

[Space and Place: Sommer Semester 2007]

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[introduction]

week 1, Introduction

week 2, Observing space

Week 3 Public Space

week 4, Public space - Observing

week 5, social space; identity- boundaries, inside, outside, belonging, fernweh and non-place

week 6, social space - behaviour, crowds, personal space

week 7, constructed space- the built world, cities

Week 8 constructed space- public and private, neighbourhood, community

week 9, imagined space and represented space, mapping

week 10, your place - narratives, mapping and finding your way in the world

week 11, digital space- connectivity and presence

week 12, digital space- connectivity and presence

week 13, summary

final submission: 17.09.07

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[introduction]

Social space:

Space is acted upon by people, and it becomes a part of everyday life.

In this way it shapes and is shaped by human behaviour, or the social patterns and norms. We behave certain ways in certain places, we understand the differences between public space and private space and often the space itself also shapes behaviour, for instance in a dark alley at night in a big city we are less likely to be friendly to strangers

In this seminar we will focus on four aspects of social life and people's interaction with space:

- Spatial behaviour
- Personal space
- Crowds
- Territory
- Neighbourhood

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[Spatial behaviour]

Behaviour is how we act in space, and is dependent both on other people and the space itself.

Our behaviours and interactions in the world can be considered as situated in the sense that it refers to any event occurring within the physical boundaries of a situation (Goffman, E. Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.).



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[Spatial behaviour]

We behave in certain ways in certain places. We move slowly and act in a restrained manner in a church. In a nightclub we are extrovert in our behaviour towards others (often as a result of alcohol!). A commonly held set of rules guides how we behave in places and with others.



Kneeling quietly
Church



nightclub

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[personal space]

The **elevator experience**: Imagine that you are in a crowded elevator in an office building. All of the other occupants are unknown to you.

What are the rules are for standing in the elevator?

How do people stand when there are only two or three people? What happens when a fourth person enters the elevator.

How would you feel if there were two people on the elevator and a third person entered and stood right next to you?

What happens when the elevator becomes more crowded and there are now four or more people?
When is it permissible to talk to the other people?



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[personal space]

The extreme of personal space is the need for privacy; to exclude others from a place.

Private space is seen as the direct opposite of public space; access is denied to most people aside from a select few



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[crowds]

We don't exist alone in the world, but often gather with others. Either spaces are created that can hold a crowd, such as a public square, or the crowd deforms to fit the space.

There is a language of the superstructure of the crowd: how does it move? what are the flow patterns? where are people assembling? where are the points of congestion and what is causing them? We become very adept at reading the crowd, and understand (usually) how to move through it or become part of it.



St Peter's Sq. Rome
Sunday Mass



Crowd with people on staircase and platform
Football Match, Berlin

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[crowds]

The familiar stranger, though not necessarily a crowd phenomenon, A familiar stranger is an individual who is recognized from daily activities, but with whom one does not interact.

By definition a Familiar Stranger

- (1) must be observed,
- (2) repeatedly, and
- (3) without any interaction.

This may be the person on the daily commute, or someone you see every morning at the bakery when you fetch rolls.



Bus Stop,
Bristol

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[territory]

Spaces are divided into territories, which try to differentiate social settings by defining regions and boundaries.

Territory can be about separating or dividing.

Walls may be installed to enforce physical separation between territories



Wall
Palestine



Wall looking towards Beit Jala
Palestine

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[territory]

Territory can also be about defining common or shared space.

Here the space is defined, but outsiders are welcomed and invited to enter

Gates act as a way of inviting strangers or signifying the boundary of a territory



Gate
Chinatown

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[neighbourhood]

A neighbourhood is an area, often of a city, which is commonly defined by a group of people - it is a social construction, although it may be confined by physical features such as a boundary road or river.

The identity of a neighbourhood can be derived from three factors:

- 1) From the master identity of the area which it is part (e.g. Kreuzberg is known as an area of Berlin)
- 2) Through comparison with adjacent communities
- 3) Through historical associations

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[neighbourhood]

Once a person considers themselves a part of the neighbourhood, this is often associated with community, or a feeling of ‘insidedness’.

This is linked with feelings of identification with a place or a place attachment

In this way they may come to have a ‘sense of place’ . This involves personal orientation towards place, in which one’s understanding of place and one’s feelings about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning

People who become separated from such locales experience displacement , where they cannot associate with others feelings about the place. In this sense they may feel ‘out of place’ or alienated



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[conclusion]

Spaces and places are created just as much by social relations and actions as by physical structures such as walls and doors

Spatial settings are defined very much by social aspects, and human behaviour is framed by where it occurs

Our spaces are affected by the presence, and distance or separation from others, which are often very fluid in character such as the coming together and dispersal of a crowd. The way people act in such situations are not unpredictable, but derive from commonly understood roles and behaviours

Spaces are also structured into neighbourhoods and territories, which can either be created through common consensus or enforced to create boundaries between groups

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