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The Materiality of Territorial Production

A Conceptual Discussion of Territoriality, Materiality, and the Everyday Life of Public Space

Mattias Kärrholm
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This article brings together research on territoriality and actor-network theory to develop new ways of investigating the role of materiality and material design in the territorial power relations of urban public places. Using the public square as a main example, the author suggests new ways of conceptualizing the production and stabilization of territories in the everyday urban environment. Setting out from a brief outline of the history of territoriality research, the traditional approaches are reapprropriated from the viewpoint of actants rather than persons or institutions, suggesting a distinction between four different forms of territorial production. Some material ways of stabilizing the effects of these territorial productions are then conceptualized. The author argues that public space can be seen as constituted by a territorial complexity, thus pointing to the relationship between materiality and public space, via territorial stabilization and production.

Keywords: territoriality; materiality; public space; actor-network theory (ANT); everyday life; urban design

The relationship between the material design and the everyday use of urban public places has been notoriously problematic to explore. Some researchers have been skeptical regarding whether the investigation of such a relationship is useful, and some have even regarded it to be beyond the capacity of language (Forty, 2000, p. 117). In this article, I argue that the relationship between materiality/space and use (or, as formulated in previous decades, between form and function, or between humans and the built environment) not only can be explored but also is fundamental to urban studies as well as to...
studies of everyday life. The problem of these relationships seems, first of all, to be of a conceptual and theoretical nature. This has been stressed by the large number of anti-Cartesian approaches launched in recent decades, of which we follow one in this article: actor-network theory (ANT). However, this article is primarily about the exploration and reappropriation of an old concept that seems to be strangely underused in the contemporary discourses about space and urban life: namely, territoriality. Issues of territoriality are important inherent aspects of material design and everyday use. We are constantly obliged to observe territorial divisions and classifications, such as parking lots, motorways, and walkways in our daily activities in the city. Territorial regulations affect our behavior and movements in urban space, both explicitly and in more obscure ways, and these types of regulation are often supported by material forms and designs. Furthermore, today, in our globalized cities, we can see a wide range of phenomena (from the transformation of old building types to new information and surveillance techniques) that transform the traditional territorial structures of the old modernist era. In spite of this, territoriality has never been as much used as, for example, the concept of place (Cresswell, 2004), not even when it comes to aspects of spatial control (Dovey, 1999; Markus, 1993).

The Concept of Territoriality

One reason for this neglect could very well be that the concept has a long and somewhat problematic history. Territoriality began as a political concept (Latin, *territorium*) and was used to describe foreign states, as well as the area surrounding a town or under its jurisdiction (Malmberg, 1994, p. 49; *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989). From the 15th century, we also have the words *terratorium* (Vulgar Latin) and the French *terroir* used to indicate a district of certain geological and/or geographical qualities (Gottman, 1975, pp. 29-33). The most important transformation of the concept was, however, in the 18th century, when territoriality also came to be used metaphorically by Oliver Goldsmith to describe space appropriated by birds through singing. This behavioral notion of territory (in German often distinguished from *territorium* as *revier* and in Swedish as *revir*) was developed during the 20th century. In the 1950s and 1960s it was used to describe a human behavioral phenomenon in the social and behavioral sciences: human territoriality (Edney, 1976; Malmberg, 1980).¹ Human territoriality was at first described very much in analogy with zoological territoriality, focusing on defensive and aggressive behavior. In the 1970s, this approach was developed by Irwin Altman and others to include a softer “perceived ownership” of places, that is, places appropriated but not necessarily defended (Altman, 1975). Simultaneously, the concept of territoriality was still very much alive in a traditional political sense, notably within human and political geography (Gottman, 1973; Soja, 1971). In these studies, territoriality was seen as an intentional power strategy and a way of exerting administrative and spatial influence in society. One of the most influential studies in this field to date is a book by Robert Sack from 1986, very explicit in its nonpsychological and nonbehavioral approach but still bearing the somewhat confusing title of *Human Territoriality*. In the past decade we have also witnessed a new interest in the political aspects of the concept, especially in the field of geopolitics (Delaney, 2005).

Although there certainly are other uses, territoriality has, since the 1960s, primarily been divided into two different fields of interest: human territoriality (Altman, 1975; Bell, Greene, Fisher, & Baum, 1996; B. B. Brown, 1987; Edney, 1976; Hall, 1959; Malmberg, 1980) and politico-geographical territoriality (e.g., Gottman, 1973; Häkli, 1994; Paasi, 1996; Sack, 1986; Soja, 1971).² This division bears many resemblances to discussions found in other fields of research where dichotomies such as gemeinschaft/gesellschaft,
subjective/objective, organic/mechanic, nature/culture, structure/agent, and space/place have come to play an important part. A parallel discussion can, for example, be found in the related field of research investigating the construction of local communities (Cohen, 1985).

Human territoriality and politico-geographical territoriality have sometimes become mixed up. Soja (1989) noted this problem when commenting on the situation in the early 1970s: “The then prevailing view of territoriality was filled with bioethological imperatives which obscured any social-political interpretation” (p. 150). Unfortunately, these two approaches often seem to be unaware of each other, and one can still see how they lead to occasional conceptual mix-ups, problems, or neglect (Agnew, 2000; Kärrholm, 2007; MacAndrew, 1993; Rapoport, 1994).

Some definitions and descriptions of territoriality representing a social or behavioral approach are as follows:

- The act of laying claim to and defending a territory is termed territoriality. (Hall, 1959, p. 187)
- Territorial behavior is a self–other boundary regulation mechanism that involves personalization of or marking of a place or object and communication that it is “owned” by a person or a group. (Altman, 1975, p. 107)
- Territory is] a meaningful aspect of social life, whereby individuals define their scope of their obligations and the identity of themselves and others. (Shils, 1975, p. 26)
- Human territoriality can be viewed as a set of behaviors and cognitions a person or group exhibits, based on perceived ownership of physical space. (Bell et al., 1996, p. 304)

Definitions of territoriality that represent a politico-geographical approach are as follows:

- Territory is a portion of geographical space that coincides with the spatial extent of a government’s jurisdiction. (Gottman, 1975, p. 29)
- Territory is first of all a juridico-political one: The area controlled by a certain power. (Foucault, 1980, p. 68)
- Territoriality will be defined as the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. This area will be called territory. (Sack, 1986, p. 19)
- [Territoriality is] a strategy which uses bounded space in the exercise of power and influence. (Johnston, 1996, p. 871)

**The Actant Perspective**

Here is why the word “territory” is so apposite: because the order and security it provides are not static phenomena, but mobile. Much like the space marked out by a territorial animal, territory constantly shifts as it is continually remarked and re-presented in different ways. And much as these territorial creatures can only extend their territories at great cost, so we might also note the sheer difficulty of sustaining this process of remarking. (S. D. Brown & Capdevila, 1999, p. 41)

Territoriality could, to sum up, be described as a specific kind of power that uses space as its medium (Johnston, 1996; Sack, 1986). If we were to take Sack’s definition in isolation,
it is broad enough to be applied to the psychological (as in MacAndrew, 1993) as well as geographical approaches, and there are of course resemblances between the two. Most important, territoriality has in both approaches been preoccupied with the actors of territoriality rather than with the territories or the consequences of territorial production. Irwin Altman (1975) focuses on the psychological needs and behaviors of the person who produces the territory, whereas Sack (1986) is mainly preoccupied with the strategies, rules, and reasons used by the territorial producer. One reason for this preoccupation (at least in the politico-geographical approach) is the tendency of territories to become a way of justifying an exercise of power or a certain type of conduct: The control of the ruler has been replaced by that of the territory. Such a tendency can be told from expressions like, “It’s the law of the land” (Sack, 1986, p. 33). As a response to this tendency, researchers have often tried to get beyond the polished surface to find the strategies or reasons underpinning the construction of territorial order. What social rules and relationships have been disguised in the shape of a territory? This unmasking, however, neglects the question of, What does this territory do? in favor of, What is the extra-theoretical function of this territory? In other words, the functions the territory actually serves are neglected in favor of the discourse that initiated it (Hacking, 1999, p. 19).

To Sack, territoriality is a deliberate strategy or attempt to delimit a territory. If we are interested in the relationship between territorial control and everyday practices, Sack’s perspective might be problematic, because it conceals the fact that imagined control or surveillance might be just as effective as “real” control. Furthermore, routinization and socialization are important to the ways in which we use different territories; incorporated behaviors and practices are not so quickly undone. Territories cannot, in this sense, be turned on and off at will (as suggested in Sack, 1986, p. 2), because they tend to remain productive long after their walls are torn down. If we are to study the territorial power relations that affect everyday life, we need to look at territoriality \textit{in actu} rather than at the intentions or strategies that anticipate that territory. Following this line of thought, it would be more appropriate to define territoriality as spatial delimited and effective control than as an attempt or a strategy. One could also describe territoriality as a kind of spatial institutionalization (Paasi, 1996), suggesting that a certain place could be regarded as more or less territorialized rather than territorial or nonterritorial. A territory is, in short, a spatial actant, and it brings about a certain effect in a certain situation or place (the network). Territories need to be constantly produced and reproduced (by way of control, socialized behaviors, artifacts, etc.) to remain effective—borders and control are thus the result of territorialization, rather than vice versa (S. D. Brown & Capdevila, 1999).

The actant perspective is a fruitful one because it turns the questions of what caused a certain territorial effect into an empirical one. The territorial power is then described as a network of different actants of artifacts, persons, rules of conduct, laws, and so forth (Latour, 1991), suggesting that territoriality is an altogether mobile and dynamic phenomenon (S. D. Brown & Capdevila, 1999). Territories are also material—they are not just constituted by the person setting and managing the rules of the territory, but by the boundaries and material characteristics of that territory.

**Territorial Production**

What kind of territories do we find in public places? First, urban places are not like blank pages waiting to be written on, but rather like some kind of palimpsests (Lefebvre,
1991, p. 142). There is nothing unambiguous or hierarchical about the territorial structures of a place. Territories are produced everywhere. They can be stable and enduring, or immediate and ephemeral. Territories are also produced in different ways, in different contexts, and by different means, and do encompass a wide range of phenomena such as a nation, an urban district, a parking space, or someone’s favorite bench. If the concept of territoriality has come to denote a number of different phenomena (Altman & Chemers, 1980, p. 122), the actant perspective makes it possible to reappropriate different uses of territoriality as different forms of territorial production in response to the question, How is this territory produced (and constantly reproduced)? What kind of activated control are we talking about?\(^4\) I distinguish here between four different forms of territorial production that we are likely to find in public places (see Table 1).\(^5\)

Territorial strategies and tactics are intentional attempts to mark or delimit a territory. In other words, the territorial control is directed explicitly toward the ordering of a certain area (the territory). Territorial strategies represent impersonal, planned, and, to some extent, mediated control, and often involve the delegation of control to things, rules, and so forth. Territorial strategies are (to a degree) always planned at a distance in time and/or space from the territory produced, whereas territorial tactics involve claims made in the midst of a situation and as part of an ongoing sequence (in daily life). Territorial tactics thus often refer to a personal relationship between the territory and the person or group who mark it as theirs.

Territorial associations and appropriations represent productions that are not planned or intentionally established but are consequences of established and regular practices. These practices may be the effects of rational and planned decisions but are not made with the explicit intent of producing a territory. Territorial appropriation produces territories through a repetitive and consistent use of an area by a certain person or group who, at least to some extent, seem to perceive this area as their own. The object of territorial appropriation could, for example, be one’s home, one’s street, or one’s regular table at a restaurant. The object of territorial association represents an identifiable area, characterized by a certain usage and those specific conventions and regularities that underpin this usage. These areas do not necessarily have to be considered by any person or group as “their own,” but are nevertheless associated to by others as pertaining to a certain function or category of users. Examples could include bathing places, climbing trees, or a gravel path in the park where people play boule.

Different forms of territorial production often operate at the same place, mobilizing different sets of artifacts, rules, and so forth. A bench could be associated as the territory of sandwich-eating students at lunchtime, whereas another group of youth could appropriate it at night. The same group could mark the bench by way of territorial tactics. (This does not mean, of course, that the appropriation is transformed into tactics, but that territorial tactics are added to the territorial appropriation to produce two different forms of territorial production). The a piece of street bench is also furniture and as such is maintained and regulated by way of a territorial strategy. Together, this would make the
bench an object of four different forms of territorial production: It is a place consisting of several different territorial layers. A differentiation of different forms of territorial productions thus makes it possible to provide a first survey of the landscapes of territorial power relations and their different concentrations as found at a certain place.

It should be noted that the distinction made here between strategies and tactics is similar to the more general one made by Friedrich Wilhelm von Bülow: “Strategy is the science of military movement outside the enemy’s field of vision, tactics within it” (quoted in de Certeau, 1988, p. 212), and, although related, is not the same as the one made by Michel de Certeau. For de Certeau (1988), the relationship between strategy and tactics is between discipline and antidiscipline, between the production of those in power and the production of consumers. The relationship between strategy and tactics thus seems to be fixed as two different sides of a power relation in a dialectical way. The different forms of territorial production presented here are not based on who is in charge and who is not. Instead, they represent a way of describing the occurrence of different territorial productions operating at the same place, without predetermining the power relations between these productions axially, or in terms of strength or formality. Hence, several different territorial strategies could be produced at the same time and at the same place. (Public places maintained and produced by authorities by way of territorial strategies might, for example, simultaneously be restricted by the territorial strategies of some dominant group or subculture.) The relative strengths of different territorial productions need to be investigated empirically. This way of sorting different forms of territoriality, by posing the question of how the territory was produced, can be distinguished from the more traditional ways of classifying that tend to respond to the question of what (actor, mechanism, etc.) produced the territory, and in distinctions such as between informal and formal territories or between group and individual territories (Bell et al., 1996; B. B. Brown, 1987; Malmberg, 1980).

Theoretically, the different forms of territorial productions suggested each has its own genealogy and can be traced back to different, related uses within the research of territoriality. The history of territorial strategies is thoroughly discussed by Sack (1986). Hall (1959) and Goffman (1963) were pioneers of the study of territorial tactics, whereas a more recent example can be found in Manar Hammad’s (2002) inventive experiments on spatial privatizations and conflicts during a conference in La Tourette. Aspects of what I call territorial appropriations have been thoroughly discussed in studies by Altman (often from a perspective of privacy; 1975) and by writers such as Korosec-Serfaty (1973), following the more Lefebvrian tradition. Aspects of what I refer to as territorial associations have been dealt with by Crouch (1994) and, to some extent, by Deleuze and Guattari (1988).

Territoriality and ANT: The Materiality of Territoriality

Sitting at an urban square, it is quite easy to recognize the material nature of everyday territorial production. People sit where there are benches, they wait for buses at bus stops, and so forth. One might also come to realize how vital territories are to everyday life: Knowing how to behave on both sides of a pavement curb could be a matter of life and death. In fact, we are constantly obliged to take different territorializations into consideration—territories such as pedestrian crossings, bicycle paths, and parking spaces all have their proper designs and rules of conduct. Some places are signposted with territorial rules, such as “No Smoking,” “No Parking,” or “No Walking.
on the Grass.” At other places, territorial regulations can be a more latent part of the ongoing life. Behaviors and practices regarded as improper also often involve some kind of territorialization. Statements such as, “You cannot behave like that,” often imply a tacit specification: “at this place” or “in this territory.”

Territorial production constitutes and is constituted by the material environment, and the concept could be used as a way of addressing the relationship between materiality and use by way of spatial control. The approach to territorial power implied above bears many resemblances to power as described by Foucault (1980, 1982; see also Deleuze, 1999). Foucault claimed that power relations need constant maintenance, and the main task of the researcher is to investigate how certain power relations are accomplished, kept active, and form clusters of disciplinary relations, resistances, and so forth. Foucault’s general perspective on power is made concrete and more applicable to artifacts and microscale situations if read through ANT (Law, 1994; Lee & Brown, 1994). ANT is very explicit in terms of the powers of materiality, and has been described as a kind of semiotics of materiality (Law, 1994). It would, however, be fair to claim that ANT could be just as good in discussions on spatial aspects as on material ones, and that ANT thus could be described accurately as a semiotics of spatiality/materiality.

A territorial practice of power can be described in terms of network stabilizations where connections between a set of actors or actants (e.g., rules and regulations, borders, subterritories, walls, locks, pavement, behaviors, and norms) become increasingly stable and predictable. The advantages of this perspective are several. First, it opens up a possible way of investigating the meaning of materiality and artifacts through the roles they play in different territorial networks, where some functions might remain constant whereas others change. The same material object might thus be a different actant in another territorial network production, implying a plentitude of potential actant roles for every object (Law, 2002; Law & Singleton, 2003). This perspective also gives us a concept of power that matches the scheme of different territorial productions: The power of a certain place might be layered into a whole set of territorial networks, opening up possibilities for the investigation of the cooperation and coexistence of different territorial productions and powers at a specific place. There is also much to be won with a model of description that sees power in terms of landscapes rather than vectors (in the spirit of Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Latour, etc.). A discussion of power relations does not necessarily have to imply a spectrum ranging from power at one end to freedom/resistance at the other. Nor does power have to be studied through resistance, transgression, or failure, but could just as well studied by asking, How does this place function? In discussing the landscape of territorial power, we can apply a nonpolarized and nonhierarchical strategy. That is, hierarchies and axialities might well exist, but they are the product of stabilized power relations rather than a point of departure. Especially within the field of urban planning and design, it is important to use a view of power that does not regard homogenous functional zoning or “one place/one function” as being natural or pregiven orders.

Territorial Stabilizations: The Territoriality of Materiality

After poststructuralism and constructivism had melted everything that was solid into air, it was perhaps time that we noticed once again the sensuous immediacy of the objects we live, work and converse with, in which we routinely place our trust, which we love and hate, which bind us as much as we bind them. (Pels, Hetherington, & Vandenberghe, 2002, p. 1)
Even if the idea of territorial network stabilization is a good way of acknowledging the territorial role of artifacts, it is not sufficient in itself. Observing a place, one might note that some effects or procedures seem to occur quite regularly, although the territorial network supporting them has been destabilized. People might use a local bathing place even though the local authorities have closed it down and removed signs, bathing huts, and so forth. There is no longer any territorial strategy to support and stabilize the network; perhaps just some mementos in the form of leftover artifacts. Still, the material conditions for bathing remain, and the territorial association might be strong enough to produce it as a territory (and it might thus continue to be an important local bathing place).

Tim Dant (2004) has pointed out that ANT, although it emphasizes the importance of a “sociology of the missing masses,” has actually never, in detail, been used to study “the interaction or the lived relationship between human beings and material objects” (p. 81). I think it is also fair to say that the focus of ANT studies is often on networks and programs rather than on artifacts and places. Places are often entangled in a whole range of different and perhaps even conflicting networks, traditionally studied in isolation in different disciplines. To be useful from a perspective of material studies, the dedifferentiation of ANT would thus need appropriate redifferentiation (Albertsen & Diken, 2003; Latour, 1998).

At a general level, we can find this redifferentiation, for example, in the writings of John Law and Annemarie Mol. In a series of articles, they challenge “the tendency of networks to insist that there is nothing valuable, nothing firm, beyond the network” (Law 2002, p. 97; see also de Laet & Mol, 2000; Law & Mol, 2001; Mol & Law, 1994). This is not so much redifferentiation from inside ANT as a more far-reaching rewriting of ANT, following an ANT-and-after trajectory (Law & Singleton, 2003), supplementing network topologies with fluid topologies, Euclidean topologies, and fire topologies; in other words, other means of establishing homomorphism than network topology (Law, 2002). These are constructive and innovative ideas and have, to a large degree, inspired the following discussion on different forms of territorial stabilization. However, I do not unreservedly subscribe to the critical aspect of these new spatialities. ANT has often been described in Machiavellian terms, viewing power from the point of view of the person responsible for the program (de Laet & Mol, 2000; Law, 1994; Lee & Brown, 1994; Vandenberghe, 2002). Although critique of the ANT focus on “the master of the network” is legitimate and certainly points out an important field of theoretical development, it is not inherent to or obligatory in an ANT description. This could be clarified by emphasizing the distinction between network description and network stabilization. If viewed as forms of stabilization, fluid, Euclidean, and network stabilizations could, in fact, all be described in terms of actants/networks, where ANT is a way of viewing the world from a perspective of becoming. Bearing this in mind, I suggest a differentiation of three different forms of territorial stabilization: body, sort, and network. It should be noted that these forms of stabilization are not about shape invariance alone (Law, 2002) but about shape invariance as connected to certain recurrent territorial effects (see Table 2).

Using body stabilization (referring to human and nonhuman bodies), it is possible to address the issue of how the persistence of stable material features can lead to territorial effects’ remaining constant even when other actants or territorial sorts change. This stabilization has to do with the fact that we all have bodies and, more precisely, that certain artifacts, from an empirical perspective, tend to produce similar possibilities/limitations on bodily actions within different contexts. Although bodies are enacted and the “body-we-do” (Mol & Law, 2004) can differ dramatically, a simple empirical investigation might
show that bodies of a similar sort (e.g., human bodies) also share common features when it comes to possible actions (generally, we do not walk through walls, we do not stand up and sleep, etc.). The building of a 6-foot stone wall could thus be an effective way of stabilizing the possible bodily movements to and from a territory. Such a stabilization might, however, not just be accomplished by the persistence of certain Euclidean shapes but also through other stable, material features, such as textures, elasticity, hardness, light conditions, and so forth. A sleeping policeman is a good example of body stabilization because it tends to produce a lot of cars driving slowly, regardless of speed limits, road signs, or rules (Latour, 1998). The car is also a good way of ensuring bodily stabilization because it provides the acting persons with quite uniform bodily shells, where the impact of a certain material design seems easy to predict (Sheller & Urry, 2000). The sleeping policeman could thus be a good way of stabilizing the territorial production of, for example, a pedestrian crossing. However, we might also see examples of territorial body stabilization that work by way of the human body (Dant, 2004; Warnier, 2001). At the square, one might find walls, benches, or water putting limits on movement within or across certain territories. We might also find material barriers and boundaries limiting or enhancing the possibilities of visual territorial control. In a more large-scale perspective, territories might be made accessible or inaccessible through their position in certain spatial structures (Kärrholm, 2004).

Using sort stabilization, it is possible to address effects that are held constant even when actants, relations, or material aspects are transformed: The territory remains effective even if the actants or forms are changed, as long as they can still be associated with the same sort of territory. There are, of course, many other territorial sorts. Our everyday places are full of them, and new ones can be enacted at an instant (as soon as we recognize a place as a bathing place or a picnic place and relate it to a certain use). A territorial sort is often spread by the coining of a name—names such as smoking room, boudoir, or market square—that can be used to legitimize a certain rule of conduct, and in this way the formation of a territorial sort resembles the formation of a concept (Markus, 1993, p. 30). Different territorial sorts are often also the objects of certain territorial strategies, and thus of network stabilization. The point is that if the territorial strategy is replaced or removed, similar territorial effects might still be produced, that is, by way of territorial association or a quick reference: “Quiet, this is a reading room!” Territorial sorts are always material and can be described as a kind of fluid topologies (de Laet & Mol, 2000; Law, 2002), a family of possible network structures that all produce similar territorial effects. Different actants can be replaced (within certain limits) without affecting the territorial production. Territorial sorts can also take on different forms and still work: different bus stops, pedestrian crossings, or outdoor cafés might produce similar territorial effects, irrespective of whether they have a common material denominator. Of course, we might reach a point where the territorial sort could no longer be produced, where too many actants have been

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replaced, or something too unfamiliar to this specific sort of territory has been intro-
duced (Law, 2002).

Network stabilization alone does not give a satisfactory description of the different
territorial roles of materiality. Networks can be used to describe material effects, but
this does not say anything about how these effects were accomplished. Territorial sta-
bilizations by way of network, sort, and body are a first step toward specifying differ-
ent forms of material territorial institutionalization, that is, institutionalization seen as
the stabilizing of recurrent effects and practices, rather than as the construction of an
identity (Paasi, 1996). The different forms of stabilization are not mutually exclusive,
but can be more or less manifest in different examples and situations. Thus, they rep-
resent an analytical effort to distinguish possible themes of a description (where fur-
ther forms could be added to the list), and do not in any sense represent an absolute
classification into different categories of power. The forms of stabilization are ways of
describing a specific territorialization (and thus cooperate within a given territorial
production). An outdoor café might, for example, be regarded as more or less stabi-
lized by all three forms: (a) artifacts supporting comfortable seating while hindering
the through movement of passersby; (b) a strong network constituted by actants or
actors such as waiters, menus, tables, chairs, and a good chef; and (c) an atmosphere
and design readily associable to the outdoor café. Territorial stabilizations might also
be used to describe territorial conflicts across different territorial productions: the
material redevelopment of a certain square might thus stabilize the territorial associa-
tion to a certain territorial sort (square as park) whereas destabilizing another (square
as marketplace).

Territorial Complexities

Territorial research has been elaborated mainly on the topic of the privatization of
space (Kärrholm, 2005). However, by developing an actant perspective and different
forms of territorial production, we see that the concept of territoriality is just as satis-
factory for dealing with aspects of how new territorial productions are established and
how they open up a place to a wider range of uses, as for dealing with homogenization
and exclusion. One important point when discussing territoriality in terms of differ-
ent forms of territorial production is the possibility of changing focus from singular
territorial domination to territorial cooperation and intertwining, and thus supple-
menting the focus on privatization with that of making public.

There are, of course, many definitions and ways of dealing with public space
(Madanipour 2003; Sheller & Urry, 2003; Weintraub, 1997). One common approach
has been to see public space as a space characterized by the copresence of strangers (an
approach attributed to such thinkers as Ariés, Goffman, and Sennett). Seeing public
space as an interpersonal sphere of sociability, one often tends to focus on space acces-
sible to different kinds of people or groups (Lofland, 1998). For a place to become
accessible to many different people it must, however, also be a place of varied activities.
A place that is officially open to all kinds of people but nevertheless only accessible to
a certain category of users (such as cars, bikes, or shoppers) would, of course, also
(indirectly) imply restrictions on which people are allowed to be at that place.

In an empirical investigation (Kärrholm, 2005) of territorial productions at three
public squares in Lund, Sweden, it was found that the square that seemed to be most
accessible and open to different groups and activities (Mårtenstorget) also had the
largest number of territorial productions as well as the most flexible material design, enabling it to be mobilized in different territorial networks at different times. This square had a large number of territories stabilized by way of networks rather than body or sort. At another central square of Lund, Clemenstorget, it was the other way around. Certain uses were secured through territorial subdivision, and then supported by material designs (such as fences and walls, grassy areas and hedges) that seemed certain to exclude at least some of the undesired activities by way of body stabilization. The accessibility of the square was to some extent predetermined, and the territorial corpus was so convincingly designed that it actually reduced the possibilities of new superimposing territorial productions. This could certainly imply a territorial association that was easy to read, although possibly at the expense of preventing a proliferation of new associations and territorial sorts.

It seems that making accessible (and, in this respect, making public) cannot be equated with the erasing of boundaries. In fact, the opposite seems more likely: The access to space has to be subdivided (in time or space) to accommodate different uses and to make room for as many different categories of users as possible. A certain degree of territorial differentiation and superpositioning could very well bring about a much greater degree of accessibility. Spatial rules and conventions are necessary if we are to be able to act (and coact) at all. We can recall Foucault at this point: Power is productive (Foucault, 1982). My suggestion is that the publicness of place could be described as the result of different territorial productions (and thus stabilizations) intermingling at a place and providing it with some kind of territorial complexity. More territorial orders also indicate more possibilities. The danger of exclusive, one-sided use does not lie in territorial homogenisation alone but in the lack of superimposed territorial productions. One way of looking at public space—adding to others, from Goffman’s dramaturgical model to the idea of mobile publics as put forward by Mimi Sheller (2004)—would be to regard public space as a result of all territorial productions of a certain place.

Territorial division and production seem to support cooperation among a wide range of different interests. Public space always embodies the copresence of different territorial productions. Following Mol and Law (2002), one could describe such a territorial complexity by elaborating on three crucial aspects.

First, territorial complexity is characterized by a large number of territorial productions, within each form of production (strategies, tactics, etc.) as well as taken together. At the shopping mall there is, for example, often just one dominant territorial strategy. The dominant production need not be a territorial strategy but could just as well be a place dominated by the territorial appropriation and association of a certain group, thus somehow tending to exclude the possibility of other productions. As these places become scenes of new territorial production, complexity increases (Mol & Law, 2002, p. 7).

Second, territorial complexity is characterized by a large number of territorial layers at each place. These multilayered territorial productions follow different rhythms (Lefebvre, 1991), shifting between absence and presence in a regular manner during the day, the week, the year, or with less regular phenomena such as the weather (rain vs. sunshine).

Third, territorial complexity is characterized by heteronymic relationships among different territorial productions. Territorial complexity is about how different territorial productions interrelate. Within territorial complexity one might expect that different territorial productions are not reduced to units within a larger scheme (such as parking spaces in a parking lot, or shops in a mall), but that there are territorial layers
of equal importance at a place. Hence, a place of territorial complexity is also a place of territorial heteronyms. Complexities can include rigid orders, but these orders come and go and can always be seen within a more complex context of different orders. The concept of heteronyms comes from the Portuguese author Fernando Pessoa (2002), who went beyond the concept of pseudonym and its hierarchical connotations, acting as a substitute for the author’s “real” name and identity. In the works of Pessoa, Fernando Pessoa is just one of many heteronyms (of equal rights) such as Bernardo Soares, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos. A heteronymic territorial relationship represents a plenitude of different territorial productions, existing in the same place and without the preconception that one is dominant or in any profound way outranks the others. Territorial heteronyms are different in scope and strength, but they do not have any predetermined relationship or hierarchy of one being more correct than the others. Territorial hierarchies might of course be established (at the cost of territorial heteronymity and complexity), but these must be maintained through constant work and the mobilization of resources.

In discussions on space in general and territorial complexity in particular, it is thus important to acknowledge that the territorial regulation of a place might not be at one but several levels. The regulation of a place could involve several different, cooperating, or competitive territorial strategies (or other forms of production) set by different organizations, at different scales, and so forth. One might perhaps guess that a place of territorial complexity thus might be laden with territorial conflicts. This might well be the case, but such conflicts are probably more often the result from tendencies of territorial homogenization or hierarchization. The territorial strategy of a park to act as a territory-of-leisure for different groups, ages, and so forth might for example be destabilized by the territorial appropriation of drug users taking over the park. As people stop using the park, the territorial appropriations and associations made by other groups and usages disappear, and complexity decreases. The authorities might choose different paths to increase territorial complexity again. One way is to try and settle the conflict by accommodating for different groups and uses to be copresent at the same place: drug users as well as children and families (e.g., Tompkins Square Park in New York; Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 120). Another and perhaps more common way is to find means of evicting the drug users, and thus to move the group or problem to another place in the city. In terms of territorial complexity, this strategy would, however, be the less favorable one.

Investigating the Territorial Stabilizations of Public Space

The idea of territorial complexity opens up for a territorial discussion of materiality and the everyday life of public space. This is also an essential point in this article: Public space is a matter of material design, suggesting that material and spatial design must always be acknowledged as a question of political importance (Latour, 2004). Seeing the connections between territorial stabilizations and territorial complexities is a way of addressing these issues theoretically and empirically. I have thus tried to establish conceptual conditions that make it possible to go on and investigate these relationships in ways that are more concrete: How do the different forms of territorial stabilization intermingle at different places? How have the territorial productions that constitute the territorial complexities of these places been stabilized? How do the different material designs and forms of territorial stabilization affect the possibility of
complex territorial production? Subtle material transformations might sometimes result in unexpected changes in terms of territorial production. Territorial complexity could, of course, put pressure on material design—in complex places, the same designs might need to be able to play different roles in different territorial productions. But what about the other way around: How does architectural design affect territorial complexity? An interesting contrast to the furnished European squares of the 1990s full of litter boxes, letterboxes, benches, kiosks, bus shelters, advertising pillars, and the like were the open paved squares common to European cities of the early 20th century. Such a territorially unsettled or neutral square, lacking the inscriptions of territorial orders, would, if established today, potentially be accessible to pedestrians, bicycles, cars, and buses at random. Would this then be a place of great territorial complexity? A neutral space open to the public might seem a good recipe for publicness and accessibility. However, this would not be revealed until some kind of territorial complexity had, in fact, evolved. Multilayered territorial productions involve accessibility for different groups and uses, and thus constitute a certain neutrality of space. Neutrality must be seen in this sense as the result and not as a point of departure. Although artifacts play an important role in social relations, it is more difficult to pinpoint what difference various designs of these artifacts might make. It can, however, be noted that neither the heavily subdivided and furnished squares full of artifacts nor the open paved squares with no marked borders at all represent a guarantee of territorial complexity (in fact, they both seem to imply the opposite).

Conclusions

The concept of territoriality has seldom been used to its full potential. It has either been treated too narrowly, limiting the scope of its potential, or too universally, without being specific about differences among various kinds of territorial phenomena. Furthermore, it has often been treated with a focus on just one isolated type of territorialization, or on the territoriality of one group or one actor, dealing, for example, with aspects of exclusions, defense, or spatial homogenizations. Sorting territorial claims into different forms of productions (strategies, tactics, appropriations, and associations) enable a distinction between different kinds of spatial claims, as well as an investigation of multilayered territorial landscapes. Using the theories of Foucault and Latour, it was also possible to dedifferentiate discussions of territorial power and open up for investigations of how territorial practices and effects might function and be stabilized, or destabilized, rather than placing power in predefined institutions or blocks. Such a discussion of territoriality reduces territorial claims to the level neither of individuals/groups nor of society but enables a discussion of territorial production as a collective effort of human and nonhuman actants. It ensures a certain degree of complexity and, to some extent, it enables discussions beyond dichotomies such as public/private or inclusion/exclusion.

The article sets up a conceptual framework for empirical investigations of territorial structures and is mainly preoccupied with discussion of how power relations are stabilized and can be described. This does not, of course, mean that we can neglect the effects of already assembled and reified asymmetries. A lot of powerful relations are already there, stabilized and institutionalized. However, the first task is to describe and explain the territorial hierarchies, asymmetries, conflicts, and homogenizations—not to repeat them, or explain power with power (Latour, 2005, p. 61). It is only when the
stabilized territorial productions have been described, and the actants (e.g., funds, resources, artifacts, etc.) that contribute to these asymmetries of power are identified that we can begin a process of redifferentiation, categorizing and defining important territorial institutions, agents, and groups. Starting out with such a genealogical focus on becoming (the actant perspective), rather than being, it seems possible to leave behind a lot of fixations and schisms in territoriality research.

The three different forms of territorial stabilization that were discussed enable material aspects to play a more articulated role in the discussion of territorial power and, more specifically, of the accessibility and openness of public space. Together, the concepts of territorial production, stabilization, and complexity provide us with a more dynamic and materially enriched discussion of territorial phenomena and everyday life, aspects which traditional research on territoriality often have lacked.

Notes

1. Some previous attempts to use territoriality in a human (behavioral) context can be noted in anthropology, as early as the late 19th century (Malmberg, 1980, pp. 70-83).
2. Notably, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and Husserl (Steinbock, 1995). But see also Shils (1975) and Pollini (1999), who discuss territoriality from a more sociological perspective.
3. I here make a distinction between actor and actant, related to the one suggested by Greimas (1987, pp. 106-120; Hammad, 2002; Latour, 2005, p. 71), following the line of semiotic discourse where actant is used to describe an element that modifies a situation at a more abstract level without figuration (and actor is something with figuration in a specific situation such as, for example, concrete individuals, a certain artifact, etc.).
4. The concept of production as used here is inspired by Lefebvre’s (1991) use of production as “the result of repetitive action” (p. 75), whereas products do not press all creativity into the service of repetition (p. 77). In this article, I focus primarily on the microscale.
5. This does not suggest that the possible number of territorial productions are exhausted. One could easily add, for example, territorial operations (taking up the discussion of personal space) or territorial administration (territoriality as discussed by Håkli, 1994).
6. Places are more often treated as the product of a network than as an integral part of a network (see Latour, 1997) but, to the interesting actor-network theory (ANT) discussions on material artifacts—such as doors, keys, and sleeping policemen—that has been made, one could just as easily add discussions on spatial artifacts, such as pedestrian crossings, town squares, and dining rooms.
7. The territorialization of a network could, in the sense of the word used by Latour (1996), also be described as a framework.
8. Because this was suggested as a good research strategy by Foucault in the 1970s, many people have followed this line of investigation (also in ANT). Some (such as Cresswell, 1996, p. 10) have even claimed the study of transgression to be the only way of investigating a correlation between appropriate behavior and place.

References

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