

Territoriality

When the term "territoriality" appeared, at a fairly late stage (1852), in writing and in usage, it mainly had a legal and ethological meaning. The French Littré dictionary defines it as what relates to "a territory considered politically". Thus there has been reference to the territoriality of legislation, in the sense that all the inhabitants of a given [territory](#) are obliged to comply with that legislation, or be confronted with the legal coercion of the institutional power. After being legal and political, the term then became geographical, in reference to an evolving and changing relationship (i.e. temporal) at once existential, affective, citizen, economic and cultural, a relationship that an individual or a collective institutes with the territory or territories that they appropriate, concretely and/or symbolically. For a long time, geographers only retained the collective dimension of the term, specific to a community or a social group. Today, because of the increased consideration of individuals and players in geography, territoriality often refers to individual experience of space (Dardel, 1952; Tuan, 1977; Ley & Samuels, 1978; Sack, 1980; Frémont, 1988; Bailly & Scariati, 1990; Gregory, 1994). Consequently, both the individual and the group draw from it feelings and arguments that forge their identities.

The complex notion of territoriality in the representations and imaginary worlds of the various protagonists takes the form of a sort of cognitive interleaving, variously shared by the protagonists in a given social space. Claude Raffestin (1980) refers to the "multidimensionality" of the experience of territory by members of a collective and by societies in general. This acceptation has two advantages. First, that of removing territoriality from the confinement of spaces within which the members of an identity-based social collective might be living. It gives the concept a broad geographical meaning, often fragmented and dispersed, linked to the individual. Secondly, the acceptation draws away from the model of a territorial ascendancy, in the sense of a brutish defence of an appropriated territory, a sort of gut reaction seeking to preserve an area of vital resources to the exclusion of any sharing (Ardrey, 1966). Far from being purely instinctive, territoriality is indeed a social construct quite able to accommodate otherness.

Claude Raffestin also considers that territoriality defines a set of relationships that arise from a tri-dimensional system: society, space, and time, illustrating its temporal fluidity. Without rejecting this proposal (Di Majo, 2014), territoriality can be seen more as a series of tensions in another triangle, A, B, C. In this figure, which can be distorted and changed, each of the three summits identifies either to territories (A and B) or to individuals or groups possessing the ability for initiative and imagination (C).

(A) comprises the legitimate political and administrative territories, either nested one within another or forming a network, and governing a considerable share of the daily mobilities and practices of the different individuals, and structuring the symbolic sphere of its spatial relationships. In France this corresponds to the following: the commune or municipality – the school, the mairie, the basic services; the next level up of the canton, the intercommunalité or the urban district – the structure of the local area or small urban area, sometimes an urban quarter; then the département, the main level of republican administration, and the territory where top-down and bottom-up political flows meet; and the région – an economic space, with its territorial development projects, training facilities, historical heritage etc. It naturally also concerns the national territory, the dominant symbolic space, strongly linked to identity, the space of governing power, of the major economic and social choices, and of a shared history. Beyond these national levels other institutionalised supranational territories on the level of Europe exist – the EU, the Eurozone, Shengen – or again continental or zonal entities – the European Council, NATO – and world entities such as the United Nations.

(B) concerns a different category of territories, those that result from the spatialisation of various systems of action. Here we can cite the urban or metropolitan labour area, production areas and consumption areas, and also smaller living and activity zones – "technopoles", clusters, productive districts, AOC or IPG zones (defined and protected production areas), zones in which associations are active, influence zones of industrial plants, etc. These are geographical constructions generated according to social conventions that can be variously explicit or implicit – basins of activity – or according to a more explicit, formalised social contract – clusters or technopoles, AOC areas. The territories or spaces of action generated in this manner reflect a systemic functioning based on spatialisation (Auriac, 1983). The boundaries are variable, sometimes strict – AOC area – sometimes approximate – employment basin – or indecisive, in reference to a country or region. On individual level, they gather, but not in exclusive manner, the main places of residence, work and ordinary leisure venues, the location of services, and the [places](#) of exercise of basic citizenship.

These (B) entities shown up by spatial practice and analysis correspond only approximately to the (A) (political) territories. Between

(A) and (B) discrepancies can be observed. They give rise to a first category of tensions (t1). But in turn (A) and (B) only partly fuel the more diversified, concrete, mental, imaginary spatial relationships that are experienced by each player, agent or inhabitant (C). Here two further families of tension can be seen: t2 between (A) and (C) and t3 between (B) and (C). The individual (C), in whose body and mind the territorial relationship is formed and becomes concrete, arbitrates among these three groups of tension. The territorial relationships entertained here integrate representations, experiences, and imaginary worlds specific to each individual (Debarbieux, 2015) and they do not necessarily fit the constant injunctions of the daily productive and administrative orders deriving from (A) and (B). The intensity of tensions t2 and t3 differs according to the individual and the space concerned. The tensions demonstrate two levels of socio-spatial reality. On the one hand we can see a context entailing collective challenges and determinations (A and B), i.e. the pole of contingencies encountered by localised individual and collective action. On the other we have the fabric of individual motivations, representations and strategies (C), in other words the singularity of each individual. This singularity, although also generated socially, or resulting from a place or territory, affords considerable room for autonomy and individual competence. Ultimately, the behaviours of each person in society and in spaces comply with these two orders of influence, and these two energies.

It is thus this set of tensions t1-t2-t3 within the A-B-C triangle that can be termed territoriality. It adjusts and articulates the scales of territories and [networks](#) frequented and/or represented by each individual. It demonstrates the way in which people weave their relationships with the spaces they use, of which they have representations and with which they identify. It can be noted that, towards a geographical area or a given set of places, individuals exhibit a degree of mimesis, a relative similarity in behaviours and in the structuring of their movements and itineraries. Consequently, territoriality in more than one respect expresses the link between the human subject and his or her reference social collectives, both with regard to practices and the marking-out of places, and with regard to their representations of their relationship with geographical space.

This theorisation of territoriality (Di MÃ©o, 2014) is subject to debate. It can be proposed in the perspective of the arrival of a third paradigm in geography – following on from the vertical paradigm of the relationship of humans with the environment and the horizontal paradigm of the dynamics of the forms of space, this third paradigm is cross-sectional and holistic, adding to the first two the integration of the universe of representations and imaginary worlds so as to fully understand the true nature of the human and social space.

All in all, the pair territory/territoriality is indeed a structuring geographical complex for the society that produces it. A structuring geographical complex means a socio-spatial combination within which the territorialised space is at once the substance and the mode of human action. The theory of structuring (Giddens, 1987) describes how this type of action produces geographical objects (territories) and relationships (territorialities) by way of competent, reflecting, autonomous individuals who are nevertheless subject to social norms, moving in specific time-space. These actions, and the players concerned, in turn undergo the structuring effect of these dynamic forms of space and of the tensions exerted by them on practices and representations.

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