General

Terra – Terror – Territory

Re-Articulating the Territory by Putting Use Value above Exchange Value

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Essay – December 18, 2017

While Blue Marble showed us the finity of the earth, of Terra, the current culture of grabbing sees territory as private property and exchange value. This can only be adjusted if we intervene at the structural level, says Pascal Gielen. We have to re-evaluate and upgrade the use value, whether it concerns public or private territory. Artists and cultural organizations can play a crucial part in this. Not by proclaiming a political message but by acting politically or not with their work.



Image: Mind Design

... today, all politics is about real estate. Postmodern politics is essentially a matter of land grabs, on a local as well as a global scale. Whether you think of the question of Palestine, the settlements and the camps, or of the politics of raw materials and extraction; whether you think of ecology (and the rainforests) or the problems of federalism, citizenship and immigration, or whether it is a question of gentrification in the great cities as well as in the bidonvilles, the favelas and townships, and of course the movement of the landless – today everything is about land.
— Frederic Jameson

... the urban, the environment and the question of territorial identity all are dimensions of the monotopic Europe coined around a specific notion of mobility as zero friction.
— Ole Jensen and Tim Richardson

A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing.
— Oscar Wilde

When, on 7 December 1972, Blue Marble – the first clear photograph of the whole earth – was shown, we immediately understood its message: this is the territory. Although it had long since been proven that the Earth was round and finite, it took an image to really let especially that finiteness sink into our collective consciousness. From then on the Earth was indeed understood as a territory: a well-defined and limited terrain and the only one we might inhabit and farm, at least for now. It is no coincidence that ecological movements rapidly gathered momentum in the early 1970s.

What may be a historical coincidence, or not, is that it was in exactly this same period that neoliberalism began to gain popularity – after twenty years of preparing for it – between 1940 and 1960. Because of a unilateral decision by the United States to no longer tie its currency to gold, the famous Bretton Woods system was dismantled between 1971 and 1973. Inflation, first in price and then wage, broke the then dominant Keynesian model. Concurrently the student movement's demand for more freedom in the late 1960s had made at least some proponents of that model receptive to anarcho-capitalism.[1] In any case, it was the alumni of the early 1970s who, in the 1980s, became the neo-managers, policymakers and controllers of real estate. In short, the beginning of the 1970s marked the start of a bipolar 'terror about territory'. This terror came from two completely different spheres. On the one side there was the ecological movement, which, from a growing awareness, revolted against the destructive exploitation of our finite planet; on the other side, free reign was given to an urge for accumulation and expansion that, by contrast, encouraged the excessive exploitation and privatization of real estate. For the record, from its Latin roots the word 'terror' means fright or panic. A fear that is mainly caused by a threat to one's territory, either mental or physical. This is an interesting finding as such: the effect of terror is primarily placed on the receiving end. Terror first of all points to a state of mind and only in the second place to the violence or regime that causes the terror. A state of terror is therefore in fact a psychological condition, the situation of a feeling of dread the real cause of which may never materialize or even be non-existent.

The triumvirate terra, terror and territory seems to define today's general climate of fear. According to ecological movements we are no longer on the brink of disaster, but well past that because they fear, with reason, that we have already exhausted or simply used up the limited territory at our disposal. In turn, CEOs fear – increasingly so alongside governments – that economic growth will halt and that they will not be able to accumulate even more, that they will run out of available, finite territory, as it becomes occupied by others. However diametrically opposed both movements are, their state of mind is similar: a general panic. Even their solutions run parallel: both try to reclaim and control the territory. It is only when we ask how these parties would like to do so that all similarity ends.

The Wild West

It was on a bus trip from Hollywood to Santa Monica that an elderly gentleman – he was close to 90 – explained to me why Americans were so attached to their guns. According to him, it had a lot to do with the first-in-time, first-in-right principle, whereby the first white settlers of America's West could claim farmland and (gold)mines as their own if they were the first to settle on a territory. As this gold and land rush gave rise to quite fierce competition and envy, we may assume that in nineteenth-century California, Texas and New Mexico territory was not only frequently taken by force, but also had to be defended with guns. Whether there was much actual shooting in those days is perhaps justifiably a subject of debate today. The rough history of these parts owes its mythical status mostly to Hollywood films, as historical sources point to a not so wild Wild West.[2] However, it is certainly true that at the time, the authorities could hardly enforce the monopoly of violence for such a vast territory. Local farmers, miners and militias had to maintain order and guard the land themselves, and they did so also by using weapons. In the United States, the possession of firearms is thus synonymous with the right of ownership and even with personal autonomy or the right to self-determination, according to my elderly travel companion. This runs parallel to a deep-rooted, either or not repressed distrust of the government. The government will after all never be able to efficiently enforce the monopoly of violence and therefore citizens can and should lend a hand. The point is that private possession of firearms in the first place served to define and defend one's own territory, thus making ownership and guns like twins that are joined at the hip.

The contrast with the original inhabitants of the new continent could hardly have been bigger. Although Native Americans did have property rules, they valued territory because of its practical value. In other words: useful to hunt and fish. This led to quite a few misunderstandings. The white newcomers who had settled on the land or had even bought it from the Indians 'fair and square', were surprised and greatly annoyed when those same Indians on their hunting travels still raised their tents on the land that they had sold. So, one can own the land but one can never safeguard the territory from the use of the land. In that sense, land can indeed never be private property. Or, the territory may belong to someone, but the use of it belongs to no one and everyone. But also, the land can only be property as long as it is being used. To paraphrase Karl Marx: for Indians the territory has hardly any trade value, but only use value.[3] Territory cannot be a commodity in that regard.

These radically different views of territory and its use also meant that Indians used weapons primarily to hunt animals and not, like the newcomers, to deter other people or hunt each other. An arrow cuts through the hunting ground, but a gun occupies the territory and then has to protect its borders. The economy of the former depends primarily on moving through the territory, while that of the latter is based on owning and expanding it. The former panic when they can no longer travel freely throughout the territory, the latter when the borders of their territory are threatened. Of course we mustn't turn cowboys and Indians or sedentary people and nomads into cliches, and indeed not romanticize the latter. Still, it is helpful to view the distinction in an ideal-typical sense, since how one deals with territory can be radically different.

Use Value and Exchange Value of Territories

As long as we cannot exploit other planets besides our own, Blue Marble literally shows us the boundaries of the territory. We now realize that ownership and exploitation are finite. No matter how many more people join us on the globe, we can no longer 'expand' it. The territory is simply practically 'gone'. Hence the panic on both sides, mentioned earlier. Ecologists are in distress because they see the sea level rising up to their neck and feel global warming breathing down it. In their turn, the capitalists live in fear of not being able to acquire more territory, unless they are sufficiently fast, flexible and especially competitive – and if they can no longer simply seize territory by force, these days governments are only too willing to do it for them. As German economist Dirk Lohr states:

As soon as we start speaking about 'globalization', we inevitably associate it with the excessive financial markets that are disconnected from the real economy. There is less public awareness of another type of globalization that also involves the forced unification of institutions all over the world: the institution of private property and privatization strategies. The driving forces behind this development are – besides the usual suspects, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization – governmental development organizations themselves. [4]

This privatization rush is still often justified with an ancient legitimation by John Locke:[5] in particular he defended the private appropriation of land by reasoning that collectively using it was economically less efficient. Those who promise 'improvement, the enhancement of the land's productivity' therefore often more easily obtain a building permit, a change in zoning plans or environmental permit nowadays. [6] In times of increasing scarcity (of territory and natural resources) there is of course much to be said for Locke's argument to let the land be owned by those who can exploit it most productively and effectively. That is not only good for the economy but for the ecology as well. Careful handling of scarce resources – whether these are clean water, oil or, in time, clean air – would after all also be good for the environment. The problem, however, is that the English philosopher and his followers today do not see labour and productivity in those terms, as is evident from a more precise analysis of Locke's statements about, again… the Indians.

It appears that the issue for Locke has less to do with the activity of labour as such than with its profitable use. In calculating the value of the acre in America, for instance, he talks not about the Indian's expenditure of effort, labour, but about the Indian's failure to realize profit. The issue, in other words, is not the labour of a human being but the *productivity of property*, its exchange value, and its application to commercial profit. [7]

Locke's theory was used to legitimize colonial and neo-colonial practices of appropriation, and today it is still being used and misused by city administrations and national or federal governments to defend their management, or rather mismanagement, of the territory. Crucial in this is that, just as the enlightened philosopher did, juristic legitimations for the repurposing of territory place exchange value above use value. This has quite a few consequences for our valuation of the territory. In the case of real estate businesses, for example, the urban infrastructure of houses, office buildings and transport is only relevant if it produces a surplus value. Investment decisions – often made in private-public cooperation – depend first and foremost upon the expected profit and therefore not upon the use value in terms of liveability, functionality or mobility. This use value is only relevant if it also raises the exchange value. One would be mistaken in thinking that this reasoning only applied to the physical territory, national heritage and natural resources. However infinite virtual space may appear, Internet capacity and connections are just as well in the first place bound to profitability and only in the second instance to use values such as good communication or enriching social interaction. The so-called social media are primarily commercial media: they literally convert social relations and even intimacy into commodities that generate exchange value and, hopefully, profit, even if only virtually so by

going public. Facebook, Twitter or Flickr are hardly interested in the intrinsic value of communication and social relations, but all the more in their exchange value and stock value. In other words, in the seemingly endless space of the Internet territorial laws also apply and territorial battles rage, as the www is only worldwide and this *terra* is finite, as Blue Marble has shown us. Once again, it is the sense of scarcity – partly of their own making, by the way – that drives internauts and cyber capitalists to occupy as much territory as fast as they can (before others do so). This also makes clear that if we could really escape from Blue Marble, if we could occupy a new planet, not in cyberspace but in real space, and thus be able to really expand the territory, we still would not be free from the territorial struggles. Expanding the territory does not automatically mean that control over it would change. The former Wild West was initially seen as an immense territorial expansion, as a vast and seemingly endless landscape. So, real space could fall victim to the culture of grabbing just as easily as cyberspace. And for the record: grab culture cannot be simply reduced to individual misbehaviour or an immoral psyche. This pathology is structurally and collectively ingrained with everyone who sees territory as private property and exchange value. And it is hard not to do so in an age when just about everyone sings the praises of capital and the free market. The frantic fear of loss, the hysterical urge to have more and the blind faith in economic growth all point to a systemic error of which individual greed and grabbing behaviour are merely the superficial symptoms. This also implies that we cannot simply adjust views on territory, including territorial behaviour, by naming and shaming so-called anti-social individuals. This can only be achieved by a thorough overhaul of the management of the territory. And that means we have to intervene at the structural level.

Abstract Territory

The idea that exchange value is an abstraction of use value is a classic Marxist insight.[8] Extending this and applying it to territory provides us with a special insight into our relation to territory and management of it. Private property – and this also applies to governments if they manage their territory as such – has the special quality that it can be expressed in quantitative terms. And that is exactly what exchange value is: the quantity of money that makes it possible to exchange the land for something else. If property is only seen this way (as is the case with, for example, real estate) it becomes doubly detached from the use of it. In the first place, one doesn't need to know the territory and its specific qualities in order to acquire it and perhaps resell it, just as speculative investors in a car factory don't need to know anything about how to build a car. Moreover, they don't need to have any empathy with the production process, let alone with the people who work there and they don't even have to like the car brand. They may never buy one themselves. Likewise, the territory can remain utterly alien to its buyer. Even more so, this may even be better as it makes it easier to resell it at a profit without any sentimental drawbacks. This means – in the second place – that the trader in land has a hard time grasping its limits or 'exhaustability'. In the long run, people who work the land or live in a house will sense, for example, that the ground is 'tired' or exhausted or that a house has become decrepit and worn-out. In other words: the use of something teaches us the limits of that use. Use value also refers to a sensitivity that unfolds only through the use of the territory. One develops a feeling for the land and a special ear for the creaks of one's house. Or, in more vernacular terms: people become one with the things they work on, make use of and live in. But the knowledge that is built through use and by material tangibility evaporates in exchange value. Abstraction then also means that stretch, exhaustion or finiteness of the territory become hard to grasp.

It may become slightly tedious, but once more this takes us back to the Indians. They understood only too well that they had to kill just enough buffaloes to survive. Not so many that the buffalo would become extinct, not so few that they themselves would die from cold and starvation. Admittedly, ecologists today tend to romanticize the Indians' sense of

environmental balance, but all the same it is a nice illustration of the specific quality of use value. Those who actually use a product, know its value (sometimes only after a while) and, again, in a twofold way: both the value of the qualities of a product (the things you can do with it) and the value of its limits, say, its level of 'fatigue' or 'exhaustion', or sustainability.

With Marx, a structural approach to the current (mis)management of territory would therefore advocate a drastic shift from exchange value to use value. To be clear, this does not argue in favour of total de-privatization. After all, private property too can be appreciated exactly because of its high use value. It is only when the exchange value gains the upper hand that the private domain becomes corroded. What it comes down to is that we have to re-evaluate and upgrade the use value and in some cases even fully restore it, whether it concerns public or private territory. And not only for ecological reasons, but also for the much-needed maintenance of our own character or identity.

Corrosion

Exchange value is the reason, not only that we easily buy and sell territory but also that we can quickly exchange one territory for another. For example, at present many professionals lead a forced nomadic life, having to frequently change jobs and residence, and therefore territory. In *The Corrosion of Character*, Richard Sennett describes how this global drift corrodes our individual character. By character, he means 'the long-term aspect of our emotional experience.' Further, he states: 'Character is expressed by loyalty and mutual commitment, or through the pursuit of long-term goals, or by the practice of delayed gratification for the sake of the future. … The personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others.' [9] But, he continues, 'short-term capitalism threatens to corrode [his] character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnish each with a sense of sustainable self'. [10]

It is perhaps no coincidence that in popular speech today, a bipolar disorder is often referred to as 'bottomlessness', as in 'without a base to stand on'. Isn't it true that many psychopathological disorders originate in a lack of loyalty to the territory in which we find ourselves? Or, to put it differently: can we still find the time to build up and experience a territory through long-term use of our environment? If territory first and foremost refers to a personal mental and physical space, which we can only experience because it is delineated and because we have a certain sense of control over it, then the question is whether this possibility still exists today. Even if we are not forced to leave our territory, its jacked-up exchange value guarantees that the territory around us transmutes with lightning speed. Do we still have time to connect and bond with the people and things around us? And do we even want to? It seems that many thirty-somethings today suffer from fear of commitment…

This corrosion of character, and the diminishing opportunities to bind ourselves to other people and our immediate environment for the long-term and attain an embedding through sustainable use, at least explains the extreme identitary reflex that we are confronted with almost everywhere these days. In another book, Sennett writes that less and less people succeed in developing into adults. [11] They remain stuck in adolescence for their whole lives, as it were. By this the philosopher refers to the stubborn character trait of continuously confirming one's own identity in a rigid and principal manner. For fear of losing individuality, the adolescent stubbornly clings to principles in order to thus obtain an identity. Now, this is quite normal and perhaps even necessary behaviour in youngsters who still have to establish their place in the world. In adults, however, it leads to pathological rigidity whereby all that is different is seen as threatening. This pathology expresses itself on the collective and political level in the by now well-known nationalisms, walls, travel bans, gated communities and other fortifications. In short, the terrain is again persistently closed off and defended in order to protect their own identity – a word that, how fittingly, stems from the Latin *identitas* or 'sameness', which in this context means the

urge to keep things 'the same', to maintain the status quo. This predilection for sameness and confirmation of one's own identity grows directly in proportion to the increase in exchange value and therefore the exchangeability of the territory. It shouldn't come as a surprise therefore that a growing number of adults, including company managers, religious leaders and especially prominent politicians display adolescent behaviour.

Monotopia versus Heterotopia

From Brexit to Trumpism, these are all expressions of the fear over the loss of territory. Panic caused by fear of being overrun by migrants and refugees, fear of job loss, of the 'own' prosperity, 'own' values and 'own' identity always emerge within a worldview in which everything competes with everything else. When a territory has been taken by someone, it can no longer be used by someone else. Trade agreements and common markets increase exchange value while degrading use value – if only by limiting the lifespan of commodities. The faith in blind competition backfires into reactionary attitudes, fundamentalisms and terror. When in the game of supply and demand everything is related to everything and therefore becomes relative and liquid, people frantically try to find firm ground again. They feel an urgent need to demarcate the territory and even take up arms again. This is a highly paradoxical mental state in which neoliberalism and neo-nationalism easily find and overlap each other. From Berlusconi via Cameron and De Wever to Trump, we see expressions of new ideological and political formations that reconcile free trade with protectionism and conservatism in a highly original manner. The result is a curiously repressive liberalism in which fear of loss of territory is overcompensated for by its rigid delineation.

In any case, in the past decade in Europe, the wet dream of a common market with free competition and frictionless mobility has turned into a bitter nightmare full of political name-calling, troikas and barbed wire. In particular these troikas are evidence of the belief that unity within the European Union can be achieved or restored by fixing the economy, that mutual trust can be gained by balancing budgets. In this belief, the European territory is seen as a monotopia in which the competition between (creative) cities, regions and countries benefits everyone. Until recently, no one would have dared to predict that this European utopia might very well turn into a dystopia of reactionary divisive politics. Nevertheless, social geographers Ole Jensen and Tim Richardson neatly pointed out, as early as 2004, that a policy of competition between cities, regions or countries might raise the common prosperity, but would also always generate winners and losers.[12] No matter how relative differences may be, the inherent logic of competition is that it creates a hierarchy of at least gradual inequalities between those who have more and those who have less. Those who see the free market as the foundation of the territory apply the same measure to all residents, cities, regions and countries, looking only at their differences in quantitative terms. From that perspective there are only actors who do better or less well, who do very good or very bad. Then there are only frontrunners and stragglers and everyone in between, but everyone is going in the same direction, towards the same worthy goal. That goal is after all easy to calculate and can be expressed in numbers. Within Europe, this leads to the ironic but rather apt spectacle in which glances are occasionally cast from right to left, or from east to west, but mainly from down to up or from the geographical south to the north. It may no longer be a land or gold rush, but it is a competitive rush to the economic top – whereby the North dictates the norm – that has transformed the European landscape into a minefield of envy and mutual blaming. 'Bankrupt' Greece was accused of mismanagement and corruption, whereas rich tax haven Luxembourg quietly won the rat race. It brings to mind the old saying about the pot calling the kettle black. Fierce competition inevitably leads to envy and exclusion, along with the occasional foul play.

The crucial fallacy of Europe as a hegemony is the belief that cultural differences can be smoothed over by making everything mutually comparable (in exchange value). Or, in line

with the preceding argument: the belief that differences in use, in the *cultivation* of the territory, can be solved by making the territory itself interchangeable, albeit at some cost. However, this ignores the fact that the territory as a much-needed space of security and mental safety only emerges by using it. Territory, in other words, is pure culture. It is the result of the work of assigning meaning by which an arbitrary landscape or a meaningless area becomes meaning*ful*. Only in the use of the space is that space charged with meanings, affects, indeed with *value*. It is only because residents, through (long-term) use, acquire knowledge of and become *familiar* with their environment that they form an attachment to it. In short, through the working and cultivation of an abstract space that space is transformed or *articulated* into concrete, although mentally *experienced* territory. This is why a physical breach of the territory always also has a psychic repercussion, and the latter often lingers longer than the former. This is because territory is in the first place an affect- and value-laden symbolic space that is charged in processes of assigning meaning, or, simply, by culture. And this is the turf on which artists and cultural organizations can play a crucial part. By using their environment they continuously articulate and re-articulate the territory. With all their massively singular articulations of sometimes completely contradictory ideas and artefacts they generate a murmuring of meanings. Against the monotopia of the common market they pose a heterotopia of images and ideas. A certain terrain can be occupied by only one entity at a time, but it can be re-articulated and thereby cultivated by many, in endless variations. This is the fundamental difference between exchange value and use value.

Art as Use Value



View of the Earth as seen by the Apollo 17 crew. – Photo: NASA

Perhaps the quality of art and culture is presented in a somewhat too positive light here. As we know, artists, curators and other cultural professionals are equally capable of jacking up exchange value. The auctioning of artworks in the art market, as well as the competition between creative cities, cultural capitals, art festivals and biennales all take part in an economy of seduction in which artistic activities and artefacts, as brands, determine the surplus value within the exchange value. From phallic architecture to spectacular shows and other mediagenic art events, they all are the driving force behind a monotopian culture of consumption, herding us frictionless across a smooth landscape from one sensation to

the next. This is the unavoidable force of aesthetics as *aesthesis*: it speaks to our senses. And ever since the advent of propaganda, publicity, logos and brands we know that design and art are peerless when it comes to seduction. They make us glide tirelessly over the surface from one fac ade to the next. Sign value and not use value is the driving force behind our urge to consume today. Design often prevails in blinding competition battles on the basis of functionality today.

However, we also know that artists can oppose these hysterical market mechanisms. They can at least, through irony and over-identification, reveal the peculiarities of an exaggerated exchange and even fetish value. We only have to bring to mind the stunts pulled by Damien Hirst or the more political actions of The Yes Men to recognize that artists are at least capable of relating to their own work context in a highly self-reflective manner. However, as is especially evident in the case of Hirst, this highly ironic and even publicly cynical attitude has little effect. It merely confirms the insanity of a market in which such artists make quite a decent living, by the way. What else could they do but be opportunistic and cynical?

Today, alternative looking artists and curators too can smoothly surf the global landscape with their backpacks and portfolios full of radical political ideas. Meanwhile they draw grey lines across Blue Marble on their cheap flights from one artist-in-residency to the next and from biennale to biennale, where they can repeat their declarations of radical involvement to the same crowd of the already converted. (The word 'radical' may well be the best-selling brand in the professional art world of the past five years, by the way.) The point is that alternative artists as well frictionlessly exchange one destination for another, one territory for another. And it is no coincidence that such exchanges are smoothly facilitated via subsidized cultural exchange programmes and collaborations. Within the European Union there are quite a few avenues of support for this. After all, both artists and cultural institutions can contribute to the hoped-for monotopia. From a policy standpoint, artistic and cultural exchanges only too often serve to smooth over cultural differences and make identities look more similar, in order to enhance the circulation in the common market. Romanticizing a nomadic and sometimes even precarious identity is of course beneficial to an economy that has been aiming for mobility and high flexibility over the past few decades. The constantly travelling artists and curators are exemplary protagonists of a hypermobile labour market. **13** This market demands that employees or, rather, a superfast growing mercenary army of freelancers, develop a certain immunity against the territory in which they find themselves. As already stated, all this on behalf of smooth interchangeability.

In short, the solution or point of opposition does not necessarily lie in the political message that artists may proclaim with their work, but what is important is whether they act politically or not with their work (however a-political or formal that work may be). The crucial point is how they organise their own artistic practices within society and how they help shape that society through those practices. And, predictably enough from the above, this comes down to putting use value above exchange value again. After all, artists have been trained in certain skills that can accomplish this. First of all, they have the power of imagination to, for example, think of multiple, sometimes even contradictory use values for the same territory. It is one of the qualities that enable Renzo Martens to see a cacao plantation in the Congo as not just a raw-material producing area for the West, but also to re-articulate it as a creative development area for the South. That last verb indicates yet another skill often found with artists to intensify use value: artists have the special ability to constantly articulate situations and territories anew. Each new novel, each new performance and any other statue or installation may contain an alternative interpretation of the same field. In other words, the territory can be made and used again thousands of times without any need to exhaust or consume it. Besides, the artists' sense of aesthetics can do more than jack-up the exchange value through seduction; it can also be deployed to

intensify the use of and sensitivity to the environment. Especially *aesthesis* can transform a landscape or a building into a familiar environment. It is the design and experience of smells, colours, sounds, temperatures and all things tangible that turn a house into a home and an abstract wasteland into a homeland, into, indeed, a familiar and cherished *territory*. It is not in the first place rational arguments, cognitive considerations and rules of law that turn a terrain into a territory, but rather affect, attachment and love that make it a familiar place. And these latter elements are only evoked by addressing all the senses, by experiencing a place, not by calculating it rationally. Aesthetics not only allow us to observe Blue Marble in a detached manner as just a pretty picture, but also to feel, smell and hear the globe in a hundred different ways as well. Aesthetics provide the mimetic ability for us to live in and embed ourselves in the territory.

Finally, there is another special quality or potential in design. It cannot only intensify use, but also review the various users and attune them to each other. Urban planner and mobility expert Sabine Lutz demonstrates this with a simple example of how to design a street. Traditionally, streets are designed functionally, with clear demarcations of where cars, bicycles and pedestrians should go. The various users are neatly separated, which means they are hardly aware of the collective use of that same territory. The result: they regard the terrain they use themselves as only for them and sometimes even as their private domain. A simple redesign that lifts this functional demarcation can make them experience this use quite differently.

It comes about when a street is redesigned to help drivers change their routines: they see various people doing different things to their left and right, and sometimes directly ahead. They recognize that the street is alive, not only lengthwise, but also crosswise. They (car drivers) slow down, thereby making the street safer for everyone. A different design encourages pedestrians and cyclists to use the entire street, not just the sidewalks and bike paths. They can cross the street wherever they like, not only at designated pedestrian crossings. That requires a certain amount of trust (but not blind trust) that generally speaking, drivers are not murderers. Pedestrians and cyclists, too, bear responsibility for safety. They make contact and make sure that they have been seen, while at the same time signalling to drivers: the street is not yours alone. [14]

Perhaps Lutz's argument may not wholly convince us to trustingly 'release' our six-year-olds on their bicycles in traffic situations with tough SUV drivers, but her description does make clear that the use of a territory can be understood and experienced completely differently through design. Mutual visibility reveals our interdependencies, for instance. Of course there will always be power relations between SUV drivers and bicyclists, between strong and weak users, but in this case these are not hidden. And although these users are absolutely unequal, Lutz nevertheless presents them here as users of equal standing of the same territory. Their mutual visibility at least also reveals the power relations that exist between them. Because of the design we understand and even 'feel' the territory as a shared (user) space. Obviously, the above traffic situation does not by itself immediately lead to smooth, frictionless or harmonious interactions. The road users must frequently, and perhaps time and again, negotiate and delineate 'their' territory, and obviously there will on occasion be conflicts. Some name-calling, pushing and shoving are to be expected now and again. In other words, the design does not assume any pre-existing consensus about the use of the road. This will have to be renegotiated time and again through dissensus, either explicitly or not. The only consensus that this design implicitly imposes is that all road users are of equal standing. This means that all have a right to use the territory. Which nobody can deny, not even the SUV driver – unless we are dealing with a real murderer.

Although in perhaps a very different context than Lutz's ideal traffic space, the example does appeal to the imagination. Would it be possible to design social territories, such as

buildings, squares, Internet and media spaces, cities, regions, Europe... as such shared spaces? Can we imagine a place where instead of pedestrians, bicyclists and car drivers, let's say multinationals, refugees, democrats and populists have an equal right of use? In spite of their enormous differences? Can we, in other words, rearticulate the territory as a heterotopian place where contradictions and paradoxical practices bump and grate against each other in relative peace?

Of course such questions reek of 'naive' idealism and of utopia. Then again, it is the imaginary power of art and fiction in particular that makes it possible for us to at least think of such spaces. Even more so, within and sometimes even outside the space of fiction we can effectively experiment and play with such notions. Artists have, or take, the autonomous right to appropriate the territory time and again in different ways. They are allowed to contradict each other and even themselves. They make full use of the use value without concerning themselves with the exchange value. In this way, the current reactionary responses to the climate of terror can be warded off. An imaginary, heterotopian territory at least makes it clear that the current model of monotopia is also nothing but a utopia. It exposes hegemonic political plans that are presented as feasible, as just as much fiction. Perhaps the biggest political strength of artistic practices is that they can debunk, through the power of imagination, what is taken for true, real and obvious. And doesn't that also sum up the absolute use value of the arts?

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This text was published before in: Understanding Territoriality: Identity, Place and Possession; Hermon, R. (edit.); ISBN 978-1-78808-598-4; Brighton, Fabrica; 2017; p. 7–19.

Footnotes

1. Srnicek, N. & Williams, A. (2016), *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London & New York: Verso), 63.
2. See Robert Ellickson, *Order without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
3. See Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, II & III (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1984 [1867]).
4. Dirk Lo hr, 'The Failure of Land Privatization: On the Need for New Development Policies', in *The Wealth of the Commons: A World beyond Market & State*, ed. David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (Amherst: Levellers Press, 2012), 410–415.
5. See John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government* (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1690).
6. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London & New York: Verso, 2002), 106.
7. Ibid., 111.
8. Marx, ibid.
9. Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character – The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1998), 10.
10. Ibid., 27.
11. See Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1970).
12. See Ole B. Jensen and Tim Richardson, *Making European Space: Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
13. See also Pascal Gielen, *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015).
14. Sabine Lutz, 'Shared Space: A Space Shared is a Space Doubled' (2012), in *The Wealth of the Commons*, 236–237.

Tags

Capitalism, Public Space

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