

Andrea Mubi Brighenti

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# Mobilizing Territories, Territorializing Mobilities

by Andrea Mubi Brighenti

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The territory itself is a place of passage. The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial.

Deleuze and Guattari [1987, 323]

Il faut sonder les territoires...

Anonymous

Restless nights and uneasy dreams go with the territory...

Agent Gordon Cole (Twin Peaks)

## 1. Introduction: Mobilities and Borders

Territory has been traditionally imagined as almost the opposite of mobility. But, is this the only way to imagine territorial phenomena? Or even, is it the most fruitful one? For quite a while, the notion of territory seemed to function as the conceptual scaffolding of the Western “sedentarist metaphysics” described by Liisa Malkki [1995; drawing on Deleuze and Guattari 1987], whereby mobility was inherently perceived as excessive and threatening, if not disruptive [see also Cresswell 2006]. Over the last decade, mobility scholars have highlighted that our contemporary age is characterized by an impressive quantitative and qualitative rise of mobilities [for an overview, Urry 2007; Adey 2009]. Not only have the classical and more recognizable patterns of mobility quantitatively increased, but new and unexpected forms have appeared to complement them. Far from eliminating travel, extensive usage of new media technologies seem to have fostered mobility even further. In this context, it would seem that, if something like a sedentarist metaphysics still exists, it would be more of a sedentariness of the mind than something actually applicable to social practices. In other words, sedentarism would seem to exist as a sort of implicit mind set, a presupposition, a zero-degree option in the study of mobility forms. Despite living in a mobile world, we still tend to assume sedentarism as the norm. But, what model of sedentariness are we referring to? And what is its actual relationship to territories and territorial production in general?

In this piece, I argue that a historical-epistemological – or, if you prefer, genealogical – examination of the sedentarist paradigm from a somehow unconventional perspective could help us advance towards a new conception of territory, which might turn out to be beneficial to mobility studies, as well as sociology in general. In fact, it seems that mobility studies have somehow underestimated the force of territories. Whereas the 1990s globalization debate was keen on emphasizing a general trend towards deterritorializations of all sorts and scales, in which social relations were supposedly taken, we now realize that, far from living in an age that would purportedly decree the “end of territories,” we live in the age of their unpredictable multiplication, interpenetration and ongoing production. Simultaneously, we also record a concurrent proliferation of borders. As Mezzadra and Neilson [2013] argue, “contrary to the vision of a borderless world that shaped debates on globalization in the 1990s, there is today a pronounced awareness of the increasing presence of borders” that materialize themselves in all sorts of social places and even *ad hominem* upon single bodies. Following insights from Marx and the tradition of Italian *operaismo*, Mezzadra and Neilson have examined how contemporary capitalism works by creating, or at any rate exploiting, borders as differentials that are put at work in various circuits of capital valorization. In their view, the border is the crucial device that enables the creation and reproduction of discontinuities. Physical discontinuity is functional to the production of segmentation and stratification in terms of markets, labor force, and capital flows and it is also productive of specific subjectivities. In this context, we should not overlook that the border or boundary is a territorial device *par excellence*. Indeed, the making of a territory is inherently related to the drawing of certain boundaries. So, it seems that today we live at a time when the proliferation of mobilities is matched by a simultaneous proliferation of bounded territories, also in terms of reclusion, detention, deportation and forced immobilization. These segmentations are not confined to traditional disciplinary institutions but take place at city scale, too, as it becomes apparent when we consider the emergence and consolidation of patterns of urban segregation and “enclavism” [Alsayyad and Roy 2006; Atkinson and Blandy 2006].

In short, both mobility and fixity have their specific inconveniences, so that it would be foolish to sort them axiologically. But these considerations do not simply lead us to recognize the complementarity of mobilities and moorings. A closer scrutiny of the multifarious ongoing production of territories under contemporary conditions, I argue, should bring us to a much more dynamic take on territories themselves as inherently social enterprises. Consequently, a double move is necessarily to capture at best the nexus of mobility and immobility: *mobilizing territories*, on the one hand, *territorializing mobilities*, on the other. By this chiasm, I mean that mobility and territory do not entertain only an *external* relation, whereby mobility and fixity

would be mere complementary correlates. So, it is not only a matter of recognizing that, often, the creation of certain forms of mobility for some actors is correlative to the creation of a number of immobilities for other actors, or even for the same actors in a different respect or capacity. This is certainly true, but we should also be able to explain social relations in terms of *composite ways of spatialization*. In other words, we also need to attend the *internal* relation between territory and movement. This is why, as soon as we set territories in motion – framing them as acts, processes and events – we also attain a much more territorialological understanding of mobilities.

Admittedly, as hinted above, the notion of territory presented here is not mainstream. To some readers, it might sound too broad or ill-defined. Some might even object that it would be more commendable to employ blunter notions such as “field” or “domain.” But my aim here is not to look for fancy catch-all terms. The notion of territory I am developing moves along the coordinates of a larger social-theoretical attempt already undertaken to renew the aim and scope of territorial science as an integrally social science [Brighenti 2010a; Kärrholm 2012; Brighenti 2013]. My line of defense is also a line of flight: ideas travel far and if we really aim to tackle them we must be prepared to travel accordingly. Social theory as trajectology and reconnaissance... The peculiarities and promises of this approach will hopefully become clearer before the end of the paper. Yet, two points concerning our desiderata can be remarked at the outset. First, the approach we are looking for should be one capable of taking into account simultaneously the material and semiotic aspects of social phenomena. Second, and relatedly, our appreciation of the social is neither individualistic nor holistic-systemic; rather, we seek to advance towards a fully relational, processual, imaginational, act-based and event-based take. To this, it should be added that the use of a genealogical methodology to examine the nexus between sedentarism and mobility is, clearly, inspired by the work of Michel Foucault.

Rather than the major monographs by this author, however, it is to the grand *chantier* of his courses at the Collège de France which I find myself most indebted to. Of course, it is known that Foucault explored the notion of territory in conjunction with his analyses of modern governmentality, the genealogy of police, and the birth of biopolitics. Elsewhere [Brighenti 2010a], I have attempted to articulate some elements to distinguish Foucault’s take on territory from my own. Among contemporary scholars, Stuart Elden [2007] has also devoted effort to interpret Foucault’s engagement with the notion of territory, remarking how Foucault somehow underestimated the nexus between territory and calculation (which however he himself first introduced!). On my part, I have tried to explain why in his analysis of governmentality Foucault ultimately remained tied to a rather conventional understanding of territory inherited from classical theories of sovereignty. But, well beyond these

more circumscribed issues, Foucault's greatest heritage remains, in my view, his experimental attitude in theory-making. This is a most enduring inspiration one can only feed on. The very fact that these courses' titles do not match their actual content (a point which Elden seems to remark not without bitterness), the fact that they have shifting topics, that approached subjects seem to resurface over and over again from slightly changing angles until an almost complete reversal of the original viewpoint is attained and a completely novel ground is laid out: all these elements push me to venture depicting Foucault's courses as a grandiose instance of territorial explorations. Michel Foucault, a trajectologist...

## **2. Public, Communal and Private Domains as Territories**

Classical sociologists associated territory with settled communities, immobile existence and traditional pre-modern local belonging. When it came to the analysis of urban life, processes of territorialization were attributed to those areas of the city in which the arrival of ethnic minorities bred various forms of either emergent or enforced spatial segregation. Such an approach is particularly evident in early urban sociologists at the Chicago School [Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925]. More generally, and subsequently, two fundamental thresholds, or fault lines, have been employed to make sense of urban life. On the one hand, there is the threshold between the public and the private; on the other, the threshold between the private and the communitarian. Since the inception of the modern age, a tripartite understanding has thus led scholars to articulate *urban* space into three main *domains*: the public, the communal, and the private. Such a distinction has corresponded to precise sets of norms, rules, requirements, expectations, cultures and etiquettes applicable to each of these domains.

Public space has been essentially imagined and configured as a space of circulations. In public space, circulations had to be guaranteed, governed, sorted and supported. Foucault's [2004] studies on the police as a type of modern governmental rationality focused on precisely this point. In opposition to both sovereignty and discipline, biopolitics thus appeared as a technology of power that incorporates the requirements of mobility at precisely the same time it attempts to regulate and control it (hence, the necessity of a calculation of possible events in the open). As also recently reminded by Classen [2012, 179], "it was in the eighteenth century that vagrancy and loitering became public offenses. Everyone needed to be on the move in the modern city." In introductory classes to urban sociology the middle-age motto of Hanseatic cities, *Stadt Luft macht Frei* (city air makes free), is often mentioned. Easily

overlooked, however, is the fact that many medieval cities contemplated not only the right to residence, but actually the *obligation* to reside uninterruptedly. Since the early modern age, by contrast, an extensive set of legislative measures targeting “up-rooted” subjects was deployed to make the control of “undesirable” and “exceeding” population possible. Vagrancy laws and a myriad of harsh edicts promulgated in most cities across Europe since the Sixteenth century aimed at punishing the *déracinés* through bans, displacements, evictions, and persecutions.

The sheer fact of *not belonging* in the city was seen as a crime, whose “culprits” (or, more objectively, targeted populations) were variously described as “foreigners,” “wanderers,” “vagrants,” “Romas,” “Jews,” and “idlers.” The fact that such a sector of the population could be perceived as “marginal and supernumerary” was made possible by reference to a specific “image of society,” namely society as an inherently “closed space: the closed space of the walled city” [Niccoli 2002, 117]. Yet, paradoxically, the presence of such peoples was the very condition that made it possible for cities to turn into crucial commercial and eventually capitalist hubs. Indeed, Karl Marx [1867] himself noticed that the legislation against vagrants was perfectly functional to the primitive accumulation of capital. And, as later remarked by Max Weber [1958], the peculiar feature of the modern western city lies in the fact of being a marketplace. The dynamics of the market entails precisely the setting in motion of goods together with the people carrying them (the bearers), creating a space of exchange which is also a space of mixture. So, at least in the West, the crucial tension concerning urban public space can be said to have resided in precisely the tension between, on the one hand, the acceptance of heterogeneity and mixture of different populations and, on the other, the unremitting search for purity and homogeneity, which, as noted above, also turned into banning, eviction, and deportation – in other words, policing. Overall, it is important to recognize that all sorts of marginal and deviant subjects were the inevitable, if unwelcome to some, counterpart of the same recipe that fueled the success of the urban machine, that is to say, *human density*. The two phenomena proceeded and could not but proceed hand in hand.

Communal spaces were bound to have a different trend. In the early Twentieth century, the sociologists at the Chicago School applied to city life a number of ideas directly or indirectly deriving from colonialist anthropology. Chicago scholars described, as part of a “natural history” of city growth, a number of processes of territorialization that had led to the establishment of veritable urban communities. “In the course of time – they remarked – every section and quarter of the city takes on something of the character and qualities of its inhabitants” [Park, Burgess and McKenzie *Ibidem*, 6]. In particular, in the case of immigrant colonies, a feedback loop effect was identified between, on the one hand, spatial concentration and, on

the other, neighborhood solidarity and cohesion. Such strongly characterized neighborhoods were later to be described as “urban villages” [Gans 1962], stressing precisely the fact that they seemed to retain pre-modern local-based forms of organization (village life) in the heart of the modern metropolis (urban life). The organization of urban villages also included the development of an independent structure of authority aimed at the self-protection of the community from external intervention – and, of course, all official interventions by the city council were perceived by local residents as “external.” A specific correspondence between identity and territory was thus presupposed in this type of community studies, whereby territory was taken as the main carrier and the primary recipient of identity. The phrase “local identities” reached the point of tautology because identities were precisely molded as locales. In other words, urban communities were defined by early American urban scholars on the basis of the coincidence of three elements: people, institutions, and territory (which they famously called “natural areas”).

As soon as the public domain was “set in motion,” in the sense that it began to be conceptualized mainly through the notion of mobility, the communitarian domain was simultaneously equated with settled, immobile living, and conceptualized through the notion of “territory.” Also, these spatial trends concerning public and community life found a parallel *in the domain of ideas*: to the mobility of opinions in the public sphere, with all its fluctuations, its flows and drifts (a special discipline, public opinion analysis, was created to explain them), came to correspond the firmness of values and beliefs in the communitarian sphere (which seemed to call for various exercises in cultural analysis). As a consequence, during the Twentieth century, the private domain gradually turned into a site of articulation – as well as tension – between the two previous domains. Indeed, the private dimension was regarded as a matter of individualist affirmation, which enabled individuals to appear in the shared spaces of the city as free-standing and self-determined individuals. This prototypically liberal figure was the “public man” [Sennett 1978]. As far as the private domain was concerned, thus, freedom was interpreted in terms of capacity to move [Bauman 1988]. More recently, Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye [2004] have called *motility* such a “capital of mobility” [see also Flamm and Kaufmann 2006]. It is not by chance, I think, that these analyses, which represent the most advanced analytical methodologies in mobility studies, still retain more or less explicitly an individualist point of view on movement, focusing on individual mobility choices, decisions, strategies, capital and portfolios.

We have to pay attention to such a shared genealogy: that peculiar creature known as the “modern individual” was made possible by mobility, in the sense that it appeared when the arsenal of medieval social bonds began to loose grip and a kind

of “disembedded” space appeared. Physical mobility and social mobility were thus originally intertwined. For instance, the role of late medieval “free cities” in creating zones of exemption from feudal power is remarkable. The motto *Stadt Luft macht Frei* designated precisely such possibility of liberation from bondage that was inherent in the legal spatiality of the city. Yet, as hinted above, freedom-as-movement was possible only because, and to the extent that, residence was taken for granted: as Simmel [1908, 506] beautifully put it, modern living bestows on the settled subjects (the *Sesshafte*) all the advantages of mobility, but does not grant to the unsettled ones (the *Unsteten*, or *Beweglichen*) all the complementary advantages of immobility. Such an asymmetry reminds us that, as a matter of fact, the individuality we are examining was, at least initially, restricted to a privileged class, and even when it empirically turned into a more widespread societal condition it still retained its original elitist blueprint. The notion of “privacy” was another tenet of the individuality that coalesced and consolidated during the Nineteenth century, especially in the Anglo-American Protestant world. Elsewhere [Brighenti 2010b], I have tried to describe privacy as a specific “politics of visibility” that was meant, not simply to subtract the private individual from the public domain, but rather to enable him/her to appear in public, while managing precisely the conditions and thresholds of such apparition (especially in terms of “staging”).

As concerns the relation between the three domains of the public, the private and the communal, this was the situation up until, roughly, the mid Twentieth century. Since the 1960s, however, the new social movements have been forcefully claiming that “the private is political.” While of course different from the assertion that “the personal is public” (although much confusion has been done about this distinction – and quite a few media scandals may serve as illustrations), the politicization of the private domain created a series of new strains. Notably, the success of the claims made by the new social movements and their contentious politics has created a tension not only and perhaps not so much between the private and the public (an old dichotomy that itself traces back to Roman law), rather – I suggest – *between the public and the communal*. This forces us to a *change of perspective* which might prove extremely important. In other words, instead of conceiving territory as the sign of the communal – thus equating, on the one hand, the communal with the territorial and, on the other, the individual and the public with the deterritorialized *qua* mobile – we should begin to observe and describe all the three domains of the public, the communal, and the private as “social territories” [Lofland 1998]. The urban domains are territorial formations, each of which endowed with its specificities. Such a realization entails recognition of the fact that, in most cases, territories are not mutually exclusive but rather stratified and superposed to each other.



The domain of the communal is, in a sense, the keystone of such a reorientation. As said above, drawing from Nineteenth century colonialist ethnography, early Twentieth century American sociology depicted communities as local territories of attachment and belonging (“tribes”). In this view, each community had its own communal territory, where it essentially took good care of itself. This view has numerous shortcomings, since it tends to built into the notion of the communal an *exclusionary* attitude (in the sense that the community would appear as naturally inward-looking). Alternatively, the communal could also be interpreted as a different sort of territory, one that is much less localized, circumscribed or self-secluded from the rest of the city. Indeed, a founding moment in the articulation of this alternative notion of the communal is the 1338 fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Public Palace in Siena, known as *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. The fresco is best understood as a political manifesto and a long-term political program [Schiera 2010]. The whole complex allegory presents the people, values and technologies needed to govern a city aptly and make it prosper (the bad government side – or what is left of it – shows what happens when such endeavor fails). In Lorenzetti’s, the allegory of the communal is placed right in the center of the fresco because it represents its culminating point. It is an austere white-bearded man called the *comuno* – in modern Italian, *comune* – which ultimately coincides with the city itself. In other words, the city is depicted here as not simply the sum of private individual citizens (the “public men”), nor as simply the public administration of local government (the “police”), but as a superior unifying entity, namely, the *comuno* qua “common good.”

It could be objected that Lorenzetti’s fresco described the situation of an essentially mono-cultural city, in which an arsenal of symbols of unity could be taken for granted and successfully mobilized. Not by chance, a large part of the fresco evokes a theological allegorical horizon within which civic virtues are placed and may become operative. On the contrary, our contemporary societies, characterized by cultural super-diversity, place us in a very different situation, in which the repertoires of justification are themselves contested. From this point of view, certainly, all notions of commonality presuppose a whole *politics of definition*. Unsurprisingly, in most rhetorical usages and appeals to the “common good” from both the right and the left, what is “good” for “whom” remains at the level of implicit assumption. Nonetheless, two points should be emphasized. First, historically, we should not take for granted that Lorenzetti’s Siena was as mono-cultural as it might look at first sight, for after all the medieval city was composed of a plurality of corporations, guilds, boroughs, which made it perhaps no less diverse than our cities of today [see Isin 2002]. Second, even most importantly, from a theoretical point of view we should not be misled into

imagining the communal as resting with reified and substantially closed communities. The communal refers not to the parts, but to societal totality itself. It inheres totality while remaining conceptually distinct from public power. This is why in Lorenzetti's piece we find a powerful insight which the modern social sciences have neglected and are only slowly rediscovering now. Of course, that does not mean that we can simply and straightforwardly refer back to Lorenzetti as ultimate authority. In my view, it is fair to say that we share a problem rather than a solution with him. Such a problem is, I submit, the issue of the "measure" of society *qua* polity.

Lorenzetti attempted to solve the problem of the societal-political measure within a horizon made possible by recourse to transcendence, while we are bound to immanence. Once we discard both the communal-as-communitarian and the communal-as-transcendent options, we still have a chance to imagine the communal in the perspective of the "connective" as a possible dimension in which to articulate the politics of commonality. The common good can be articulated as a *connective architecture* giving way to a plurality of actual territorializations. In this sense, the current debates on commonality and the common good are noteworthy [see e.g. Hardt and Negri 2009]. The spatial and movement-related implications of such debates are evident. For instance, while private mobility has long been regarded as either an individual issue or as one to be entrusted to the public authority – or even both simultaneously – we have increasingly come to realize that the construction of mobility regimes is an issue of common concern. Atmosphere is being increasingly recognized as a topic of key importance to be treated as a common good [Adey 2013]; and modernity itself can be described as a movement towards the "explication" of the atmosphere [Sloterdijk 2005]. The notion of atmosphere, environment or milieu are inevitable counterparts to the idea of commonality or the communal. In sum, once we begin to explore the three domains of the public, the communal, and the private as complex territorial formations, we are better placed to see that much of the conceptual puzzle in the articulation of the three domains I have presented so far derive from a gravely simplistic understanding of territory.

### 3. Territorial Imagination, Conservative and Radical

The theodicy of place attachment and the depiction of rootlessness as the cause of all evils are well-known components of the sedentarist metaphysics. However, my point is that the scholars who diagnosed the sedentarist metaphysics of the West made the inadvertent assumption that territory really represents the epitome of those components. But, what is the real ground for such an assumption? Where does such

a conservative image of territory come from? And, is it the only possible way of imagining territories? To put it in starker terms, is territory necessarily reactionary?

Certainly, territory is inseparable from imagination. Imagery is a coessential component of each territorial endeavor. So, this recognition only hints at the richness of the notion itself. The issue is less one of denouncing territories as the regressive basis of sedentarist thinking, and more one of understanding where does a certain type of territorial imagination come from. Indeed, imagining the relationship between territory and movement is a crucial passage. We have observed that, to the lower classes, the sedentarist metaphysics essentially meant the demonization of itinerant and migrant workers. To the upper classes, on the other hand, it meant the romanticization of travel. The literary *grand tour* and the geographic-scientific exploration are two classic models of such typically Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century idea. Perhaps not too paradoxically, in both these cases *it was precisely the transgressive image of movement* – whether in the form of economic migration or cultural-scientific travel – *that supported and became functional to a conservative image of territory*. In a similar vein, literary utopias and descriptions of ideal cities often served to sever, instead of connecting, imagination and action.

Even today, most theorists of socio-spatial relations tend to identify territories with fixity, parcelization and enclosure. For instance, in an influential piece, Jessop, Brenner and Jones [2008] have argued against various forms of reductionism in understanding socio-spatial relations. One such reductionist view is, they write, “methodological territorialism, which subsumes all aspects of socio-spatial relations under the rubric of territoriality. This is manifested, for instance, in state-centric approaches to globalization studies and in narrowly territorialist understandings of cities, states, and the world economy” [*ibidem*, 391]. Hence, the authors assert that territory is one dimension of socio-spatial relations that is different from, and complementary to, other three dimensions, namely places, scales and networks. In their view, the structuring principle of territory is “bordering, bounding, parcelization, enclosure,” while its associated structural pattern is the “construction of inside/outside divides” and the “constitutive role of the outside.” Jessop and colleagues’ struggle against reductionist thinking is certainly laudable. But, isn’t their own understanding of territory ultimately reductionist? At the very least, their criticism can only have a point with respect to a static and impoverished understanding of what a territory actually is and how it works – a view that directly descends from the conservative image of territory.

To regard territories as simply bounded pieces of land makes us miss the most interesting heuristic force of this notion. In most explanations, territory is charged with closure and fixity. My aim here is to challenge this view, and, as I move towards

my *pars construens*, I would like to begin from the observation that the many criticisms of closure and fixity that have recurrently appeared in the literature over the last twenty or thirty years are themselves symptomatic of our age. The diagnosis of sedentarism is made possible by the fact that, in reality, the idea of movement has penetrated deeply in our culture. The correct temporal horizon in which we should place this latter trend is not twenty or thirty years, but the last century and a half. Even more interestingly, my argument is that *this implicit reference to movement is not thoroughly unrelated to a certain aspect of territorial phenomena*.

I would just like to consider two examples, although they are clearly too complex to be dealt with adequately. Both movement and territory appear as crucial in the theories of Darwin and Freud. It can be said that Darwin's [1859] evolutionary theory deeply mobilized the notion of species. Admittedly, Darwin was very un-theoretical about the notion of species, skipping all sorts of ontological and theological issues and moving directly to data analysis. Overall, however, his work transformed dramatically our deepest conceptions of what is a species. Commonsensical as well as traditional biological definitions of species on the basis of well-defined anatomical and physiological features, Darwin made us understand, are the sheer outcome of the temporal restrictions of our observations. We are extremely partial observers of species-related phenomena. What we identify as a coherence, consistence and stability of traits is only a perspectival illusion. In reality, species are undergoing transformation before our very eyes, albeit at slow-motion (or, conversely, we might say that we live in fast-forward). Species have no ontology, they actually exist only as *populations* exhibiting a range of inherent anatomical, physiological and genetic fluctuations. At the same time, it is undeniable that species look like territories: they are bounded entities, in the sense that there are limits to cross-breeding, and they have a degree of persistence and resilience that makes them recognizable. So, species are both territories and movement.

Two generations later, Freud [1899] described the unconscious as a diagram of movements. The psychic mechanism of repression, in his view, determines the partitioning of the conscious and the unconscious, whereby certain drives and wishes are removed from conscience and continue to exist in a different region of the subject. Dream-work proceeds via the twin movements of condensation and displacement, enabling the transformation and articulation of the content of the unconscious in a state of constant drift. Far from being static accidents, traumas and symptoms are the terrain where the various psychic components come to express themselves. This view of the unconscious goes hand in hand with a rigidly jurisprudential model which Freud will subsequently formalize, where Id, Ego and Super-ego are identified as the three major territories of the psyche [Freud 1923]. Stated as *Wo Es war, soll Ich wer-*

*den*, that is, as a humanist attempt at bringing back the Ego on the terrain formerly dominated by the Id, psychoanalytical therapy itself appears as a wholly territorial endeavor, intended as a redrawing of the boundaries between the territories of the Id and those of the Ego. Hence, the unconscious, too, is both territory and movement.

Perhaps, to some, these cases will read remote and unrelated to the present discussion. But the impact of figures such as Darwin and Freud on contemporary culture can hardly be underestimated. In the social science, the critique of the sedentarist metaphysics has been an important step, one that should perhaps be best understood in the context of post-colonial thinking, that is, with a de-centering of a series of cardinal axes that determined the notion of “majority” and “normalcy” in culture and society. In my view, today such a de-centering move should be continued in the direction of a *territoriological analysis* capable of debunking a number of preconceptions and misconceptions. Indeed, we are increasingly forced to recognize that the classical social scientific notion of territory is too limited and that the unreflecting association of territoriality and sedentariness is wrong. Even nomad peoples, who for so long have been depicted as the deterritorialized, as the people lacking any territorial organization, do in fact have territories and territorialities. The opposition between settled and nomad peoples is thus *not* the opposition between people with and people without territory, rather, between different *ways of territory-making*. To mention just an example among many, French anthropologists and geographers studying the Touareg populations in the Sahara [Bourgeot 1995; Gagnol 2011] have revealed a peculiar processes of territorial appropriation:

“Clearly, the juridical understanding of the term [territory], that of a bounded space appropriated in an exclusive and private way, is non-sense for Touaregs. Their territorial appropriation is relative, collective, linked to rights of priority use that can be changed in function of power relations between rival lineages, as well as in function of [ecological events such as] for instance a major drought.” [Gagnol *Ibidem*, 91; my translation]

The fact that the Touaregs’ territory is “floating and multiple” and does not conform the classical geopolitical model of modern statehood does not mean that it does not exist *tout court*. On the contrary, to study Touareg territoriality could be an important challenge for mobility scholars (in a similar way, in the 1950s the Situationists were fascinated by Roma territoriality). Once we begin to complexify the relation between territory and movement, we also recognize how a radical imagination of territories might contest its traditional conservative imagination. Critical spatial theorists are worried about the politically conservative if not regressive implications of the notion of territory. But those regressive appropriations of territoriality, far from diminishing the analytical usefulness of the notion, in fact exalt its critical

potential and indeed call for an extended investigation of territorial dynamics. Everywhere geographers have took just one step outside of the European continent they have found similar territorial issues: a completely different understanding of territories and boundaries, where the colonialist imagination and its legacy loose their grip, if they have ever had one [see e.g. Pase 2011]. What is more, it is not even necessary to go outside of Europe, for after all Europe is full of inner peripheries, of territorial interstices and spatial exceptions to statehood. Once we ponder the veritable expanse of such peripheries, we are left wondering whether, after all, the paradigm might have represented only a very limited local case among many.

The reason is that, for every visible territory, a flow of territorial imaginations is at play and at work: territories are constitutively imagined (not imaginary) enterprises. Territories are acts of coexistence, they are inherently social even when they are designed to exclude and segregate, that is, whatever treatment is imagined for the *socius*. In this respect, two clarifications are of particular importance: the first might be called the issue of the “primacy of phenomenology” and the “actuality of ecology,” the second the “form-substance” issue and the “misunderstanding of hard-factuality.”

As to the first point, we have seen that territories are often characterized as merely “closed” entities. Allegations of closure are premised upon the apparent phenomenal dimension of territories. Indeed, territories look as if they were “just there.” This phenomenal dimension is extremely important, because it corresponds to the full *actuality* of a territory, but it might also be misleading in terms of hiding the true import of the territorial dynamic. A territory is a *phenomenological* entity, but simultaneously it is also an *ecological* one. I suggest to regard territory as a powerfully complex notion that is located at the point of convergence between phenomenology and ecology, that is, between the experience of a *here-and-now* and the ensemble of prolongations of such here-and-now into other locales (as well as *temporales*) which are in turn connected into what ultimately amounts to a system (hence, ecology). The various here-and-now are real, yet function as the virtuality of a territory, in the sense that they globally configure an elsewhere-and-at-other-time. Such a dynamics can be appreciated once we begin to consider territories in the perspective of *action, work, imagination* and *event*.

This consideration leads us directly to the second point. Often, territories are accepted or presented as basic “hard facts.” This view presupposes that a territory consists of some – usually unspecified – substance (space?) to be put into a given form, shape or scheme (order?). But in fact, territories are neither merely formal entities (like the notion of “scale”) nor simple hard facts. Rather than to the couple “form-substance,” to explain territories we should be better turned into the couple

“materials-expression.” Territories consist of the work and craft (and time and energy!) that are necessary to make a certain material *become expressive*. In other words, they concern meaning. This is also why territories can never be taken for granted as sheer facts. Meaning is a precarious, “living” phenomenon, and territories do not hold together without all the work and effort that are necessary to stabilize them. Craftsmanship and art, but also industry and design, are the type of work that is called forth to make them. A work of patience that uniquely and distinctively produces the *value* of territories.

In the case of a territorialological analysis of contemporary retail spaces, for instance, Kärholm [*Ibidem*, also drawing from Law 2002] has recently showed how rigidity is only one among the various ways in which a territory can be stabilized. Fluidity is an alternative viable option. Stabilization by fluidity, or fluid stabilization, create specific territorial sorts. Since the Eighteenth century, architectural typologies of retail buildings have coalesced in a sort of canon that tends to “typify” and “de-singularize” buildings. A singular building is the opposite of a typified one. And insofar as it entails distinctiveness and uniqueness (the uniqueness of a “face”), singularity is often sought after in the retail business. Yet, simultaneously, stabilization necessarily requires some form of de-singularization, which entails enhanced repeatability of features. Kärholm makes the case that these types are not fixed. In his view, the relation is not of the type/token kind (like Bruno Latour’s “immutable mobiles,” meaning a setup that can be transported from place to place retaining its key features). In fact, building types can be better described as *territorial sorts*, which transform themselves and are constantly adapted while they are replicated (therefore they rather look as “mutable mobiles”). The de-singularization/re-singularization process (which however does not amount to a dialectic) turns the fluidity of a territorial sort into a territorial strategy, attaining stabilization. In this case, we clearly appreciate the processual and evolving nature of territories, and we can gain an insight into how imaginative and practical work is entailed in each territorial production.

#### **4. Territories Live...**

A reconceptualization of territory might ultimately prove useful to advance towards that “politics of place *beyond* place” evoked by Doreen Massey [2007, 15]. My point is that territories can be reimagined by avoiding the pitfalls of localism – which in political geography Agnew [1994] once called the “territorial trap.” But why should the notion of territory be retained at all? In my view, there is much to

gain, if we are able to make visible the many facets of such a theoretically powerful notion as the notion of territory.

What is peculiar of territorial production is that it captures something essential of the social bond itself. In short, territories live. Territories live, but their life is *neither organic life nor organizational life*, as, respectively, Nineteenth and Twentieth century sociology has dreamed. In Nineteenth century, sociology was born under the auspices of organicism, which imagined society in terms of mutually useful specializations and functions within a single social whole (an “organism”). Although the organicist metaphor never really died, returning *in auge* from time to time to justify authoritarian (when not totalitarian) visions of society (as well as, timely, when sacrifices are called forth), during the first part of the Twentieth century and well into the 1960s a new sociological imagination focused on the organizational dimensions of society. The very term “organization,” as known, does derive from “organ,” yet it entails a more diagrammatic view which enabled its users to escape a narrowly biological talk. Accordingly, not only did the sociology of organizations play a pivotal role in the development of the discipline of sociology at large, but the organizational, formal diagram was sought for in every field of analysis. The neglect of all social phenomena that were not amenable to this diagram (for instance, crowds) was a logical byproduct. In the late Twentieth century, *networks* are perhaps the latest incarnation of the organizational focus in sociology [Brighenti 2014].

By contrast, the work of territories can hardly be captured by either organicism or organizationalism. The reason is that both these visions have overlooked the materials-expression nexus which characterizes the work of territories. Far from being the epitome of fixity, territories are on-going, open productions which imply the capturing of materials and the production of expressiveness. If a territory appears as a stable construct, we should not forget that, in fact, a deterritorializing imagination always works through the territory as a radical imaginary, opening it to transformation and mobility (even when such an imagination results in “restless nights,” as agent Gordon Cole puts it in *Twin Peaks*). Territories are always, as reminded by Deleuze and Guattari [*Ibidem*, 323], “places of passage.” This is also why we need to shift our conceptualization from territory to *territories* in the plural. There cannot be any single *theory of territoriality*, while the *theories of territories* are in the first place *parades* or *enfilades*. Consequently, my way of approaching territories is not definitional but rather, I would say, *problematizing*. Some readers will certainly, maybe legitimately, be disappointed by the lack of definitional attempts; but the type of exercise I am proposing here is different. We could perhaps distinguish a problematizing thinking from two other ways of thinking, namely the analytical and the critical. Whereas analytical thinking privileges definitions, systems and formal relations, and whereas crit-



ical thinking is devoted to unearth the hidden limitations of those definitions, systems and relations, a problematizing thinking is devoted to explore the plurality of internal and external of relations (resonances) with a type of move that resembles a *reconnaissance*. We might also call such a style *diavolution* [Brighenti 2008]. A problematizing way of thinking is, in other words, itself a territorial exploration, a movement within a problematic environment, an instance of trajectology... It is an inherently risky business, and indeed we have already recalled the political troubles of territory-talk (nativism, chauvisim, etc.). Yet such a practical aspect bears epistemological significance, too, for it highlights that – beyond action, work, imagination and event – *risk* is another constitutive element of territories. Incidentally, that is precisely why “restless nights and uneasy dreams go with the territory.”

Although the nation-state has been a major territorial player in the modern age, as testified by its role in the control of the mobilities of humans, goods and capitals since the late Nineteenth century, the history of territories is a much broader one. In the most general terms, my idea is that, as soon as we adopt a problematizing perspective, we can notice that territories are essentially *attempts to provides us with answers*. Territories are attempts to cope with a series of problems and come up with a number of answers. Answers to what precisely? Answers to, on the one hand, *necessities and needs* and, on the other, *desires and aspirations*. We have, on the one hand, *needs of measure*. These needs correspond to the necessity of measuring a social composition. They precipitate in the disciplines of law, administration, organization, governance, as well as in a myriad of chunks of technical knowledge. On the other hand, territories also provide answers to our *desires of expression*. This aspects concerns the expression of social events: gestures, proximities, intimacies and care are all territorial, so that, literally, each time we meet, we “take each other’s measure.” These facets thus reside in the fact that each territory is both *functional* and *expressive*, or, in a slightly different terminology, both *extensive* and *intensive*. In my view, what is interesting about the probable etymology (only probable, however, since no etymology is 100% sure) of “territory” form the Latin verb *terreo*, *-ere*, “to frighten, to keep out,” is not that territory is related to terror, nor that territory entails a primordialist attempt at excluding others (*à la* Konrad Lorenz), nor even that it can evolve into a strategic attempt at controlling people in space (*à la* Robert Sack). Rather, the crucial point is that the making of a territory entails the imagination and creation of *a relational program between living beings*, the script for an encounter, a project which comes to be *inscribed into* or *projected onto* specific materials. In other words, the fallacy of primordialism can be avoided if we just consider that aggression is but one among many other possible territorializing acts. The core of territory-making is the idea of relationship, not aggression.

And, inevitably, we are pushed toward the million-dollar question: what is a social relationship? Certainly, relations can be described and qualified in many ways, but I think it is not wrong to observe that even the fleetest type of social relation could hardly be imaginable without the experience of *the intense*. Intensity is that “occupation” and “animation” of interaction space so finely described by Simmel [*Ibidem*], a “heating” of the atmosphere, a perturbation of the milieu, a wave that transverses it, from which the need to establish “critical distances” arises. But while Simmel’s analysis was phenomenological and formal, today territorialology also calls for a technological and ecological analysis of social relations. What matters are not the social effects of technology, but more radically the fact that *society itself is a technology*. The territorial acts of inscription and projection turn materials into properly expressive materials. Association, i.e., the coming together of a plurality of *socii*, is made possible by the mediation of a plurality of such “articulated materials.” From this point of view, “post-humanism” is a premature theory for it takes the human for granted. In fact, the human is not made yet. Post-humanism, in other words, overlooks that the enterprise of being human is, since its origin, a territorial enterprise of articulating materials by intensifying them. The paleoanthropologists André Leroi-Gourhan [1965, 278] wrote beautifully about an “operational synergy of tool and gesture” which drove the hominization process since its outset.

If we call “territorial constitution” the specific setup of coordination, or operational synergy, that is made possible by the ensemble of acts aimed at stabilizing a territory, we see how territorialized subjects are helped to carry out a range of activities in relation to which territories appear as – at least provisional – answers. These activities include simple but crucial verbs such as “to be” (to occupy a space in relation to others, to “furnish” it), “to have” (to come to possess as a property), “to express” (to act upon others and to be correlatively acted upon), “to know” (to explore, draw maps, sort information). Claiming is perhaps the most renowned territorial act; but what is the meaning of claiming a territory, if not the fact of bringing together a set of *qualities* and *properties* inside that territory? To claim means to sign. Territories are ways to manage the multiplicity of qualities (qualities such as beauty, fragility, slowness, resilience...) that appear at each threshold of discontinuity between different states or conditions, qualities that were previously without an owner. Hence, as far as territories are concerned, it is often impossible to separate production and exploration: territories are our own creations yet we never finish to explore them. In territories there is no real opposition, or even separation, between construction and discovery (Tarkowsky’s *Stalker* docet). Drawing territories does not at all prevent from venturing into them as perfectly real adventures. And, essentially, every territorial exploration is done *in depth*. In the Seventeenth century “sciences of

police” one crucial invitation was recommended: *il faut sonder les territoires* – probe the territories. From a certain point of view, we still have to fully meet this challenge.

## 5. Conclusions

In the classic definition given by Max Weber [1978], which he went on elaborating precisely during WWI, territory features as one of the three constitutive elements of the state. Today, we recognize that definition as a sanctioning moment of the modernist take on territory (and it is interesting that the most perfected definitions are usually formulated when the described phenomenon is about to disappear). Territory was squarely put in the framework of governmental and bureaucratic practices – the plinth of a whole politico-administrative complex for *Massenverwaltung*. In a larger context, following Foucault’s reconstruction, during the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth century the notion of *raison d’état* was elaborated as a new de-transcendentalized political measure. Simultaneously, state reason appeared through the deployment of an array of artifices – Hobbes’ giant, the “social contract”... Since the late Eighteenth century, the birth of disciplines such as political economy, as well as, more generally, the social sciences, was accompanied by a re-conceptualization of these problems grounded in the idea of *naturalness* of social and economic processes.

Liberalism constructed a whole worldview that was destined to interact with and counterbalance the *raison d’état* itself thanks to the notion of *état de droit*. In other words, the new governmental measure was to be found in the self-limitation of regulatory powers. Rather than with the grandiose dream of a police state, that is, of a state capable of being in charge of every aspect of the life of the population, European states were left with the curious figure of “civil society,” an entity capable of assuring the functioning of governance by precisely leaving a number of regulatory vacuums. Ultimately, it was precisely the notion of civil society, or, if one wishes, society *tout court*, that expressed the awareness on the part of the political institutions of the state that *territories live*. True, even today common sense and mainstream rhetoric seem to remain tied of a modernist naturalized understanding of territories. But there are also signs that such a traditional notion is being surpassed in practice. Mezzadra and Neilson [*Ibidem*], for instance, have documented in great details how contemporary sovereignty and governance of citizens and workers are grounded in the complex spatial topologies of logistics, special economic zones, corridors, and enclaves. Contemporary tensions, frictions and social conflicts cannot be understood without taking into account that contemporary political and economic institutions are *de facto* dealing with a proliferation of territorial formations which exhibits new

measures, that is new shapes, new scales and new rhythms that exceed those encapsulated by the Weberian definition of sovereignty. The whole contemporary lexicon of “transnationalism,” the critiques of methodological nationalism and the deployment of notions such as “assemblages of power” are diagnoses of the same realization, namely that the reality of our territories is much more complex than the modernist imagination had it. Certainly, as Mezzadra and Neilson argue, the current transformations and multiplications of territories and borders are also the outcome of the working of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. It is impossible not to agree, with the caution that – just as power for Foucault – capitalism needs to be understood nominalistically. In other words, we are not dealing with a vague superior omnipotent power but with a description of a set of immanent relations and relational programs among human beings – and territories are but ways of imagining and performing such relations.

As discussed in this article, the notion of territory can represent an important conceptual tool to capture the simultaneous proliferation of mobilities and borders in our time. Contrary to what most authors assume, neither fixity, nor closure, nor spatial continuity can be taken as defining features of territories. Leroi-Gourhan [*Ibidem*] first remarked that the practice of territories entails the existence of regularly followed paths. Paths, circulation, trajectories, mobilities are coessential to territories. Anthropologists who have studied the life of nomad and semi-nomad populations are well acquainted with this phenomenon [e.g., Brody 1998]. But settled peoples, too, practice their territories through circulations. Far from being an exception to territorialization, *movement is the act that actually confers consistence to territories*. The inner paths inside a territory are potentially also flight lines from that territory (studying autistic children, Fernand Deligny called their paths *lignes d'erre* and compared them to spider webs). Paths can be cuts that establish new borders and, consequently, new territorial formations. Precisely in this sense did Deleuze and Guattari [*Ibidem*] characterize territories as *lieux de passage*, places of passage. The primal territorial spatial act is not settling down, but cutting across.

It follows that the eventuality of complete territorial closure and the ensuing blockage of all circulations do not lead to the most perfect constitution of a territory, but, on the contrary, to its utter destruction. At the end of the Eighteenth century, Fichte's dream of the “Closed Commercial State” was the last expression of the dream of *Polizeiwissenschaften* as well as, perhaps, the pale foreshadowing of Twentieth-century totalitarian projects. Territories are rhythmic creations that constantly swing between the pole of closure and that of openness, as well as between acts of destabilization and re-stabilization. From this point of view, the so-called “territorial trap” [Agnew *Ibidem*; Agnew and Corbridge 1995] consists of nothing else than the

misplaced equivalence of territory and localism. But, even if it is true that territorial acts are grounded in a “fixation” of their components which grants a continuity of heterogeneous materials, *territories themselves can be mobile. Territorial continuity is not necessarily spatial continuity.*

The example of the Torah as a movable Jewish territory is illuminating in this respect. Forced by the history of the diaspora at the time of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews have created this alternative territory which is the Book, a fully expressive territorialization which in no way should be regarded as a surrogate. The mother tongue also functions as a movable territory; and shouldn't we say the same about all proximate and intimate social relationships? Indeed, they all entail territorial fixations, which are anything but immobile. How can a fixation be mobile? At bottom, territorializations proceed by putting the series of constitutive elements – elements which are entering a territorial composition – into a sort of reciprocal *resonance*. Territorial fixation is precisely such a resonance. The elements are thus taken into chains of *activation* and *reactivity* which form the inner source of territorial mobility. It is not a matter of an active element grabbing hold of a passive one but rather an issue of *intensification of a shared (communal) environment* in which thresholds of mutual activation and reactivity can be reached in order to generate measures and expressions. As containers, territories are “joint signatures.”

In conclusion, reasoning in territoriological and trajectological terms might help us to focus on how craftsmanship and care, along with the expressiveness, could be related in our contemporary spatial life. Indeed, today we collectively face a new problem of measure, a problem that is technological and economic as well as cultural and political. Measures are changing quickly and an arsenal of new measures is being introduced, often without much awareness. What could constitute a set of *viable measures for our age*? Territories matter a lot, for it would be foolish to deny that territories have not only boundaries but also *limits*. There is a *capacity of territories*, which depends on their limitations in terms of resources, population, mobility, and coexistence. The challenge we have to meet is related to the fact that contemporary territorial productions are extremely diversified, splintered and scattered, yet simultaneously stratified and criss-crossed. To mention just one example (albeit, in my view an essential one) we record a veritable return of crowds on the social scene, one century after the debate on crowds in the late Nineteenth century. Crowds first appeared as an urban out-of-measure and have since remained as a counterpoint to sociological imagination [Borch 2012]. Today, crowds reappear as crowds of data, new crowd territorializations characterized by dispersal and volatility, as well as by pervasiveness, reactivity and compulsiveness [Brighenti 2014]. It is not by chance

that the new governance of populations today works through the new media. From this point of view, there is no doubt that all contemporary governmental attempts are already making reference, albeit implicitly and perhaps without much awareness, to territorialology as outlined here. Moving from Foucault's original notion of *gouvernement* as the conduct of human conducts (and adding the idea outlined in this article that that territories are material designs for the inscription of such interaction programs), a non-foucauldian conclusion must be reached: namely, all governance, all governmentality are territorial.

One final speculation: viable answers to our current societal crisis of measures can perhaps only come from care as a crucial attitude and a crucial resource in territory-making; and in the attempt at finding new ways of taking care of our territories (with all needed patience and temporal immersion), we cannot but be fully aware that the age of the overabundance of means – not only economic means – is over.

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## Mobilizing Territories, Territorializing Mobilities

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Abstract: Territory has been traditionally imagined as almost the opposite of mobility. But, is this the only way to imagine territorial phenomena? In this piece, I argue that, by casting a new outlook on the “sedentarist paradigm,” it is possible to develop a conception of territory which might be beneficial to mobility studies. Indeed, mobility studies have underestimated the force of territories. A double move is thus necessary to capture at best the nexus of mobility and immobility: mobilizing territories, on the one hand, territorializing mobilities, on the other. It is not simply a matter of recognizing that often the creation of certain forms of mobility for some actors is correlative to the creation of a number of immobilities for other actors, or even for the same actors in a different respect or capacity. Rather, we should be able to explain social relations themselves in terms of composite ways of spatialization and territorialization.

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*Keywords: Territories, Territorial Imagination, Measure, Mobilities, Borders.*

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**Andrea Mubi Brighenti** is aggregate professor of Social Theory and Space & Culture at the Department of Sociology, University of Trento, Italy. Research topics focus on space, power and society. Among his publications, *The Ambiguous Multiplicities: Materials, episteme and politics of some cluttered social formations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Andrea is Co-Editor of the journals *Lo Squaderno* and *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa*. <http://www.capacitedaffect.net/>