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# On Territorology

## Towards a General Science of Territory

*Andrea Mubi Brighenti*

### **Abstract**

The development of territorology requires the overcoming of the dichotomy between determinist and constructivist approaches, in order to advance towards a general science of territory and territorial phenomena. Insights for this task can come from at least four main threads of research: biology, zooethology and human ethology; human ecology, social psychology and interactionism; human, political and legal geography; and philosophy. In light of the insights derived from these traditions, the article aims to conceptualize territorial components, technologies, movements, effects, and their interplay, in order to establish the main lines of inquiry for territorology. A general territorology, it is argued, amounts to a sociology of territorial acts and relations, whose aim is to analyze the expressive and functional components of territories, as fixed through their organizational and technological devices.

### **Key words**

material/immaterial ■ sociological theory ■ territory ■ theoretical pluralism  
■ visibility

### **Sources for Territorology**

**D**ESPITE THE increasing recognition that globalization studies needs to take territory seriously, territorology is not particularly fashionable today and, currently, contributions to its development are not precisely thriving. Indeed, the term itself sounds uncanny and slightly arcane among social scientists, probably because it is generally associated with biological and ethological determinism. But, as this article argues, territorology is not necessarily confined to that dimension. On the contrary, the development of a true territorology requires the overcoming of the

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dichotomy between views of territory that regard it as based in instinct and views that consider it to be based in strategy, i.e. between determinist and constructivist theses, in order to advance towards a general science of territory and territorial phenomena.

Like most other crucial concepts in the social sciences, territory is polysemic and ambiguous, reflecting the fact the social science is inherently plural and non-paradigmatic. Consequently, my attempt here is not to provide any definitive systematization of the concept, but rather to suggest that its inner diversity constitutes part of its very richness. I begin by reviewing various possible sources for a science of territories in order to stress their disciplinary diversity and different research sensibilities. Then I proceed to identify the main characteristics of territory from a relational, processual and ‘evental’ perspective. By doing so, I seek to support the claim that territory is better conceived as an act or practice rather than an object or physical space. Following this, the technologies that can be used to make territories are outlined. Attention to these drawing technologies enables us to capture the role that acts of inscription play in the creation and the constitution of territory. Flows, boundaries and rhythms are likewise discussed as dimensions and attributes through which territories can be observed. In the concluding section, the major territorial effects are taken into account, and an attempt is made to reveal the permanent tension between, on the one hand, procedures of stabilization, order, consensus, hegemony, pre-assignment and, on the other, the irreducible plurality of each territory, necessarily mirrored in every territorial constitution and regime.

Recently, Saskia Sassen (2006) has published remarkable research into modern and contemporary assemblages of territory, authority and rights. Such an extended contribution from one of the leading scholars of globalization offers an occasion for a reappraisal of the state of territorology. The very fact that territory is understood as part of an assemblage formed with legal components, such as authority and rights, seems promising. Sassen’s rich exploration advances a process-based framework for understanding territoriality, suggesting that territories can be explained as the outcome of a complex, heterogeneous composition (an assemblage) including legal, political and economic dimensions. However, Sassen explicitly eschews conceptualizing assemblages: ‘my usage [of the term assemblage]’, she explains in an early footnote (2006: 5) ‘is profoundly untheoretical’. My argument here is that an inquiry into the nature of assemblages is what would be most needed in order to understand the role of territory and its relation to disciplines such as law, political science and, more generally, social theory.

First, territory is a crucial concept if we are to make sense of law from a situated perspective. In fact law, as Fitzpatrick (2005) effectively put it, needs to ‘take place’. But how law takes place cannot be explained when abstracted from its basic territorial form (see e.g. Delaney, 1998; Ford, 1999; Nedelsky, 1990). The problem is not separating and opposing territorial and

non-territorial law – sometimes described as geocentric versus egocentric law (Santos, 1995) – rather, elaborating a concept of territory powerful enough to speak of law in its entirety; in other words, to found a territorology of law.

Second, in political geography territory is in most cases taken as an alias for the nation-state's physical extension. According to this view, territory is nothing other than the area of land claimed by a country. But, as scholars such as Cox (1991) and Agnew and Corbridge (1995) once observed, the equivalence of territory and state is highly questionable (more recently, see also Brenner, 2004). There are reasons to believe that the mainstream political and legal conception of territory as the passive spatial recipient of the state is the fruit of a modernist discourse which, while managing to monopolize the definition of territory, narrowing it down to a single dimension, has in fact not replaced the occurrence of a wider range of territorial phenomena. While the state operates as a centripetal force, it can never fully reach total exclusion of other spatial functions and practices. Not only has the debate on globalization that has taken place since the beginning of the 1990s problematized the nature of this definitional monopoly of the state over territory; it has also led to the announcement of a 'death of territories' (Badie, 1995), on the assumption that globalization is increasingly undermining state territoriality. Geographers have promptly replied that, even in a world configured as a space of deterritorialized flows, a significant part of social life remains territorial and that the 'death of geography' is but a fashionable narrative which, in reality, has no substantive truth (cf. e.g. Elden, 2005; Morgan, 2004). In doing so, however, geographers sometimes seem chiefly preoccupied with reaffirming the importance of the 'territorial factor' of political modernity (see e.g. Dijink and Knippenberg, 2001).

We know that despite the great formal variety of organizations and technological infrastructure, and the historical specificity of territorial configurations, no politically organized group ever existed without creating and managing their territorial forms. Even if the claim that the modern territorial state is in crisis were true (and it is not conclusively agreed that this is the case), the demise of one specific historical territorial formation does not mean the end of territories as such. On the contrary, it is probably a prelude to the transformation and, potentially, to the multiplication of territories. Rather than 'deterritorialization of the state', we should speak more precisely of a deterritorialization of some actors or some relations from the state coupled with a subsequent reterritorialization of those actors and relationships onto some other type of territory. Consequently, a more attentive consideration of contemporary territorial reconfigurations inevitably leads to the recognition that in every social environment territories exist at a multiplicity of different scales and degrees of visibility, in a state of constant proliferation and transformation. In doing so, the mainstream conception of territory as a subcategory of physical space is necessarily left behind. Territorology must investigate the concept of territory, not simply as

a specific historical and political construct, but more radically, as a general analytical tool to describe the social sphere and, ultimately, as a social process in itself.

Third, to retrieve the notion of territory in social theory we might look at Michel Foucault's work. In his 1977–78 course at the Collège de France, *Sécurité, territoire, population* (*Security, Territory, Population*), Foucault (2004) revealed, from his genealogical perspective, the complex connections between population and territory at the core of governmentality, and the practice of disposition of men and things for the realization of specific aims. In the modern world, governmental practices are organized and articulated into a series of *dispositifs de sécurité* (security devices) that are substantiated by discourses and *savoirs disciplinaires* (disciplinary knowledges). For Foucault, the *definiens* of the governmental state is not so much territory per se, but population, along with the security devices, the discourses and the disciplinary knowledges shaped and employed to govern population. Interestingly, Foucault used territory in a rather conventional, mainstream political sense (thus excluding, for instance, the element of calculation – see Elden, 2007) in order to criticize the cult of the centrality of territory in the definition of sovereignty. But from a relational perspective territory appears precisely as what keeps sovereignty and government together. The link between sovereignty and government is indeed the territorial relationship *par excellence*. In order to work properly, government needs to territorialize a given population within its own framework of sovereignty. In Foucault's account, this is precisely the aim that disciplines help to achieve. What counts is not space per se, but the relationships among people that are built through space and inscribed in it in the effort to sustain the triangle sovereignty–discipline–government.

Thus, Foucault provides a first step towards the problematization of the mainstream conception of territory in political and legal sciences. But there are many other sources and traditions in the study of territory and territoriality. As hinted above, the main cleavage is sometimes identified between macro, or political approaches, and micro, or biological approaches (cf. Storey, 2001). Yet this distinction, as well as more generally every distinction between the natural and the social (or artificial), is unsatisfactory. The very vexed question 'Is territory based on instinct or strategy?' is not really helpful for the development of territorology as a general science of territories. Disagreement between the 'two cultures' (the scientific and the humanistic) in the study of territory revolves mainly around the issue of the origin. In these *querelles* the origin of territory soon becomes a matter of metaphysical pathos rather than science. Not by chance, they recall the theological and existential debates on free will. Scientists may employ terms like 'instinct' and 'inborn' in a circumscribed, conventional and technical sense, but they cannot delete the strong connotations of those terms, which generate an emotional critical reaction. Popularizations – such as Ardrey's (1966) book on the 'territorial imperative' – further contribute to polemical exchanges; and the discussion ends up in a metaphysical domain. This is

why debates of this type tend to become ideological, barren and, in the end, rather sad. By contrast, a science of territory should focus not on origins, but rather on how territories are constituted, through which processes and with what consequences.

In order to do this, the development of a territorology requires a combination of insights derived from at least four main threads of research: (a) biology, zooethology and human ethology;<sup>1</sup> (b) human ecology, social psychology and interactionism;<sup>2</sup> (c) human, political and legal geography and planning;<sup>3</sup> and (d) philosophy (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). While full exploration and systematic comparison between these traditions clearly falls beyond the scope of this article, the richness of this multiplicity of approaches, which cannot be reduced to any analytical unilateralism, is a fundamental heritage of territorology. It is likewise in connection with this multiplicity that territorology can hope to bridge the dichotomies between opposed approaches such as vitalism and historicism. In the following I trace a number of insights from these sources in order to highlight the various aspects of the territorial dynamic.

Most importantly, it is only by keeping this multiplicity of sources alive and in dialogue that a sufficiently comprehensive territorology, no longer confined to its ethological or geographical formulations alone, can be elaborated. I am more interested in the variety of these researches than their coherence. In other words, territorology cannot be built positivistically, through mere accumulation of 'facts', but must emerge, if at all, from the unrestrained transdisciplinary study of situated problems, as intellectual figures of the stature of Foucault and Deleuze (both endlessly inspiring for everyone who attempts to conceive and describe territorial phenomena) demonstrate. To say that territorology should be developed in an open field, through problems rather than through a discipline, means that its propositions should not be deduced axiomatically from disciplinary conventions, requirements, agendas or common sense, but, on the contrary, should emerge piecemeal, through engaged problematizations and critical explorations. The point is not to decide whether or not an ethology of animal behaviour is sufficient to understand the whole extent and scope of territoriality. Clearly, it is not. But a politology of organizations is likewise insufficient. The problem, rather, is how to conceive of an ethology of organizations together with a politology of animal behaviour. Only this joint endeavour can give way to territorology.

### **Territorial Components**

To begin a discussion on territory as a geographical, behavioural, political and legal concept, three points should not be overlooked. They will be listed here in a rather apodictic fashion, but will in fact dominate the rest of the discussion.

First, a territory is not an object and should not be confused with the space where it takes place (Brighenti, 2006b). The mainstream view that interprets territory as the hard fact which merely provides the visible

support or back-up for invisible social ties must be challenged. For instance, it does not make much sense to affirm that ‘the state extends its power over a territory’, because that ‘territory’ is precisely the effect of a specific social relation which includes power relations. The image of the modern territorial state is a mythic-ideological self-representation which would not have been possible, not simply without a certain configuration of political power, but also without a whole techno-social and biopolitical configuration, ranging from technologies (military, cartographic, transport technologies, etc.) to disciplines and their knowledges (medicine, school, police, administration, etc.; for a historical example, see Allières, 1980). The very production and accumulation of knowledge is a territorial move. Besides that, if the state is an abstract construct, town halls and even neighbourhood councils are no less so. While not of the same scale, nor endowed with the same degree of centripetal power, all of these institutions lie at the same level of abstraction. Territory is not defined by space, rather it defines spaces through patterns of relations. Every type of social tie can be imagined and constructed as territorial. This is not to say that all territories look the same. On the contrary, they differ dramatically in scale and visibility, as well as in expression, function, organization and technology. Only the most visible territories are usually recognized as proper territories, whereas the others are relegated to the realm of metaphor. Visibility is an important predictor of the definitional fault-lines that will be adopted by scientists and lay people. Interestingly, the effects of visibility depend in their turn on specific expressive, functional, relational, organizational and technological territorial arrangements (Brighenti, 2007). In other words, only once relations among actors, rather than space, are put at the conceptual core of territory, does it become possible to capture the ways in which spatial and non-spatial territories are superimposed one onto the other and endowed with multiple linkages.

In other words, we need an epistemology that de-essentializes territories. It is also important to note that a fully relational conception does not obscure the dimension of power that is involved in human relations. Rather, it strives to avoid reducing territory to mere space imbued with power, where spatial structures would simply represent the neutral carrier of power. An analysis of power, as Foucault taught us, must be conducted within an analysis of the specific features of relationships of various scales. Territories are interactional. They result from encounters and from the affects developed during those encounters. Territories are the effect of the material inscription of social relationships. In fact, actors do inscribe an ensemble of cognitive and normative plans into given material supports, such as procedures (e.g. procedures for navigating a certain space), ways of doing things conveniently (proper behaviour, efficient action, etc.), expectations about mutual recognition (interaction rituals, reparations, etc.), power claims and hierarchies (both personal and impersonal), and so on. Because more or less complex plans are always territorially inscribed by the different actors that compose a territory, territories are as heterogeneous as the

ensemble of actors that are present in them. In fact, a territory designates a convergence of actors who attempt to manage reciprocal visibilities and invisibilities and reciprocal affections (including, notably, the spread of moods, attitudes, desires, beliefs, etc.).

Second, territory is an imagined (not imaginary) entity. Benedict Anderson's (1983) famous idea of nation as an imagined community is extremely important and inspiring but should not mislead us about the fact that clans, too, are imagined entities. The difference is that the clan territorializes its members through myths and narratives that focus on bodies, whereas the nation territorializes its members through myths and narratives that focus on places. Outside these acts of imagination, neither the nation nor the clan can be visible, working entities. Both are territorial; in short, every social formation entails a specific territorial endeavour. When space is carved out and circumscribed by an animal to create a territory, this implies a fundamental transformation of previous environments. Territorial practice is an imaginative mechanism whereby someone is initially recognized as an intruder or insider (or other equivalent qualification) in relation to one's territory. Spaces and places can be urbanistically and architecturally planned to support certain activities, but if the capacity to imagine relationships were lost, even the most carefully planned space would be an empty shell. It is imagination that enables classification, distinction and recognition. For its part, territory is not simply the physical setting for such recognition. Rather, recognition and separation of two basic types of co-specifics (members of the same species) is what the territory is all about. Selective inclusion and exclusion combine into series to form an ordering mechanism that becomes the basis for the formation of social groups. Inclusion and exclusion are not totalizing; they correspond to openings and closures that are the basic operations of the territorial machine. As such, they can be applied differently to various relational dimensions, giving birth to patterns of hegemony, control and resistance.

Third, territory has both expressive and functional components. Expression marks the emergence of a territory, given that a territory appears when some qualities and properties emerge from an environment. Without quality and property, or better without quality as property (such as a signature, a specific way of marking), there would be no territory. Therefore, the setting up of a territory is expressive and semiotic. But functions are not far away, because every territory acts on the organization of environmental functions. Nonetheless, it is important to remark that the classic ethological concepts of defence, control, reproduction and pecking order in the access to resources provide only some of the many possible territorial functions, which can be much more complex and far-reaching. Indeed, it is thanks to the imaginative element entailed by territory that the here-and-now can be prolonged and that general organizational functions can be projected and carried out. In particular, the functional aspect is a theme clearly present in Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and his concept of *espace conçu* (conceived space), that is, space as it is imagined and represented through abstract and



mental schemes which convey the dominant vision for a specific space. And, as argued by Soja (1989), each concrete spatiality is an arena of struggle.

On the part of scholars of territorial phenomena that situate themselves inside specific disciplines or sub-disciplines, the idea of an encompassing, transversal conception of territory, as well as of a general territorology, is probably not destined to be well received. Such an idea can be deemed to be vague, confusing or uselessly complicated. Understandably, a general territorology conflicts with the more narrowed-down, operationalized notions disciplinary scholars may wish to work with, and it can at times sound counterintuitive. But the reasons for employing a territorological approach in no way rest on some dream of grand theorizing. Rather, they are grounded in the epistemological challenge posed by a radical investigation of territories. The difficulty in conceptualizing the interplay between physical space and the organization of relations and functions that comes along with it, within and throughout a territory, is in the first place an epistemological difficulty.

The theoretical question that lies at the core of territory and its relationship to social life at large can be put as follows: how does it happen that the material transforms into the immaterial (Vandenberghe, 2007)? How does it happen that spaces transform into relations? In traditional ontology, spaces and relations are two different sets of things. But the distinction between the spheres of the material and the immaterial is weakened by the fact that, in social practices, these two dimensions do not simply interact but ceaselessly prolong into each other. This is what happens with every territory. True, technology amplifies these prolongations and makes them more visible and perceptible (and this is one of the reasons why it is all the more important to study this under-explored type of social ontology today), but it does not create them. Interestingly, Sack (1997: §3) has recently ventured into this problem, which he has described as the spatial interweaving of elements from the realms of nature, social relations and meaning. Sack has fully recognized the constant interplay of these realms and has attempted to describe it, introducing an interesting theorization of three 'loops' (in/out rules, spatial interactions and surface/depth). However, his theory ends up reaffirming the irreducibility of the three realms of nature, social relations and meaning, which is precisely what I argue should be overcome.

This irreducibility is probably due to the chosen realms themselves. In fact, from a territorological perspective, what matters is not the distinction between natural and social, but rather the distinction between material and immaterial or, with reference to a problem raised by Bergson (1889), the distinction between quantitative and qualitative, *temps* and *durée*. So, while at first it is necessary to avoid conflating territory and its physical spatial extension, the next step is to conceptualize prolongations between the material and the immaterial. It is only in this way that we can hope to advance in the understanding of what Sassen calls assemblages of territory, authority and rights. The concept of prolongation also emerges as an

integrative and a corrective to media theory. McLuhan (1964) famously advanced the image of media as sensorial extensions. He was also quite clear that one cannot conceive these extensions as if they were not mediated. Media are hardly neutral because their expressive characteristics affect the content they mediate (popularized as ‘the medium is the message’). But McLuhan’s theory, as well as his disciples’, is rather unclear when it comes to accounting for precisely how extensions work: as it tends to conflate the layers of content and expression, it ultimately becomes a reductionist theory. Nonetheless, media can be explored as territories.

If, for instance, one compares the two ideal-typical situations of a face-to-face conversation and that same conversation on the phone or through any other media, one understands that the problem for a theory of prolongations is to explain how a quantitative worth (in this example, a spatial distancing) becomes a qualitative one (in this example, a mediated interaction): when mediated by different technologies, the conversation is no longer the same. A transformation occurs. A new territory is being created. This fact also means that there is not a single conversation, but a series of conversations, a series in which each conversation is confined in or, on the contrary, pushed to the limits of its technology. The concept of prolongation draws attention precisely to the existence of series, and to the creation of relationships within and across series. Notably, the concept of prolongations ultimately enables us to bridge the gap between studies of human territoriality on the one hand and traditional political territories on the other. These two research areas can be recast not simply in the guise of two poles of micro versus macro territories, but rather slantwise, through the differential analysis of relational prolongations, imaginative forces, and materially expressive and functional components. Territories are on the move: as Tim Ingold (2007: 75) remarks, ‘For the Inuit *as soon as a person moves he becomes a line.*’

### **Territorial Technologies**

Territory exists as a bounded entity. It is widely accepted that boundaries are a constitutive prerequisite of territory, to the point that the analysis of territories cannot miss the phenomenon of boundary-making. Through its boundaries, territory enables actors to manage reciprocal distances. The management of distances, which is so crucial in ordinary social life, is the corollary of the fear of being ‘touched by the unknown’ so vividly described by Canetti (1984 [1960]). Boundaries are nothing other than critical distances, combined to shape social regularities and orders (cf. Goffman, 1971; Sommer, 1967). The activity of drawing boundaries, while in many cases implicit and even invisible, is the constitutive process of territorialization.

Consequently, territory and boundaries should be framed as two aspects of the same phenomenon – or better, of the same activity. If territorializing is a way of carving the environment through boundary-drawing activities, trajectories and boundaries should be conceived as

complementary rather than oppositional elements. Boundaries are not the opposite of flows but rather the moment when flows become visible, inscribed in the field of visible, socially relevant phenomena. Thus, if drawing a boundary means drawing a line, that line is also a flow, a trajectory that vectorially intersects or aligns itself with other vectors. Furthermore, because the activity of boundary-making or boundary-drawing is immanent and situated, there are no pre-destined, ‘natural’ boundaries. Naturalization and absolutization of boundaries should be studied as the outcome of situated transcendent-oriented movements and practices. In many cases, justificatory practices, such as a theodicy or a nationalist narrative, will be involved in this process (cf. Murphy, 1990; Penrose, 2002; on the grammar of justification in general, see Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). In short, boundaries are the operations that lead to the instauration of territories. Once a shift from an essentialist and objectivist to an operational, interactional and ‘evental’ imagination of territory is made, the activity of boundary-drawing and the means for marking can be described and identified from the following points of view:

*Who is drawing.* The territory cannot be conceived outside of its relationship with the agents who undertake the territory-making activity. Notably, individual as well as collective (group) territories may exist. Human territory-making activities encompass both types of territory. The ratio among individual and collective territories varies according to social groups, their culture, economy and technology. Of course, the most visible and stabilized political territories are usually collective territories.

*How the drawing is made.* There are many different technologies for drawing and dropping markers, which range from body secretions, postures and plumage, to graffiti, stone walls, cartographic projections and GIS technology, as well as situational, ad hoc procedures. Drawing is the material act of inscription of a line that becomes part of a whole ecology (Ingold, 2007). Technology always matches the specific sensibility and understanding of the boundary-drawing agent. Different technologies produce different types of markers suitable for inscription into different types of surfaces. Territorial markers are in themselves meaningful: each marker is a sign that bears its own individual characteristics, so that it can be more or less effective, impressive, memorable and affectively powerful according to specific circumstances.

*What kind of drawing is being made.* Territory is not an absolute concept. Rather, it is always relative to a sphere of application or a structural domain of practice. Territory is always ‘qualified’: reproductive territory, proprietary territory, economic territory, political territory, psychological territory, affective territory and so on. Boundaries are more or less focused on a range of expressions and a given set of functions that shape the rationale for a certain territorial constitution. These expressions and functions manifest qualities as properties or possessions. Because not all boundaries are of the same type though, there may be no coincidence

between different types of boundaries (e.g. contemporary – and, following Wallerstein (1993), also modern – economic and political territories clearly do not coincide).

*Why the drawing is being made.* Qualities pertaining to various domains of practice are inscribed into the territorial constitution. Projects, plans and strategies too are inscribed into the territorial constitution. Because a territory is established as a semiotic device and as part of a plan to control resources, it can be thought of as expressive and teleological. Projects and plans transform territories themselves into resources. But this is not a univocal process. Here, the Italian word '*piano*' can be helpful, given that it means both 'layer' and 'plan'. Territories are '*multi-piani*', in the double meaning of 'multilayered' and 'multiproject'. Plans aim at establishing hegemonies, but hegemonic frameworks can be resisted.

The image of territorial boundaries as the result of contingent acts of drawing may convey the false impression that arbitrariness rules over the constitution of territories. But to stress the dependence of territory on boundary-drawing activities undertaken by interacting agents employing given technologies to carry out some plans in some domain of practice that is of concern to them does not amount to saying that territories are merely arbitrary constructions. On the contrary, after being established for the first time – although as origins tend to be enveloped in mythologies it may not be easy to tell when the first time was – boundaries become the object of an on-going work of enactment, reinforcement, negation, interpretation and negotiation. In short, they become stratified. Stratification also means that some strata become less visible than others and, so to speak, infrastructural (on the invisibilization of infrastructures such as classification systems see Bowker and Star, 1999).

Every boundary-drawing that carves the environment is based on a technology that allows a specific type of sign emission and processing. In their turn, signs exist within a semiosphere in which acts of semiosis join together *representamens*, objects and *interpretants*. Processes of territorialization include, for instance, processes that range from finding one's place on a crowded metro train, to locating one's mobile phone with GIS technology, to engaging in face-to-face interaction between strangers. Nation-state boundaries are also semiotic entities (cf. Anderson, 1996). Each of these territories has its own specificities, but once a regime is set up, territory-making becomes a routine activity. Territories are practices, at least if by practice we understand a set of repetitions and differences that prolong from one environment to another. Connecting past knowledge to present circumstances, a practice enables us to encode and decode signs, to share a meaningful environment or, in other words, to territorialize environments.

Lastly, territorial borders mean nothing more than the deceleration of flows or decrease of speed magnitudes. The study of borders and thresholds (access, acceptance, selection, exclusion, etc.) and the study of speeds and

circulations are one and the same thing. Inter alia, this explains why the absolute distinction between territories and networks (as described for instance by Lévy, 1994) is not very well placed. In fact, networks are a specific type of territory, in which access points and speeds are hierarchically arranged (for instance, fast lanes, etc.), ideally to the point of closing all access ways except one (e.g. metro stations, highway gates, etc.). The distinction between territories and networks is also very scale sensitive. For instance, the answer to the question ‘Is a street a territory or a network?’ clearly depends on the scale at which we observe the street. If we regard it as it appears on a map, then it is certainly very similar to a network; but when we actually walk down that street we can appreciate it as a territory. Because territories articulate speeds and the velocities of entry and exit, they are rhythmic: they determine specific patterns of concentration and dispersal of objects and events. Rhythms can be superposed onto each other, in which case they modulate each other, creating more complex rhythmic patterns (see also Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]). The stratification of rhythms is also a stratification of motilities. For instance, the rhythms of public transport can become a modulator for private displacements (e.g. employees), which in turn becomes a modulator for other private displacements (e.g. customers). Territories are not fixed entities, but are instead thoroughly constituted through these rhythms; that is, they are series of events occurring at different paces.

### **Territorial Movements**

The crucial insights for a process-based and eventual perspective on territory can be found in Deleuze and Guattari (1980). Following these authors, a territory is not to be understood as an object, nor as a subject, but rather as a mode, or act. A territory is something one makes vis-à-vis others as an inscription upon a specific material. Emphasis on the act leads to the recognition that territories are not simply relational, but also and primarily processual, eventual and directional entities. Deleuze and Guattari identify three movements, or vectors, in the territorial process: deterritorialization, reterritorialization and territorialization. Arguably, they adopt this precise order of exposition, which could prima facie appear counterintuitive, for two main reasons: first, they want to counter the idea that these processes occur temporally one after the other (vectors coexist and affect each other); second, they want to note that territories are actualized when one leaves them (hence, their description begins with deterritorialization). It is the moment of exit – which can be due to the most diverse causes – which makes a territory visible. And what happens after exit? One cannot leave a territory, Deleuze and Guattari argue, without at the same time creating another territory somewhere else. One cannot deterritorialize from some relations without concurrently reterritorializing on some others. It is this double movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that evokes the primitive movement of territorialization, which otherwise tends to be taken for granted, perceived as a degree zero of territory, as non-movement. These three territorial movements proceed together precisely as movements, or

directional vectors. In fact, each territory is constantly crossed by deterritorializing tendencies, tendencies that push out of a territorial series towards other series (from intra- to inter-series).

Taken together, these three movements define the type of relationship that exists between the *territoire* and the *milieu* or *Umwelt* it territorializes. Territory itself is, for Deleuze and Guattari, a way of expressing a certain relationship with a world. Thus territory is linked, on the one hand to expressivity, to the becoming expressive of a milieu, and on the other hand, to functionality, to the organization of this relationship. The relationship between territory and its world is expressed through a specific rhythm and melody possessed by territory. More precisely, the expressive qualities of territory combine among themselves to create certain themes. These themes are, on the one hand, territorial motifs and, on the other hand, territorial counterpoints. The motifs, in their turn, form rhythmic characters (*personnages rythmiques*), whereas the counterpoints develop into melodic landscapes (*paysages mélodiques*). Rhythms are not repetitions, but rather differences nested inside patterns of repetition. In particular, a motif is a rhythmic style: it is the point when rhythm, under the influence of internal impulses, exceeds its expressive moment to become stylistic. Thus, rhythm is no longer simply associated with one figure, it becomes one, it becomes a character. Likewise melodies, as counterpoints, express the relation between territory and external circumstances. When this expression evolves into a style, it forms a landscape: the melody is no longer simply associated with a landscape, it becomes one. Whereas characters are intraspecific, landscapes are interspecific. Thus, territory allows for both the coexistence of members of the same species (characters) through distancing, and the coexistence of members of different species (a landscape) through specialization.

The term 'refrain' (*ritournelle*), as it is employed by Deleuze and Guattari, describes the sum of the three territorial movements of deterritorialization, reterritorialization and territorialization. The refrain is the coming together of rhythms and melodies into a territory. The nature of this convergence is specific. Rhythms and melodies are the matters of expression of territories. In their turn, combining these materials, territories lead to the reorganization of functions and the regrouping of forces of *milieux*. Whenever a territory appears, new functions are created, and previous functions are reorganized into new ones. Managing critical distances is one of these functions. But not only does territory decode and recode environmental functions, it also enables the gathering together of forces. Reorganizing and gathering together correspond, respectively, to the extensive and the intensive dimension of territories. While the extensive dimension creates distancing and distances, the intensive dimension creates affections and affects. In extension, territory separates the inside, *terre*, from the outside, chaos. In intension, territory 'heats' around certain focal points that lie deep in the earth as a cosmos. The earth itself is a tight grouping of forces in a *corps-à-corps* combat of energies.

Given the strain between extension and intension, what keeps the territory together? The territorial themes are kept together by a machine, which grants them consistence. A machine acts on the territorial series introducing variations and mutations, extracting regimes of signs. The machine is neither an individual nor a group, but rather a population, a mass, a multiplicity (Brighenti, forthcoming). It is on the basis of the concepts of machine and linkage, or rhizome, that Deleuze and Guattari criticize the distinction between ‘inborn’ versus ‘learned’ adopted by ethologists. They criticize it not as *explanandum* (behavioural phenotypes to explain), but as *explanans* (explanatory analytical categories), contending that behaviour (either as a type or as a statistical distribution) cannot be the unit of analysis of territories.

From this philosophical conception, some important suggestions for territorology follow. First, territories have constitutions. There are specific constitutions that depend on the combination of functional and energetic matters assembled into a territorial regime. Second, because they are created by and through refrains, territories enable the fixing of patterns. However, these ‘fixations’ should not be understood in a psychological sense, they are rhythmic patterns, i.e. patterns of differences embedded in series of repetitions. Third, and consequently, territories are affective. Again, not affects as psychological states, but as reciprocal and differential capacities of affecting and being affected within a series of territorial operations or between series or lines. These series are linkages, or assemblages. This is why at the beginning of the article we said that a study of territories should conceptualize assemblages.

The creation of a territory generates a basic discontinuity between the inside and the outside. Each boundary-drawing activity determines effects of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Territory presents selective openings, or deterritorializations, and closures, or reterritorializations. Someone or something is included because someone else or something else is excluded. These operations give birth to ongoing processes of separation and fusion, which are expressive and semiotic. Basic territorial operations are non-dialectical, as they do not end up in any synthetic moment. Each deterritorialization entails a chain of subsequent reterritorializations, the two movements recursively embedded into one another. In sum, a serious consideration of territorial movements leads us to the recognition that territorology can take as its basis neither individuals nor societies as such. That does not mean that territorology is not interested in describing small- and large-scale phenomena, but rather that individuals and societies must themselves be described and analyzed in terms of territorial relationships, traits, operations and vectors.

### **Territorial Effects**

Territories support or sustain certain aims, inscribing them into a territorial constitution. Ethologists have initially framed territoriality within the study of aggression (e.g. Lorenz, 1966), but this framework proved too narrow for

a general territorology. Later, in human geography control has been explored as one of the crucial territorial rationales (Sack, 1986). However, the fact of the existence of territorial projects does not automatically ensure the smooth enactment or guaranteed success of these projects. As constitutional lawyers know, the 'formal' constitution of a state does not coincide with its 'material' constitution (cf. Mortati, 1940) but its living law. As planners know, even the most careful territorial planning aimed at crime prevention through the creation of 'defensible space' (Newman, 1973) in many cases proves unsuccessful. As political scientists know, the state-nation-territory is constantly engaged in justificatory, disputing or ideological discourses about the meaning of its boundaries (cf. Anderson, 1996; Jacobson, 1997). The human geographer Sack (1986) pointed out that territoriality can be turned on and off according to the aims of those who successfully control a territory. One could say that a territorial regime is like the resonance of some form of past command (in Canetti's sense: see Brighenti, 2006a) which has gained temporal stability and acceptance, or, in other words, has become hegemonic. However, not only does territory guarantee access to resources; it can also become a resource in itself – most notably, a resource for identity formation. Territory is not only a rational mechanism, but also an affective and identitarian one (Malmberg, 1980). In reaction to the speculations on the identitarian and ancestral nature of political territories (e.g. Smith, 2003), recently Massey (2004) has entered a caveat on the dangers of territoriality as regressive, conservative and exclusionist. Territory, she argued, is a rhetoric that fits well with that of the nation and the family, a rhetoric that aims at seizing loyalty and affect.

Both biological reductionism (the mantra of the 'territorial imperative') and sociological reductionism (the mantra of the 'socially constructed') should be avoided in the exploration and explanation of territorial processes. Empirical case studies reveal that while territory facilitates certain aims, be they utilitarian or affective, it does not guarantee their achievement. In fact, a territory can be imagined and drawn to serve several different, even contradictory aims, following several different affects and in the pursuit of different creative strands. Ethologists understand defence and control as two basic territorial functions. Consequently, they tend to regard the original territorial form as a 'keep off' message. In fact, however, rarely if ever can a monopoly be established or preserved without degrees of tolerance and negotiation. Whereas occupation and defence are undoubtedly territorial activities, in most cases territory is defined by co-presence. Possession (occupation) extends into ownership (expression of properties), which is interaction. Complete denial of territorial sharing would amount to a denial and rejection of interaction itself. But territory is not denial of interaction: it cannot bear complete absence of interaction. As an act or performance, territory requires interaction, actors and often also an audience. Territory is a positive framework for interaction which needs interaction in order to exist: it is a social or sociational process. Exclusion and co-presence can be described as the two opposite directions that define the relational range



of territory, which lies in between the two extremes of isolation and overpopulation: while overpopulation threatens territory, complete isolation makes it impossible.

Interaction scholars like Goffman (1971) frame territory through the study of claims and preserves. But unlike ethologists, Goffman is not interested in the actors' aims (his descriptions often assume that the aims are self-evident). Rather, he focuses on the means that are deployed in the constitution of territorial preserves. He provides nuanced characterizations of the management of critical distances in ordinary – ordinary, at least, for mid-20th-century North American society – circumstances. His contribution is useful for reflecting on that territorial effect we may call pre-assignment. What is crucial about territory is the peculiar economy of objects and places it is able to initiate. Territory is not defined by the things that are collected in it, even though things may be used to mark territory's boundaries. Because a territory is not a collection of things – not even a collection of things in a given place – when something is ascribed to a territory, or when it is claimed in the course of a territorial struggle, territory plays the fundamental function of naturalizing the ownership of a given object, as it publicly declares it to be a property of the territory's pre-announced owner. In this respect, the most powerful territorial feature is the pre-, the a priori mechanism. Territory is a framework that pre-assigns to an official owner control or precedence over any possible object that will happen to lie within it – regardless how this 'within-ness' happens to be defined, spatially or otherwise, and regardless of the nature of the objects themselves. Territory is linked to ownership, but the classic model of private property as exclusive enjoyment of certain goods is not fully suitable to describe its workings.

On this basis then, the focus of territory is not exclusion from a given area, but creation of ordered social relations, which are, in many cases, relations of dominance. To the newcomer, a territory looks like a set of rules and standards. Explicit displays of superiority and submission, which define priority in the access to resources, are of fundamental importance in animal behaviour. Territory, in other words, represents the bridge-mechanism between the two figures of possession and ownership. Etymologically, possession is defined by physical occupation of a space (German, *Besitz*; Latin, *possido*) while ownership is individually tailored to the owner (German, *Eigentum*; Latin, *proprium*). By 'anchoring' ownership on possession, territory facilitates the making of hierarchies and rankings. Differences and differentialities help to establish hierarchical relations which are objectified by the territorial fixation. Territorial definitions thus help to stabilize given patterns of relationships, as well as their related status distributions. Territory serves as an imaginary but nonetheless effective prop for social relationships. But it is not simply a setting for social relations: it is also, crucially, a form of social relations.

Finally, a demand for consensus surrounds the maintenance of territory. Territorial relationships are not simply monopolies established and

maintained through aggressiveness and display of dominance. They also need respect as a pivotal regulatory social device. Respect is in fact a thoroughly territorial device, insofar as it is both expressive-affective and functional to distance management. The demand for respect constitutes the consensual side of territorial relationships, a consensus which makes ordering attainable. Territorial respect is primarily focused on the other and her ownership. A demand for respect of the other qua owner is directed, in the first place, towards the newcomer. Territory helps stabilize a certain distribution of respect by setting up a visible stage for the taking place of the relationships which are played out interactionally. Respect is probably among the first legal categories implied by territory, linked to the territorial pre-assigning effect examined above. Avoiding both biological and sociological reductionism, territorology aims at recognizing and describing law as implied in boundary-drawing activities, territorial movements, and the simultaneously created set of pre-assigned relational positions and dispositions. From a territorological perspective, law is an inherently territorial endeavour.

In conclusion, territorology invites us to understand territory as existing on a layer distinct from the physical-spatial layer where traditional imagination in the social and behavioural sciences has located it. Of course, distinction does not mean lack of interaction, since territories interact with spaces in a number of crucial ways: social actors are physical, bodily persons who live spatially and are subject to spatial constraints. Yet, territory is generated by an act of imagination, a prolongation of the material into the immaterial. The most important political and legal implication of a relational and processual conception of territory is that, despite claims to control and monopoly, despite hegemonic homogeneity-claiming plans, each territory is as heterogeneous as the ensemble of subjects and agents who form it by inhabiting (territorializing upon) it. Because it recognizes the fact that, as an expressive and functional device, territory is a social event (both intraspecific and interspecific), in practice a territorology amounts to a sociology (science of the *socius*) of territorial acts, movements and relations.

### Notes

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1. For the stream of biology, zoethology and human ethology see, for example, Ardrey (1966); Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1970); Lorenz (1966, 1981); Tinbergen (1951); von Uexküll (1957 [1934]).

2. For human ecology, social psychology and interactionism see, for example, Altman (1975); Edney (1974); Ericksen (1980); Goffman (1971); Lyman and Scott (1967); O'Neal et al. (1977); Roos (1968); Sommer (1959, 1967).

3. For human, political and legal geography and planning see, for example, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]); Ley and Cybriwsky (1974); Maier (1975); Malmberg (1980); Sack (1986), tracing from Foucault (1975) and Gottman (1973); Blomley (1994);

Blomley et al. (2001); Delaney (2005); Elden (2007); Healey (1997); Herbert (1996); Holder and Harrison (2003); Kärrholm (2007); Paasi (1996); Soja (1989); Storey (2001).

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