**Territory/Territoriality**

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**Abstract**

'Territory' and 'territoriality' are widely used in urban research, but often in a general, non-specific sense that effectively relies on the idea that a territory is a 'bounded space', or the understanding that territory is the outcome of territoriality. This entry disentangles these uses, looking at economic, political, legal and strategic senses of the urban-territory relation. Finally it outlines the challenge of 'methodological territorialism'. What is described as 'methodological territorialism' is really a challenge to the bounded nature of territorial conceptions. Just as work on territory can learn from work re-conceptualizing the urban, the same is true in reverse: breaking out of the bounded sense of territory is crucial.

**Introduction**

The terms 'territory' and 'territoriality' are used in urban studies in a range of ways, not always consistently. 'Urban territory' is sometimes used as if the meaning should be evident; territorial terminology is often used to describe urban spaces or aspects of them. Yet the term territory is generally used in a very general, non-specific sense within urban studies. Some of the problem stems from conceptual confusions in the terms. Territory is most frequently understood to be a 'bounded space under the control of a group of people, perhaps a state'. It can exist at a range of spatial scales, from the supra-national down to the local. This is problematic for a least two reasons: not all territories are bounded spaces; and not all bounded spaces are territories. Putting a boundary around something is not sufficient in its creation as a territory, yet this remains a much-used, indeed dominant, definition.

A second understanding, sometimes used to reinforce the first, is that territory is the outcome of territoriality. As a result there is a great deal of conceptual confusion between territory and territoriality. Territoriality used to have a meaning of a condition of territory, that is 'of or relating to territory'; just as spatiality means a condition of space. But territoriality also has an addition meaning of an act directed towards the creation, maintenance or control of territory. This comes from a lineage in animal ethology, itself taking the human notion of territory to relate to animal behavior; which was then turned back to make sense of human behavior. There are multiple accounts in human geography that can be traced back to, or which operate in partial distinction from, this lineage. It can take various forms. Much of the early literature on territory as a concept understood it as an outcome of territoriality, either a biological drive (Wagner 1960; Ardrey 1967; Malmberg 1980) or a social

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strategy (Soja 1971; Sack 1986). Yet there is a risk of a circular argument, in thinking that territorialising behaviour creates territory means territory is seen as the outcome of territoriality, which is a condition of, or something that relates to, territory. Recent work has tried to differentiate territory from territoriality in order to re-grasp the specificity of this term (Sassen 2006; Elden 2010).

There are equally complications when we think about the urban. What counts as an urban, as opposed to a non-urban area? Does urbanisation mean that there are no longer any spaces left that are untouched by urban phenomena? Is the old opposition of the urban to the rural, the urban to the not-yet-urban, or the city to the country, of any use? How do we conceive of the urban if there is no longer that constituent outside (Brenner ed. 2013)? These questions are foundational to urban debates (see Scott and Storper 2014). They become more complicated when they are related to territory.

**The Urban-Territory Relation**

In order to make sense of these questions, it is helpful to disentangle a large number of ways in which the category of territory is used in relation to the urban. Some of these definitions are problematic, and outlining them is not meant to be a simple endorsement. Rather, it is an outline of the problem, with some identification of complexities and prospects for future work.

Urban territories as bounded spaces

The first set of meanings is dependent on the straight-forward definition of territory as a bounded space at a state level. The first is the most obvious: the urban is discrete areas within (nation-)state territory. This conceives of the (nation-)state as a territory, a bounded space, within which some areas are urban and some are not. It thus conceiving of urban, sub-urban and rural as discrete areas. The second is to think of the urban *as* territory. This conceives of urban spaces or areas that are bounded and controlled, demarcated, discrete and distinct, and thus seen as territory. This understanding is reliant on thinking the urban as a specific type of zone or area, opposed to other types of areas. The difference from the first is that these areas are not just within (nation-)state territories, but territories themselves.

The third shifts the scale to look at territories within the urban, discrete areas that have been territorialized. Examples of these would include the divide between public and private space (Mitchell 2003; Low and Smith eds. 2006); gang territories or drug-dealing territories; gated communities; the construction of an eruv for an orthodox Jewish community; inner-cities; downtown; central business districts, etc. It may be the nature of boundaries of administrative subdivisions within a city, or the grouping of various boroughs or districts together to form a city – the five boroughs of New York City, for example; or the thirty-two London borough councils and the City of London Corporation. Effectively this put territories within urban territories within (nation-)state territories.

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For example, within a state territory such as the United Kingdom, itself divided into England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and some islands with complex political-legal status, there are urban areas, some of which are named cities, which are divided into different districts and regions, or neighbourhoods, some of which can be understood as territories. This understanding is prevalent and requires an effectively scalar model of political space, with the well-known Russian dolls model of nested hierarchies. Extreme instances of a bounded territory within an urban area are the international territory of the United Nations within New York City, or enclave states such as the Vatican City, and various other extraterritorial spaces (though not most embassies).

Building on these first three meanings, there are discussions of the territorial structure of the state – centralized or federal; and then divided into states, provinces, regions, metropolitan districts or boroughs. The phrase "territorial structure of the state" is used by, among others, Kevin Cox (2012). Effective synonyms would include territorial organization (see Harvey 1982a, 404), framework or configuration. This conceives of the state as one territory, a bounded entity, which can be subdivided into other bounded entities. There may be a combination of different modes of division. For example, federal states have discrete units within them whose boundaries are akin to those of independent nation-states – compare the boundaries of the states within the United States to those within the European continent; even largely centralized states such as France have clear boundaries for the *départements*. Within the states of the United States there are further divisions to counties and townships, some of which are metropolitan areas or boroughs. Whether these are conceived of as 'territories' or zones, areas, districts or some other political-spatial category is beside the point; the issue is the nature of these bounded entities and their relation to each other. Some systems start off as neatly scalar, at least in aspiration and become more complicated over time. For example, the United Kingdom has, in some areas, still a neat, hierarchical structure. England, as one of the four nations of the United Kingdom is divided into counties, within which are boroughs or districts, some of which have parishes below them. But instead of all of these areas having discrete political units, some are unitary councils that cover at least two of the layers of government which in other places are handled separately. These can become more complicated in highly urbanised areas. Equally there are regions, some of which accord with counties (i.e. Cornwall); others are rather broader (the North-East). Some of these regions are understood as territories, perhaps problematically (see Jones and MacLeod 2004; Allen and Cochrane 2007). What results is a more complicated, uneven, often overlapping, patchwork or mosaic of political-geographical division (see Jones 2007). Narrowly conceived territorial models may not be entirely helpful here.

In addition there is the sense of territory as a container, of various sizes, which is more-or-less urbanized in different areas. This understanding is the most radical, because it tries to break from the urban-as-container model, thinking of urbanization as a gradient where places are on some kind of continuum between non-urban and fully urban. The latter may include a whole range of categories: "'conurbations', 'city-regions', 'urban regions', 'metropolitan regions' and 'global

city-regions'" (Brenner and Schmid 2011, 11). One of the best examples, historically, of thinking the relation between the urban and territory, which actually uses the term 'urban territory', is Jean Gottmann's work on megalopolis (1957, 1961). This is a term that Gottmann uses to describe the 'urbanization of the Northeastern seaboard' of the United States, an area stretching from Boston through New York to Washington, D.C. It is no coincidence that this sophisticated analysis of the relation should be written by someone who was at once an urban, regional and political geographer, who would go on to write one of the best studies of the concept of territory (1973). Nonetheless, even Gottmann tends to think of territory as a container, as something being progressively filled-in with urban areas, an understanding that becomes clear with his analysis of the question of "how far could Megalopolis grow?" (1957, 198). This understanding still tends to conceive of territory as a container which can be filled in, with urbanization as the continuum of its development. Henri Lefebvre's 0-100% scale of progressive urbanization (1970; 2003) radically breaks with the urban-as-container model, but not territory-as-container.

In order to grasp how territories are created, territoriality is often invoked as the means. This tends to work in two ways: territorializing the urban through individual behavior, or collective behavior. At an individual level, this might be in terms of actions directed towards an individual dwelling, use of public spaces such as parks, shopping and commuting, routes, and so on. Some work on territoriality had a specific focus on urban settings (Brower 1980). While individual behavior can be important, this becomes more interesting in terms of relatively small groups of people such as gangs, sectarian groups, even neighbourhood watch groups. This type of behavior can be conceived of as the creation of meaning #3. The marking through graffiti, murals and other visible marks can be said to territorialise urban space, thus creating territories (Murtagh 2002; Storey 2011; Brand and Fregonese 2013).

What these meanings provide is a useful basis for understanding much political-spatial behavior, but not necessarily enough to exhaust all of its possibilities. That territory can take a neatly bounded, exclusive form at some times and in some places does not mean that it always does so.

Political economic concerns

The urban-territory relation is frequently understood in political-economic terms. There is discussion of issues such as territorial rent (Mollard et. al. 2001; Angeon and Vollet 2004); territorial competitiveness (Camagni 2006; Brenner 2009); and territorial expenditure or allocation (Heald 1994; Midwinter 2006) – how much is distributed to discrete territorial units within a polity. All these types of approaches tend to think of discrete, bounded areas, or 'territories' that can be monetized in terms of rent; can compete with each other; or can receive funds from some other level of government. Changes in any of these can relate to wider transformations in demographics, land use and other wider political-economic issues. These are widely discussed in the urban studies literature, sometimes, but not always, with an uncritical understanding of 'territory'. In some respects these political-economic issues, especially the first, reduce

territory to land, though land is a complicated category that deserves greater attention by geographers and others (Lefebvre 2016; Massey and Catalano 1978; Harvey 1982b; Hall 2013). The danger with a lot of work is that it reduces land to rent, a spatial to an economic category, rather than recognizing land as a complicated economic geographical question.

More interesting, perhaps, is a related set of terms that seek to analyze the territorial basis of the production and circulation of capital (Smith 2010 [1984]). Much of economic geography is concerned with this relation, in broad terms, of course, although this does not mean that 'territory' is necessarily the operative category (see Christophers 2014). Doreen Massey's work on the spatial division of labor has some important urban elements within its analysis, but does not use territory language as a means of comprehending this. For her the key geographical category remains space and spatial structures (Massey 1984). Similarly, David Harvey's most-explicitly urban writings do not tend to use territory as the key word (see, for example 1973; 1989),

Work on territorial industrialization (Storper and Walker 1989) and territorial development (Storper and Walker 1989; Brenner 2009) is more explicit on the use of territorial categories. The territorial organization of production (Storper and Walker 1989), or territorial organization as 'the territorial character of the circulation process" (Swyngedouw 1992, p. 418), both potentially have urban characteristics. One variant is "territorial configuration", understood as "the spatial embodiment of the circulation of capital" (Swyngedouw 1992, p. 425). A number of related terms might be established here. Territorial coherence is defined as "a specific combination of the form of territorial regulation with a concrete form of the valorization process which generates a relatively stable pattern of 'territorial development'" (Swyngedouw 1992, p. 419); and territorial construction as "the transformation of space, the restructuring of spatial configuration and the production of new forms of territorial organization" (Swyngedouw 1992, p. 419). In other words, what this work analyses is both the territory of production and, in germ, the production of territory.

The Politics of Urban Territory

However the politics of space cannot be simply reduced to the political economic (Lefebvre 2009, Ch. 7). There are other aspects of political control of space which, while they might relate to economic matters in some respect – why is control of these spaces being sought or maintained, for example – can be understood as political-strategic. This would include warfare in the urban context; which has recently been termed 'urban geopolitics'; as well as territorial control through policing and paramilitary activity. Many of these understandings, in parallel with political-economic ones, see territory as a bounded space. For a range of reasons, which may include political-economic ones, they are contested, conflictual spaces. Urban geopolitics (Graham ed. 2004, 2010; Coward 2008; Fregonese 2012) is broader than merely urban warfare, in that the geographical, which includes territory, is of paramount importance. The militarisation of urban space relies on an understanding of territory. It may be about gaining control of these urban territories through warfare; or maintaining

or re-establishing control through policing or para-military forces (Herbert 1996; Hills 2009; Schrader and Wachsmuth 2012). It is no coincidence that the British Metropolitan Police's special force for public order and counter-terrorism is called the Territorial Support Group (see Greer and McLaughlin 2010).

However, it is not just the state and its apparatuses that seek strategic control of areas within urban space. The literature discusses urban and/or territorial segregation; territorial stigmatization; and the territorial basis for struggle and collective action, sometimes described as grassroots politics. Territorial segregation can take many forms, from gang tagging of sites to sectarian murals (which can be understood as a form of territoriality); and through political-economic power to create gentrification or gated communities (Low 2001; Smith 1996; Lees et. al. 2008); divided or mixed cities (Yacobi 2009, Ch. 4); ghettos and other racial or religious areas, some of which are self-enclosed and others imposed from the outside. At its extreme form this may produce, almost as an obverse, especially undesirable areas through not dissimilar processes. The term 'territorial stigmatization' was introduced by Loïc Wacquant to understand such marginalized places (2007, 2008; Slater and Anderson 2012; Slater 2013; Jenson and Christensen 2012; Hancock and Mooney 2013; Arthurson et. al. 2014). It has become a crucial term in examination of urban poverty, with the suggestion that "the exploration of contemporary urban poverty must start with the powerful territorial stigma attached to residency in the bounded and segregated spaces of 'advanced marginality'" (Hancock and Mooney 2013, 52); though partnered by territorial alienation or dissolution of place for those in those areas. What is specifically territorial about these marginal places is not clear; though there are undoubtedly a range of questions to be examined in relation to the spatial characterization of these areas, zones or regions.

Both segregation and stigmatization may produce challenges, resistances. There may be a more general attempt at using the location as an element within progressive politics. This would include many grassroots political movements (Castells 1983) and local activism, land-based struggles for access and control, and what Lefebvre called 'the right to the city' (1996). Interestingly, in later work, Lefebvre tended to use the term 'territorial *autogestion*' – self-management or autonomy – as his preferred designation of this movement (1975-78; 2009). *Autogestion* was not just confined to workers taking-over or seizing the means of production, such as they famously did in the LIP watch factory, but also about localized and community movements (see Purcell 2013; Wilson 2014).

Political-legal

These economic and political issues are embedded within a legal framework, which is an additional way of thinking about the urban-territory relation. This would include territorial government and territorial regulation; regulatory practices. It is important to recognize the role the law plays in many of the above categories, either as an explicit element or as framework within which political and economic struggle takes place. Territorial government may be a synonym for local government but more generally concerns the application of political

authority to urban sites. The legal structure that makes possible economic transactions and contestation is a crucial and often-underplayed element. While it may suit neoliberal thinking to emphasis the 'minimal role' of the state, in actuality the state provides a legal-political framework and institutional support to the workings of the market. Property rights, trade agreements, and more-or-less regulation are only some of these elements. Political-legal structures also provide the institutional support for state territorial control – police regulations, divisional requirements, law courts and the administration of justice. The laws enforced by the police and court system are partnered by the division of any polity into discrete zones or territories of jurisdiction – which court has jurisdiction, where different police forces operate, and so on.

**Urban Territorial Strategies**

Yet these questions – economic, geopolitical and legal – are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to grasp the variable forms that territory can take in relation to the urban. Territory can be used in a range of other ways, and the particular tactics and strategies of its establishment, maintenance, change and contestation are dependent on both these three and other questions, often in the form of techniques or strategies.

Territorial integration (Vigar and Healey 1999), cohesion (Faludi 2004, 2006) and fragmentation (Cox and Jonas 1993; Beramendi 2007; Harrison 2010) or variegation (Brenner et al 2010) are important terms which are sometimes related to the urban, and that cannot simply be reduced to political economy. They certainly relate to inequalities in territorial expenditure or territorial injustice, but can be caused and ameliorated by political-strategic concerns such as geographical location and terrain, infrastructure and networks. Neil Smith's work on uneven development (2010 [1984]) is helpful here; as is Lefebvre's concept of implosions/explosions, which includes, but goes far beyond, political economy (see Brenner ed. 2013).

These strategies are, today, often understood through Lefebvre's work on the production of urban space, the production of the urban through state-spatial or state-territorial strategies, as well as counter-movements and resistances to these strategies. A number of aspects need to analyzed here as elements of the urban elements of the production of territory (Brenner 2004). These might simply be through a reorganization of the territorial structure of the state, through redistricting, division, boundary commissions or zoning; but also includes infrastructure projects that connect or divide, incorporate or isolate.

Elements of this sense can be found in many of the earlier understandings, and in a sense this approach is to make sense of diverse projects. Urban territory, on this understanding, is continually produced and reproduced; not created through a one-off act of state-building that leaves a container or framework for future political action and struggle. Territory is mutable, transformed, contested and recreated through actions of states and other groups. This is perhaps especially the case in urban contexts. Spatial strategies transform, and yet are constrained by, social/spatial relations. States and other political actors operate within the

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constraints of the territories they inhabit, and inherit, from previous attempts at political, economic, strategic, legal and technical transformation; even as they seek to transform them in the present moment, thereby creating the context for future operations. The actions of states, private corporations, community groups and individuals work and rework on the fabric of social-political life: the production of territory. This is usefully described by Sigler in the context of the Panama canal as the 'territorial palimpsest' (2014, 897). Territory is a political technology, or a bundle of technologies that include measuring land and controlling terrain, political, economic, strategic, legal and technical (see Elden 2010, 2013).

This is helpful in making sense of the techniques used in urban locations. The material elements of the urban environment play a crucial role. Terrain is transformable, but is not entirely unimportant. The 'reclaiming' of land from the sea in many riverine and coastal cities – Singapore, Hong Kong, Mumbai, New York for example – is one instance of the production, one might even say fabrication, of space, but so too is the creation of space above or below the surface by tunneling or building. Questions of whether the bedrock is suitable for the size of structures become important. In the Hudson Yards development in New York City, for example, the building of a roof layer over the Long Island Rail Road yards west of Penn Station is a crucial step in the creation of a foundation for future construction. In Macau, land reclamation has almost trebled the land size in a century, with further projects underway, and the Cotai strip where the casinos are built entirely constructed through such large infrastructure projects.

One example would be how to conceive of urban space after so-called 'natural disasters' (Smith 2006). Steinberg and Shields edited collection *What is a City? Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina* (2008) explicitly addresses this question. It no longer makes sense, if it ever did, to conceive of the lower Mississippi as 'nature' that happens to impact on an urban environment, such as New Orleans, but rather we should think of the river itself as urbanised; and urbanised by a particularly territorial process, that of military engineering. by the Army Corps of Engineers. As Manaugh and Twilley suggest in that collection, the idea that New Orleans was put under martial law after Hurricane Katrina is somewhat redundant: "the city's landscape has never been under anything *but* martial law. The lower Mississippi is literally nothing other than landscape design by military hydrologists" (2008, 63). An extreme example of the state production of urban space can be seen in the West Bank (Segal and Weizman 2003). This is not just building houses, or the wall/fence of the 'separation barrier', but also the civil engineering projects of tunnels, bridges, roads, flyovers and irrigation. Here too the line between civil and military engineering is extremely blurred.

**The Challenge of Methodological Territorialism**

In their important challenge to the 'the urban world' hypothesis, Brenner and Schmid (2014) take issue with what they call 'methodological territorialism' and the 'territorialist' approach or understanding of the city (see Jessop et. al. 2008). The dominant meaning seems to be conceiving of the city *as* a territory. Because

territory is assumed to be a bounded space, conceiving of the city as a territory imposes a meaning of cities as discrete, bounded entities, with an outside, and of a form that can be contrasted to other, non-urban spaces. Their analysis of extended urbanization demonstrates the problems of this approach. Yet while it is undoubtedly problematic to assume this definition of cities, it is equally problematic to take this as the meaning of territory. This problem would be better described as methodological 'bounded-ness', or 'methodological territory-as-bounded-space-ism'. Indeed Brenner defines it in that very way: the approach "analyzes all spatial forms and scales as being self-enclosed and territorially bounded geographical units" (1999: 46). Similar critiques have been made of 'methodological cityism' (Brenner ed. 2013; Angelo and Wachsmuth 2014).

It is clear that the idea that the urban *is* a territory is not especially helpful. Nor is there simply a territory within which there are urban areas, or merely that there are territories *within* the urban. The idea that territories exist at all spatial scales, from a room to a home to a village to a city to a sub-state region to a state to a supra-state region to the world risks making the concept so general it ceases to become useful in specific analyses. Using 'territory' as a label for sub-state spaces raises the not insignificant question of why region, area, place, location, locale etc. are not more useful. If territory means all those things it ends up having no specificity, and therefore becomes largely worthless. As outlined above there are also problems thinking of territoriality as the means of producing territory. While a stress on the production of territory is valuable, this is from a range of processes of which 'territoriality' is but one.

What is crucial, whatever scale it is applied to, is to stop, once and for all, thinking boundaries define territory. Rather territory defines boundaries. If territory is conceived of as political-calculative-space, a technology; as a process rather than as an outcome; and as something continually being made and remade, then this helps us to break-out of a static, bounded, *defined*, sense. Indeed, it helps us to understand how boundaries are possible. Territory *can*, at certain times and in certain places, take on the characteristic of bounded-ness and exclusiveness, but these latter categories are not sufficient to define it. In this light, conceiving of the urban-territory relation is rather different. Indeed, it becomes clearer that the most important and interesting work currently being done on the urban can help understand territory and, potentially, vice versa. Breaking out of the bounded sense of territory is crucial to that work.

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**Suggested Readings**

Brenner ed. 2013; Gottmanm 1961; Graham ed. 2004; Harvey 1989; Lefebvre 2003; Mitchell 2003; Swyngedouw 1992; Smith 1996; Wacquant 2007.

**Cross-References**

See also Deterritorialization, Production of Space/Lefebvre, Reterritorialization, Space, Territoriality, Urban border.

**Biography**

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