Anthropology Theory

Final Paper

16 April 2019

<div align="center">Spatial Relations: Bourdieu and Psychogeographic power</div>

Capital is always spatial. Those with any amount of capital tied to any particular location have great incentive to advertise the importance of the places that they hold stake in. They do this by creating narrative. Those with little capital are incentivized to downplay or reject the narratives that are created by those with capital, or even spatial boundaries in general. But everyone needs connection and capital so these dis-empowered people create new narratives which give them spatial power.

In a YouTube video released by Igor Ashurbeyli on Ashurbeyli's own YouTube channel, Ashurbeyli walks over to a giant globe sitting in the corner of a furnished office.[1] Ashurbeyli creates a narrative to justify the creation of a new calendar. The voice-over translation explains that "Today, Asgardia is home for its citizens *for* more than 200 countries". Of course, Asgardia isn't a "real" country. The claim is that Asgardia is more of a "concept nation".[2] Ashurbeyli wants to replace geopolitics with "space politics".[3] But in doing so he has only reinforced the spatial boundaries between earth nations and space.

The internet has long been used as a place for expression. Virtual land is extremely cheap— so cheap that it is usually paid for by others. In response to the growing cost of land more people try to make money off of land and that continues the unsustainable cycle of high land prices. In this world where more and more people are left without a physical space, they create narrative which justify and explain the importance of virtual space--especially *their* virtual space.

For some people liminality is the only constant feeling. In response, they create simulations which try to capture the liminal interactions of millions of people within a city. "People on the move, businesses in trade, neighbourhoods changing. Each inhabitant struggling, adapting, making

life choices. The city evolves, the city grows. **The city is us**".[4] The idea promoted by Eickhoff in

Citybound is that "traffic is the pulse of a city". The city is an organism and traffic is a chaotic,

emergent phenomenon. The city is liminal.

The concept of recreating liminal narratives within virtual spaces is not new. RollerCoaster

Tycoon is a series of videogames where you run an amusement park, pretty much all videogame

worlds exist in liminal worlds: spaces which only exist on the way to something else. People don't

usually enter these spaces and expect to spend their whole life there, however, there is no escape

within the worlds of games. The product is all edges with no middle. Perhaps one of the reasons for

this phenomena is that the "*position-takings*" of these cultural products are an occupation of a

determinate position *in the structure* of the distribution of specific capital.[5] Harun Farocki reminds

us that discursive communication is not limited to mere writings. We should also need be skeptical

of images because all images are constructed.[6] Capital is relational and spatial. Stories and images

are created to support exchange of capital.

Boundaries between spaces are almost always arbitrary—with only weak connection to the

topology, the ethnoscape, or any of the other "-scapes". But most of us go through life without

thinking about the illusory nature of boundaries. We only are aware of the illusion when it conflicts

with something deep within us: *doxa* breaks here. Doxa is "the state when the socially constructed

is perceived as the natural order and therefore accepted".[7] We can find a myriad of examples where

the definitions of spatial boundaries come into question. In fact, it's an issue that is raised every day

somewhere in the world, but it usually affects only a small population at any given time. Even most

wars are faught with only a single digit percent of the population. Spatial features are also

commonly an integral part of urban legends. Is the Four Corners monument in the right place?

Well... yes because the boundaries depend on the markers, not the other way around.[8]

Of course, any discussion about spatial boundaries should include a reference to Ong's Hat.[9]

As the first online "Alternate Reality Game" it led to some of the first efforts in "mass craft

mapping". Craft mapping is a fascinating subject to study in this regard. OpenStreetMap (a crowd-sourced global map) often suffers from inconsistent quality only because there are so many different interpretations of spaces and, like Wikipedia, not everyone is familiar with the rules. "I think this (and other) "debates" on tagging issues are exhausting and seldom result in definitive decisions that the community abides by" writes user *Your Village Maps*.[10] Within these mapping communities people have to defend the changes that they make to the global map. They use embodied, objectified (their previous success), and institutionalized cultural capital to prove the legitimacy of their decisions. Outside of the communities the value of the map itself does not justify the great effort which is put into mapping. Those outside the affects of *doxa* are beyond the hegemonic *Illusio* of the field.

Power is often structured within fields in such a way that the most *distinct* figures of the field have the most hegemony within that field.[11] Control of reality itself is balanced by the separation of the hegemonic entities which are split across different fields. Buckminster Fuller argued that the "whole development of modern science and technology has resulted from a willingness on the part of a very few men to sail into the wind of tradition, to trust in their own intellect, and to take advantage of their natural mobility".[12] The hegemonic power of early navigators came from the distinctness of their actions. With their actions they did not replace authority but they augmented it thus becoming a "consecrated avant-garde". They discovery of new knowledge was found in the *tabu* "outlaw area". Fuller believed that the most significant discoveries were found in this outlaw area. When the cultural products of the avant-garde are able to overcome the normal products (*nomus)* then the avant-garde becomes recognized and their products become the new standard.

Last year, I was fascinated with the idea of homelessness. I wanted to understand the "active presence", the modes of practices within homelessness. Maybe it's cheating but I purposely became homeless so that I could understand it on a more fundamental level. It's a little strange to say that I

was homeless for four months last year, but it's true. It wasn't easy and I'm not sure what I learned from that experience exactly. Luckily, homeless life is not so bad when you have a supportive friends. I can't begin to imagine the pain of homelessness in an unwelcoming environment. Every night is full of stress. There is little reason to wonder where to go in a world where the whole earth is already divided up into lots with marked ownership and specified land uses. But you still wonder where you can sleep. The doxa is really strong. On one hand I can easily think "why should you pay an arbitrary person who has a title of ownership over land?". Why is that even allowed to begin with? Sure, it brings a sense of order. But I think that order is unjust. Still, there's not much power that you have when a police officer wakes you up and tells you that you can't be sleeping at a bus stop. The doxa of real estate is very strong. I felt bad for being homeless but I knew deep down that I should feel bad for feeling bad. Private land ownership beyond one home is unsustainable and unethical. Not conforming to the field of real estate investment should be something that is more acceptable. But it is truly difficult and incredibly stressful to break away from it.

Doxa heavily influences the design of systems. The realization of this is extremely important for me because I will likely spend the rest of my life designing systems. Very often I see systems which are built with a full understanding of current doxa but little understanding of the history of the formation of that doxa or even the counter-cultural environment. But I think it's really important to see and study the "unexpected" effects of system design. "If, in our societies, there are thousands of such lieutenants to which we have delegated competences,it means that what defines our social relations is, for the most part, prescribed back to us by non-humans." Latour is a contemporary of Bourdieu and I think he brings some important views to the table.[13] System design will always empower certain groups of people and disempower others simultaneously so it is critical that social science studies are incorporated in systems design.

I think Latour makes a subtle but important point. All human interaction is social, including the interaction humans have with non-humans. As these non-human objects become more human

the social interaction that we have with these non-human objects will become more expressive and pronounced. But even our interaction with doors and door-closers is one of social interaction. When a person decides to open a door, they first start the process by mediating with the door. They will invariably attempt to see which of the types of doors it is. If we only had one type of door, we would only have one instruction path which defined the interaction between humans and doors. If the human is unsuccessful in mediating with the door, then mediation will turn into negotiation. The human will try to understand the door as having a different behaviour or personality. Doors and door-closers were and are designed to fulfil the needs of a social world. They can only fulfil the social need by behaving in a social way. The construction of the first door was someone directly communicating those needs to the material. Much like how I am communicating to the computer to type the words which I desire to be there. The feedback loop is instantaneous—but the work of mediating my words is being embedded within a social context.

Latour goes a step further and he explains how we are disciplining the non-human door-closer when they are being designed. In turn, the non-human door-closer disciplines the human users. There is a social relationship between our objects and us. Systems that are a part of our environment change how we act. I would like to go a step further and extend Bourdieu's theory of fields and capital with Latour's work. All designed objects are embodied cultural artefacts of the creators of those objects. When a person designs a non-human door-closer they are creating an object which has its own economic, cultural, and social capital. The constructed objects live and exist somewhere on the plane of each field. Even virtual objects like icons or symbols have a spatial element and they occupy specific space within fields. All objects carry a certain amount of symbolic and social capital which will augment both the creator's and the owner's capital. The internal capital of objects is always interpreted in the subjective form. I'm not sure if we could ever discover the objective form of an object's capital but I'm sure that it does exist. Some objects have a very distinct capital like the Black Nazarene statue. Widely acknowledged sacred objects have an

obvious power. The subjective conclusion that I have when reconciling Latour's work and Bourdieu's work is that all objects can be sacred. The objects themselves carry multiple and specific forms of capital. We may not immediately realize it but we interact with objects in the same social context that we interact with humans. But we do have varying levels of expression that we willingly give non-human objects. We may talk to our little dog with a cute voice but we don't expect it to talk back. In fact, it would ruin the relationship that we have with dogs if the dog did talk back.

I think there is more to this phenomena than simply projection anthropomorphism. The *Tree That Owns Itself* is a recognition of the internal capital that the tree itself actually possesses. We don't give that recognition to most non-human things, yet I feel that is a mistake. We live in a society where exploitation is the common pattern so we don't really think of "natural" capital hierarchies. Yet we interact with these non-human objects all the time in market economies. We pretend for a short while that these objects have inherent capitals but only while we are buying and selling said objects. Outside of the marketplace context we ignore the internal capitals of objects. When our objects have sentimental value that means that we have recognized more than the economic capital of our objects.

Objects usually given the habitus of their creators' but they needn't be. Objects are usually designed by several people and so their habitus is created as a recognition of the dominant structures of the social world which exists at the time of creation. The objects are given a purpose with predetermined power to act. Over time, the social world changes and objects often experience hysteresis. The objects themselves are usually fixed and require other actors to recognize and reconcile the dissonance between the objects and the field.

These non-human actors are all around us and they influence us in profound invisible ways. What makes a place memorable? Most people seem to believe that memories are simply events that we remember but events are more than the raw situations which we identify when we dissect events. Events are always situated within environments. Specific actions are tightly bound to

specific places. Drilling teeth is acceptable only within a dentistry. Cars are usually driven outside, on roads. There are exceptions but the environment both defines the expected events at locations while also constraining the actions of actors to those expected events.

I used to live on the second floor of my apartment complex. I'd always go up the stairs because the elevator would take much longer. Now that I live on the third floor I usually take the elevator because it takes about the same amount of time as going up both sets of stairs and the elevator is easier. When I go home now I take the elevator up to the third floor and walk down a corridor to a shared kitchen apartment. A few months ago, my keycard didn't work because I had a fine on my school account which triggers the keycard to not open the door until you pay the fine. Yesterday, as I was heading home I was busy messaging my manager on my phone and someone came into the elevator so I delegated the responsibility of pushing the third floor button to him. I walked down the corridor to my apartment and my keycard didn't work. I saw a $10 charge on my account a few days ago so this made sense to me. Sometimes the door isn't completely shut so I tried pulling the door open anyway and it worked. I stepped right in and it felt good to be home after a long day. There was a paper that I hadn't noticed before on the wall adjacent to me. I examined it closer, "Roommate Agreement". Something about what rules they would like the others in the shared apartment to follow. I wondered if the two in the middle room got into a fight or something. No, wait this document has six signatures. Why wasn't I included? Oh the document was dated October which would have been before I moved in. Strange I hadn't noticed it before. I accepted it in stride. I was still home. I went to my door and opened it, walking into my room. Huh, my roommate's side of the room looks different. I wonder if he got in trouble for moving the furniture. He must have and had to move it back. I'm glad I didn't move my furniture. I don't want to get into trouble. Then, as my eyes moved to my side of the room none of my stuff was there. It was all different stuff. I quickly walked out of the room and closed the door. Something is really strange. I actually looked at my phone to see if I had travelled in time or something bizarre. Maybe

this was a dream. The outside of our fridge looked dirtier than I remembered. My mind was racing to figure out what was going on. I felt almost like I was falling. I walked outside. Maybe I entered the apartment that's right before or after ours. No... everything looks normal. I looked at the door and the number: 237. Oh... this is on the second floor. Someone lazily took the elevator to the second floor. Still, for about thirty minutes after the experience, I felt dazed and out of sync with the space that I occupied. Even though I was home it felt more like a dream. Nothing seemed real. I think the biggest reason why this happened is because the physical movement of my body and mind led me to a different space. I went on autopilot and walked with exactly the same speed and direction, yet I ended up 4 meters lower in space.

Being human, we can be aware of the environment but we deal with changes to the environment very weakly. We give too much benefit of the doubt to changes in the environment. The environment controls us much more than we are aware. If we were aware of the environment's control then we could be in control, but because the brain has to ignore so much data within the conscious space, we are weak and easily controlled by space. We easily accept that changes have occurred to our environmental space as long as it is outside of our 'owned' territory. I think the phenomenon of feeling lost 'at home' is pretty uncommon (outside of psychological factors like memory loss). But I could see something like this happen more in the future, if we delegate our autonomous cars or anything else to assume where we want to go.

It is in this space that I dedicate the rest of my life. I want to understand the psychological properties of human landscapes. Architecture and other non-human devices are lieutenants – objects which stand in lieu of humans to fulfil a specific task. From April 21, 2019 I will begin to engage in independent research with the goal of creating a global map of neighbourhoods capturing emotional velocity and the physiological senses. The end result that I'm hoping to achieve is to identify the relationship between human construction and the ambiances and feelings which rise out of the spatial relationship between constructed objects. Movement between differences in space is the only

way that we can compare environmental effects. There are many more worlds beyond 'nature', 'industrial', or the clever mixing of the two. We have to discover them or we will always be limited. Discovery will require a small part architecturing environments but a big part constructing those environments as spatial computers. On a global scale the building of environments is already happening but some of the data isn't being recorded yet. The data is not yet being gathered, standardized, or analyzed in a systematic way. "Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality and engendering dreams" writes Chtcheglov in 1953, well aware of the emotional and social capital that designed spaces hold.[14] The places themselves have great power. People have to narrate themselves into the places even if they were the creators of that place. Without a story, the people have no glue to stick themselves to the place. Non-human objects like space and place don't need stories to have power (though that power can be enhanced or augmented by narrative). In this way, human landscapes and machines are one and the same thing. Both are spatial objects which hold mediated power and various forms of capital. The symbolic power of a designed system is just as dependent upon the viewer as it is on the object itself. Meaning is both constructed and interpreted (though there is usually quite a bit of overlap here). Luckily, some interpretation is more valid than others and the most common interpretation is predictable. Bourdieu would probably disagree with my suggestion that objectified social capital can exist. But I think it really can and I think it does exist. I think it's possible to see objects themselves as having a habitus and I think there is great use in thinking this way.

As social creatures we can only interact with objects in a social context. Objects always have both a spatial position and a social position. There are, of course, objects that exist outside of human knowledge but as soon as we know of them their existence is embedded within a social context. These unknown objects still have a positionality though. We can talk of them as not existing and so those objects too have a social and spatial position. Perhaps I need to provide some examples of non-human social capital. I think the best way to do this would be to de-construct

social capital itself. I believe social capital to be a composition of properties, much like symbolic capital is really just a misinterpretation of economic, cultural, and social capital. Social capital is a combination of properties which both human and non-human objects can have. The most important property is proximity (which you could call spatial capital). Because objects have high levels of proximity relative to each other the opportunities for spontaneous reaction increases. The probability of interaction is maximized when these objects are aware of each other and there is a formalized system for communication between objects. Between human and non-human objects there are several systems of tooling which humans have created. They are sets of rules which we have determined through time which will maximize the synergy that we can create through social interaction with materials. For instance, there is a social expectation that we have discovered through time which governs which side of the hammer we should hold on to as well as the ideas that we should have when we interact with the hammer. All of the interaction that we have with tools is just as social as our interaction with other humans. Only the expressiveness with which we communicate is largely prescribed by established social norms.

There are thousands of tools which have fallen out of use. If we were to discover a telautograph up in the attic, we would have no idea what its function is or how to use it until someone with that knowledge would tell us how we can maximize the potential for capital conversion through social interaction with the object. The same is true for my earlier example, if hammers were to fall out of use and no one knew how to interact with it then we would spend days or even months relearning how to communicate with the material to maximize the utility of the object. Utility, a term from the field of economics, is a conversion between forms of capital. When we use a hammer we are harnessing our embodied cultural capital which is the knowledge that we know how to persuade the hammer into focusing the energy that we put into it. The relationship that we have with the material world is social. Accumulated cultural capital is also the ability to harness the material world and transforming it via the social relationship that we create through tools.

Complex tools like computer networks make this theory of capital even more complicated because these non-human objects are so prescribed that they communicate all on their own—decades after their original masters have passed away. But even without going into that realm of super-prescribed tooling, we can see objects take a life of their own. The habitus of non-human objects as seemingly simple as the hammer or the door-closer shape the mind of the users of the objects. The tools have an embodied disposition that is copied into the worlds of other cultures. The tools exist in fields, they occupy social space. I think all objects exist within fields but tools and buildings are the most obvious to see because our relationship with them is more everyday and spatially they are much more immediate.

References

1. Ashurbeyli, Igor. "Igor Ashurbeyli Announces New Asgardian Calendar." YouTube. January 13, 2017. Accessed April 8, 2019. https://youtu.be/Dk4AHI_7fVY.

2. Ashurbeyli, Igor. "Concept «Asgardia – the Space Nation»." Asgardia. Accessed April 2, 2019. https://asgardia.space/en/page/word.

3. Ashurbeyli, Igor. "Solemn Speech of the Head of Nation." YouTube. July 02, 2018. Accessed April 12, 2019. https://youtu.be/9K1xWXIHnW4.

4. Eickhoff, Anselm. "Citybound." Citybound. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://aeplay.org/citybound.

5. Bourdieu, Pierre, and Randal Johnson. 1993. The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature. New York: Columbia University Press.

6. Pavsek, Christopher. "Harun Farocki's Images of the World." Rouge. 2008. Accessed April 13, 2019. http://rouge.com.au/12/farocki.html.

7. Welfare commonsense, poverty porn and doxosophy. / Jensen, Tracey Louisa. In: Sociological Research Online, Vol. 19, No. 3, 3, 15.08.2014.

8. Stone, William. "Why the Four Corners Monument Is in Exactly the Right Place." National Geodetic Survey (NGS), National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). May 15, 2009. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/INFO/fourcorners.shtml.

9. Oelbaum, Jed. "Ong's Hat: The Early Internet Conspiracy Game That Got Too Real." Gizmodo. February 21, 2019. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://gizmodo.com/ongs-hat-the-early-internet-conspiracy-game-that-got-t-1832229488.

10. "Comment from Your Village Maps on 6 October 2017 at 21:09" OpenStreetMap. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://www.openstreetmap.org/user/mvexel/diary/42450.

11. McGee, R. Jon, and Richard L. Warms. Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

12. Tomkins, Calvin. "Buckminster Fuller, Intellectual Outlaw." The New Yorker. June 19, 2017. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1966/01/08/in-the-outlaw-area.

13. Latour, Bruno (a.k.a. Jim Johnson). "Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer."Social Problems 35(1988): 298-310.

14. Chtcheglov, I. 1953 "Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau." An abridged version appeared in Internationale Situationniste #1 (Paris, June 1958), a translation of which was included in the first edition of the Situationist International Anthology. The present text is a translation by Ken Knabb of the complete original version, which has just been published for the first time in France (Écrits retrouvés, Éditions Allia, 2006).

15. Beckstead, Zachary. "Cultural Objects in a Transforming World." Culture & Psychology 21, no. 3 (2015): 380-91. doi:10.1177/1354067x14551300.