows, frames that previously captured *place* isolated, can now include flows from inside and outside of that frame. Accordingly, all entities, vertexes, relations and connections that used to define firm relations between a person and physical place, are now in constant configuration. There is a strong relation between *place*, frame of observation and transcendental technologies. 'Transcendental technologies', a concept coined by political scientist Barbara Kellerman, refer to all technologies which help to overcome physical and perceptual borders of understanding (airplane, aerial photography, transportation, information transportation, automobile, telephone, internet, and mobile communication devices), as space-transcending technologies that provide new perspectives on the world by means of altering our knowledge of the world around us through helping us overcome our physical limitations. 'Transcendental technologies' are providing possibilities to change our observational frame, liberating our experience from being grounded to physical places, into a more relational experience. The frames of observation are understood as the frames through which we observe, investigate and understand the world around us. Before the new technologies, observational frames were more grounded in physical places, therefore *place* was understood through borders, actions and interactions inside those frames, but now, because of all newly introduced forms and modes of mobility (material or immaterial) and 'transcendental technologies', understanding of *place* is loosely

¹⁹(Urry 2000: Chap. 3), MOBILITY AND PROXIMITY.

²⁰Canzler, W., Kaufmann, V. and Kesselring, S. (Eds) (2008) *Tracing Mobilities: Towards a Cosmopolitan Perspective*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. (168, 169, 68).

²¹Cited in Andrea Mubi, 2012, Urban studies, *New Media and Urban Motilities: A Territoriologic Point of View*, sage publication, 49(2) 399–414, February p. (7).

²²Ralph, 1976, 3.

grounded and less contingent on physical locations, while more in relation to other entities (other flows, objects and places). Therefore, understanding *place* is strongly defined in relation to other entities and not statically and remotely observed. Today, we can see intersections of objects, entities, flows of material and immaterial entities inside and outside boundaries of *space*, their interaction constructing new understanding of *place* itself. After all the evolution in society, and the ‘*growth of movements and flows of goods, capital, people, and information, place cannot be perceived as a fixed portion of space, as an anchoring point of community. [...] We have to face new dimensions of place, and see it as an intersection of flows*’,²³ as a ‘*hub, dynamically produced in time*’.

In contemporary societies that are largely characterised by travel and movement, ‘just as territorialisations are always shifting, so too identifications remain fleeting and transitory, while always leaving behind traces of their passage’.²⁴ In a society that is constantly mobile, people tend to spend more time in transitional spaces, hence ‘identity can be defined increasingly in terms of departures and impending arrivals’.²⁵ Today, territories are subject to de-territorialisations, recombined into new assemblages, and re-territorialised. Deleuze and Guattari have influenced relational thinking of space and place, as space and place formed based on relations and, since relations change, space and place are also in constant flux.²⁶ In this approach of place and space, both are considered ‘as performed events, unfolded and played out across distances, by embodied and non-embodied vectors all into a form of assemblage of material and immaterial entities’.²⁷ By each change and fluctuation in relations, through any possibility of existence or presence of virtual in real, or connecting here (real) and there (real or virtual), the experience of place as event respectively shifts. Physical proximity is not any more the main element in constructing place and space, but is defined through an assemblage of connected or interrelated entities. New media technologies position users in constant relation with other users, at varying scales of relations: individual, objects or places.

Communication studies scholar Adriana De Souza e Silva similarly suggests that one of the implications of these media technologies is to overcome separation of the physical and virtual. She argued that the ability to move around physical places ‘always on’ and connected to virtual data shifts users’ perception of space, and respectively creates ‘hybrid spaces’.²⁸ New media technologies specifically, are acting as

²³(Shields 1999) cited in Lemos, Andre., *Space and Culture: Post--Mass Media Functions, Locative Media, and Informational Territories: New Ways of Thinking About Territory, Place, and Mobility in Contemporary Society* 2010, pp. (403–422).

²⁴Neil Leach, “Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space,” in *Habitus: a Sense of Place*, ed. Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, Second Edition (England: Ashgate, 2005), 297–311.

²⁵Neil Leach, “Dark Side of Demus,”. *Journal of Architecture*. Vol. 3. Spring 1998, (1–12).

²⁶Cited in introduction of the *Geographies of Communication: The spatial turn in Media Studies*, p. 20. Reflection on chapter written by Richard Ek.

²⁷Ek, R. *Media Studies, Geographical Imaginations and Relational Space. Geographies of Communication: The spatial turn in Media Studies*, 2006.

²⁸de Souza e Silva, A. (2006). From cyber to hybrid: mobile technologies as interfaces of hybrid spaces. *Space & Culture*, 9 (3), 261–278.

mediating forces in the production and reproduction of *space* relations. In some cases, media connects far apart places by reducing the distance between them. Corresponding to these developments in media and communication technologies, and looking at their effect on *space* and *place*, some scholars with a more pessimistic approach comprehend the experience of *place* through media as a second-hand experience, lacking depth and meaning.²⁹ Media technologies and communication devices are said to be responsible for an increased loss of sense of place or what Relph referred to as placelessness, in which identity of places is weakened to a magnitude that '*[places] not only look alike, but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities*'.³⁰ Media technologies (mainly mass media) convey a standard global image for places, increasing the sense of monotony and lack of authenticity and uniqueness.³¹

Mass media has intruded local values, invading local life and replacing the quality of relatedness with an inauthentic mass society. Examining the role of media, communication scholar Joshua Meyrowitz stated that in our modern 'electronic society',³² people increasingly have 'no sense of *place*'. Media, by transforming social relations, especially in terms of providing new situations (situational geography), has caused an undermining of the conventional relation of physical settings and social situations. Having a critical view towards media, he addressed that people traditionally come to know about their local places through social roles and hierarchies, but the shift towards electronic communication has transcended the limits of physical settings.³³ In contrast to Meyrowitz's idea that media has put physical space into the margins and that people are consequently losing their sense of place because of openness and permeability of spaces, Moores (2003) believes that our spaces today are more pluralized, rather than marginalized.

From a similar view point, new media technologies introduced recently, mainly referred to as bottom up media,³⁴ transform users from only being receivers of media information to producers and disseminators of content of media, in which different audiences make sense of their daily life, by adding, adopting and sharing personal views to spaces and places, helping in forming a communicatively constructed identity of *place*.

²⁹Relph, same reference, 90.

³⁰(Relph 1976, 90).

³¹(Media geographies, 33).

³²1985, 6—(No sense of place?).

³³Meyrowitz, 1985: 308.

³⁴Anthony Townsend. "Locative-Media Artists in the Contested-Aware City." *Leonardo*. 2006, Vol. 39, No. 4, (345–347).

1.4 Memory of Place: Dis-Emplacement, Dis-Embodiment

When distinguished philosopher Edward Casey questions how often a memory is either of a place itself or of an event or person *in* a place,³⁵ he clearly explains the *place*-bound quality of memories (though the degree to which *place* gains significance in a particular memory may vary with individuals). But the vast and enchanting territory of place memory is yet another aspect strongly altered by the fluctuating present nature of *place*, which is worth exploring in this discussion on changing relations with places. Classically, there are two main positions in phenomenological and architectural theory writings on place memory: memory of embodiment and memory of emplacement, both of which are profoundly challenged by the disembodied and displaced modes of experiencing *place* today. To understand these challenges, it is useful to first sum up what has been written on the topic while *place* was still conceived of as a stable ground for thought.

In the case of place memory also, the traditional approach tends to have a preference for a well defined, fixed spatiality. Philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes that '*Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are*'.³⁶ For phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, the term 'inhabited space' is in itself a paradigm for memory mechanisms, since '*in memories, corporeal space is immediately linked with the surrounding space of the environment, some fragment of inhabitable land*'.³⁷ Although the discipline known as the 'art of memory' dealt with trained artificial memory, it nevertheless gives important insights into how the mind works with inherent spatiality. In historian Frances Yates' detailed study³⁸ we find out that in *Ad Herenium*, one of the first antique treatises, the 'art of memory' is considered 'an inner writing', the speeches of the orators being inscribed in the mind by imagining a vast edifice of successive rooms and assigning meanings to each room. The event, the imprinted meaning in the case of the orators, inhabits *place*, residing in the situational relationship between body and surrounding *space*. It is a matter of recreating the situational structure of the body-in-place, the spatialized situation that enables one to re-enact the meanings once inscribed in *space* in the act of recalling. Likewise, in processes of natural spatial memory, places are remembered by re-activating a certain embodiment that once has taken place (Bachelard 1992). Neurologists believe that the same centres are activated within the brain in the moment that a space is perceived by walking through it and when it is remembered, while phenomenologists suggest that the very embodiment of remembering relates to *place* (Casey 2000), since to be embodied is to have a place in which to be situated. This category of embodiment in spatialized memories applies when the mind recalls places that the body had already experienced. However, when perceiving a new place,

³⁵Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: a phenomenological study*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 89.

³⁶Bachelard, G.—*The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, MA: Beacon Press, 1994.

³⁷Ricoeur, P.—*Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago Univ. Press, 1992.

³⁸Yates, F.—*The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

that carries its own memory, distinct, although similar, mind mechanisms apply. In classical theory, this was a return to the question of letting oneself be immersed in the aura, the atmosphere, the sense of place, of letting oneself be emplaced.

Casey's eloquent study on *Remembering* dedicates an entire chapter to 'Place Memory', in which he makes very valuable assertions on the self's experience and recollections of a place, but does not go into much detail about the deposited memory layers that are stored in the place itself, as an invisible archive that documents the 'sense of place'. However, in another study, he refers to a scribbled fragment of Joyce's writings from a preparatory notebook for *Ulysses*, with deep implications: '*Topical history: places remember events*'. Casey reads in this short statement an essential questioning that Joyce would suggest a subversion of the classical assertion that memory is essentially time-bound, by implying that '*the active agent is place, and not the historical events, the former actively remembering the latter*'.³⁹ The question of 'how places remember' is more actively addressed when there is some kind of spatial alienation or an absence of the once-built past, and Joyce's note that 'places remember events' could be a starting point, although it misses the uneventful everydayness of *place*, whose memories '*remain embedded in the form, remain to be unearthed, read and decoded, however imperfectly or incorrectly, whether they exist today as a spatial tangible remain or as a vague yet lingering mental presence*'.⁴⁰ Interestingly the dramatic changes in the contemporary *place* experiences open different trajectories for perceiving the above place phenomena.

1.5 Emerging Relationalities

At this point, it is crucial to bring into discussion the transforming relationships with *place*, which enable new relationalities in the present day. *Place* relations today challenge some of the assumptions of *place* and *space* perceptions, for instance that embodiment is necessary in storing and reliving memories of place. If among the traditional conceptions of subject in *place* the body was quintessential in perceiving and remembering, one cannot overlook the growing role that image and video play in the processes of place memory these days. Photographic and filmic practices, nowadays almost omnipresent and embedded into everyday rhythms and habits of interacting with spaces, are becoming disembodied modes of storing memories: the remembrance of being-in-place is transferred from the physicality of the lived body and the recollecting embodied self, into a photo-video external medium. Interestingly, deciding to photograph or record a place in order to remember it in the future may often prove to be self-contradictory. Focusing on the act of recording, one favours ocular perception, as part of a depth-less interaction with place, but the body resists inhabiting it. In turn, it is not any more the body sensorially mediating between

³⁹Casey, E.—*Getting Back into Place*, Indiana Univ. Press, 1993.

⁴⁰Trieb M.—*Yes, Now I Remember: An Introduction*, in M. Trieb ed. 2009, *Spatial Recall*, Routledge.

present and past that acts as a trigger for activating place memories that had been stored away as sensations. Instead, today it is the representation of the place through image that is the medium which can (but does not necessarily) store away sensations which one has once experienced within a certain space. In this context, we can understand place memory paradoxically being mediated through disembodiment.

It is intriguing how the vague and metaphoric phrasings used by theoreticians in the past on this topic are nowadays an almost banal description of the mixed media practices that narrate and populate places. *Place* is nowadays commonly perceived and experienced first as a mixture of others' written-visual stories of it, and only then as a physical entity. Therefore, the new media practices seem to have taken on the role of archiving place memories, embedding them in the very experience of *place*, remaining *to be unearthed, read and decoded, however imperfectly or incorrectly*.⁴¹ In this reconsidered context, it is no longer that place memories need to be stored away, either in mind, or within the sensorial body, but the active agent in this recollection is indeed, *place* itself. This indicates the changing notion of *place* and emerging relationality with *place*, where experience and the recollection of a place are no longer a relation between subject and its lived space, instead, they are an immersion into an inter-subjective domain of changing dynamic experiences. Transformed from passive into active, *place* therefore is infused with its own '*simultaneity of stories-so-far*',⁴² that experientially condense and represent memories of it in a most comprehensive expression, rendering it with a sense of flux; this sort of fluctuant representation/perception embedded in place itself has been praised by recent theories, which criticize classical fixed representations as being '*static time-slices*', that even '*multiplied to infinity cannot produce becoming*'.⁴³

Media technologies introduced in urban living have become one of the main factors that change and challenge the experience of *place*. These technologies are putting the importance of physical place in question. Previous to media technologies, the perception of *place* was strongly connected to physical materiality and material space was the main contributor in constructing the experience, but now the experience of place is less constrained to only physical borders and is rather understood more relationally in connection with entities that may not physically exist in the same proximity instead, space could be experienced with entities outside the physical borders. Sociologist Andrea Mubi Brighenti referred to the new media devices, as '*territorial devices that increase the complexity of all existing territories. Territory should not be conceived as an 'all-or-nothing' object but rather as a multidimensional set of relationships defined by prolongations, affordances and events*'.⁴⁴ Richard EK,⁴⁵

⁴¹(idem).

⁴²Massey, D.—*For Space*. Sage Publications, 2005.

⁴³(idem).

⁴⁴Andrea Mubi, 2012, Urban studies, New Media and Urban Motilities: A Territoriologic Point of View, sage publication, 49(2) 399–414, February.

⁴⁵Richard Ek, Media Studies, Geographical Imaginations and Relational Space. *Geographies of Communication: The spatial turn in Media Studies*, 2006.

similarly, elaborating on studies regarding *space*, *place* and new media technologies, discussed how the conventional ontology of *space* (as absolute) is questioned in favour of new technologies based on the notion of relational space which has resulted in two main propositions.⁴⁶ The first discusses *space* and *place* as events, produced and consumed through performances, actions and interactions. The second challenges the conventional understanding of *space* as constrained to and held in fixed section of *space* or geometry,⁴⁷ since it is transformed by each interaction and flux, the final result of *space* respectively is different, therefore entails plurality and multiplicity. *'The meaning of places may be rooted in the physical setting and objects and activities, but they are not a property of them, rather they are a property of human intentions and experiences, meaning can be generated and transformed from one set of objects to another'*.⁴⁸ It is important to note here that the concepts of territorialization and deterritorialization are more relational concepts, providing us with useful tools⁴⁹ and explanations for the new emerging urban spatialities.

Today, the means to grasp the deeper layers of *place* reside in understanding the simultaneity of flows and situations which traverse its spatial fixedness; *'what is more revealing, and now required, is a discourse on spatial change and space-place characteristics as discovered through other stories and spatial representations'*,⁵⁰ such as new media practices and technologies have to offer and already alter our everyday ways of urban living. This newly defined constantly changing and becoming nature of *place* illustrates with more accuracy the processes of remembering, perceiving and relating to *place*, surpassing the fixedness of classical representations and notions about the stability of spatiality. The reconstructive process generated by interaction with contemporary spatialities produces a new fluctuating re-assemblage of feelings and fragments. The experience of *place* is not anymore perceived as limited to physical boundaries, exceeding physical limitation. This ever changing and uncertain flux of *place/space* relationalities creates simultaneously opportunities for *becoming* and *unbecoming* through the heterogeneity of spatial experiences.

Consequently, the views offered in this book chapters are driven by the need to probe the ways in which new digital media trends in *how* and *what* we communicate, and *where* this is taking place, are driving/reshaping our everyday practices, and perceptions of contemporary identities, amidst media portrayals of urban transformations. This 'mediatization' (Friesen and Hug 2009) of space with fast-evolving range of communicative platforms and sophistication of digital representations, challenges and destabilises our prevailing societal notions of place-based identity and cultural agency, generating both tensions and possibilities for engagement, urban activism and the evolution of alternative place futures.

⁴⁶Cited in Falkheimer, Jasper and Andre Jansson (Eds.). *Geographies of Communication: The Spatial Turn in Media Studies*, summary of the chapter written by Richard. EK.

⁴⁷(idem).

⁴⁸Stephen Strasser (1967, p. 508) cited in Relph, 1976, p. 47.

⁴⁹Andrea Mubi, 2012, *Urban studies, New Media and Urban Motilities: A Territorial Point of View*, sage publication, 49(2) 399–414, February.

⁵⁰Tewdwr-Jones, M.—*Urban Reflections: narratives of place, planning and change*, Policy, 2011.

The three sections of the book are structured to offer a relatively hierarchical examination of media and people interfaces from micro- (individual and locative) to meso-level (social-network enabling) and macro-level (regional city-systems and platforms). The various interfaces enable readers to appreciate the diverse yet connected levels of technology and people interaction in cities.

In **Section A: Placing Media—Locative Interfaces**, the focus is on the implications of ‘locative media’ on individual’s navigation perception and how this transforms place experiences in diverse contexts. Fazel and Rajendran begin (Chap. 2) our Placing Media foray by providing an interesting framework for understanding theories and literatures of place after the advent of media technologies, through approaching from ‘over and above’ to view ‘from within’. In Chap. 3, Saker develops the exploration of the phenomenology scope of place and its debt to ideas of social relations from de Certeau (1984) and Lefebvre (1991) by providing a critical historical overview of how people use locative media to enhance their place experiences and identity. Kulkarni (in Chap. 4) combines embodied fieldwork, textual critiques and new installations production—to probe a media-based imagination of future urban identities—inspired by Lefebvre’s ‘total body’ as well as the urban geographical approaches of Harvey and Sassen. The section culminates in Lovett’s Chap. 5, which uses site-specific moving images to explore an expanded sense of self-identity within the architectural scale, from the habitual and haptic, to historical, cultural and narrative.

In **Section B: Spatial representation—Social Interfaces**, by shifting from the interface of locative media and individual experience in cities, these chapters examine how ‘interactive media’ constructs and structures social relations in the public realm. Dyer highlights in Chap. 6, new forms of technology-mediated, university spaces to explore emerging socio-technical student identities, drawing on ideas in Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, and Lefebvre’s notions of the (re)presentation of social space. And in ‘how I met my neighbour’, Chap. 7: Setton and Eizenberg investigate the role of virtual ‘third space’ (Steinkuehler 2006; after Bhabha 2004) through play as an interactive identity facilitator using public screens to engage strangers; In Chap. 8, Cameron deconstructs ‘Spatial Representation’ relative to social constructionism using place-based social networks, digital place making and its role in public space design, to influence the production of physical space and representation/understanding) of place (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey and Braun 1996; Tuters 2004). And finally in Chap. 9, Paredes evokes the potential of a cultural-studies-type, politically-oriented approach in demonstrating spatial representation (from sensed and harvested ‘smart’ data)—as a critical medium of urban production, transformation and potential resistance.

In **Section C: Spatial Cultures—Technology-mediated interfaces**, the focus moves towards emerging ‘technology-mediated’ identities, their manifestations and implications at the community, city and policy level. Erickson’s drawing upon various interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks such as Foucault’s biopolitics of spatial knowledge and Richard Grusin’s theory of pre-mediation, highlights in Chap. 10, the problematic role of data-driven practices in generating neighbourhood profiling, fear of the ‘other’ and spatialized identities; In Chap. 11, Lopez-Marcos’s review of the

hegemonic geopolitics of knowledge, extends such applications to some European urban, regional and community-based networks with their virtual counter-laboratory (Agamben 2008) resistance strategies. In Chap. 12, Paris discusses the impacts of media platforms on the identity formation and branding of Milan. Moujan concludes the section (Chap. 13) discussing a more-than-urban condition which requires not only diversity but also, and importantly, entanglement.

Drawing upon the contributions across these three sections, the discussion summaries in Chap. 14 structure our analyses of key themes from their findings and propositions. Concept images are used to express a synthetical view of their salient features concerning mediation at individual, local and urban levels—conveyed as a concluding overview of their import from our theoretical perspective. This hierarchical means of examining technology-based, place-identity and spatial-cultures in the three sections facilitates our analyses and aim of outlining a possible framework in the final chapter.

Chapter 15 concludes by first contextualising multidisciplinary notions of cognition, identity and place, and then integrating their insights with themes from Chap. 14's conclusion, to outline a spatio-temporal concept frame—comprising a structure of dynamic interactions linking identity with mediated processes in the everyday socio-spatial dimensions of place. This includes a number of simple, future-city-scenarios providing selective 'windows' for interdisciplinary discussions interrogating this generic range of 'urban-form' drivers that are shaping mediated identities in the futures of place.

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