

**Archaeological Landscapes: Exploring Scale, Movement and the Politics  
of Spatiality**

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## Archaeological Landscapes: Exploring Scale, Movement and the Politics of Spatiality

### Abstract:

Spatial analysis has long been considered fundamental to archaeology. More recently archaeologists espousing a more phenomenological approach, contributed to the growing literature of spatial theory by examining social landscapes at a more humanistic and intimate scale. I am concerned with space and spatial relations in understanding social interactions of power. Spatial/social relations are about spatial barriers, spatial opportunities, and/or spatial symbols that exist physically, socially and ideologically. Using case studies from both 19<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary Ireland, I explore the use of spatially driven research concerning the politics and representation of spatial scales and the movement across these scales.

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There is a long history of spatial analysis in archaeology. In fact, it would be difficult to conceive of any archaeological interpretation that is not closely linked to the control of the spatial context. Similarly, many archaeological methods are directly concerned with the “how to” of the spatial context, whether in terms of the methods of stratigraphic profiling (mapping vertical space) or the recording of horizontal space in surveys and excavations. In many ways archaeological methods that control for space, control also for time (temporal sequencing and regional chronology) and give deeper meaning to what is found in the archaeological record. That is, the “where” tells us much about “what”, “how”, “when”, “who” and “why”.

For my own research I am interested in space, place, spatiality and landscapes for what they tell us about social relations of power, how *social relations* are shaped by and help to shape *spatial relations*. I am concerned with how spatial/social relations are about spatial barriers, spatial opportunities and/or spatial symbols that exist physically, socially and ideologically. I am concerned with how power to control space and landscapes,

operates to control the people who live in and experience those places. And I am concerned with how spatial governance is challenged and negotiated by those same people.

In this paper, I will examine the shifting approach and focus of spatial studies in archaeology from spatial analyses, to settlement archaeology to landscape archaeologies. This history will situate my own perspective on spatial and landscape theory as it relates to spatial scales, movement and the politics of spatiality. Using examples from two of my research projects in Ireland – the 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping of Ireland by the British Ordnance Survey, and the spatial study of contemporary archaeological landscapes of asylum seeker holding centres in 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland – I will explore how this spatial theoretical framework allows for discussion and critique of spatial methods and techniques. I will examine the role of mapping as political representation and challenge where and how we apply our spatial analysis by questioning the spatial/temporal boundaries of our research.

#### Early Spatial Analysis and Settlement Archaeology:

The very act of laying a grid on an archaeological excavation site emphasizes the attention paid to space. The concepts of space and spatial context in archaeological research have their own history, and have influenced how spatial analysis, and settlement and landscape archaeologies have developed.

With the advent of New Archaeology, David Clarke's (1968) analytical archaeology focused on the treatment of archaeological data including classification, modeling and

testing. His spatial archaeology (1977a, 1977b) classified space in the same manner and highlighted Hodder and Orton's (1976: 1) call for a "more detailed and systematic study of spatial patterning in archaeological data". This spatial analysis applied new methods adapted from other disciplines, particularly geography and plant ecology. Hodder and Orton used statistical analysis to evaluate the spatial context of artifacts and sites represented in the archaeological distribution map. This was an attempt to quantify the spatial context in keeping with the methods of analysis laid out by the new archaeologists' perception of scientific rigor. It also exemplified an understanding of the spatial context as a static, inert backdrop that was meaningful only in its measurability.

This understanding of space helped to shape the analytical models used in settlement archaeology. Like Clarke's spatial archaeology, the emphasis was on place and activities in place, rather than on people. Ashmore (2002) has recently provided an insightful and detailed history of the changes in settlement archaeology, but I will suffice with only a brief overview here.

Regional settlement studies of the 1950s and 60s by such archaeologists as Adams (1965), Beardsley (1955), Chang (1962, 1968), Phillips (1951) and (perhaps most notably) Willey (1953, 1956) analyzed information concerning the natural environment, social relations and economic activities. In Willey's words, "Because settlement patterns are, to a large extent, directly shaped by widely held cultural needs, they offer a strategic starting point for the functional interpretation of archaeological cultures" (1953: 1). Later Trigger outlined a hierarchy of all settlement pattern levels: the individual structure; the

local settlement; and the distribution of settlements within a regional landscape (1968). Settlement archaeology had the effect of centering all human behavior within the dwelling place, that is, the built environment. All other spaces were excluded from analysis.

Settlement archaeology established a view of space as the objective physical backdrop to the places of most intensive activity and hence the greatest amount of material remains. The process of doing settlement archaeology reinforced an implication that domestic sites in the landscape are the centers of intense and socially meaningful activity, implying that activity beyond the settlement is not archaeologically as important. The in-between spaces of the landscape may be discussed in terms of natural resources such as flint deposits or good well-drained soils, but as such the landscape is viewed in a capitalist way as merely an exploitable resource. Settlement archaeology distinguished the meaningful and important 'place' of the domestic sites and the non-cultural in-between 'space' of the landscape. Thus the archaeological process simply created nodes of importance on the landscape, similar to the distribution maps that were analyzed and quantified by the spatial analysts such as Hodder and Orton.

Few archaeologists acknowledged how this constructed bounded social entities and how this resulted from and reinforced the notion that the spatial context was merely the stage upon which human activity took place. The only places investigated were built domestic places yielding evidence of intensive human activity, thus limiting the range of archaeological interpretation. Those that challenged this, engaged in "siteless surveys" to

evaluate differentiation of sites. Others challenged this restrictive view of space by focusing research on pathways, roads and larger networks that linked domestic sites. This latter type of research however, still justified the focus on the ‘nodes’ of importance, i.e., places of settlement.

#### The Shift to Landscape Archaeologies:

The shift in archaeology from spatial analysis and settlement archaeology to landscape archaeologies is in part due to the criticism that these earlier spatial analyses were associated with positivist approaches that required rigorous quantitative research seeking universal laws of human (spatial) behavior. Landscape archaeology, as Ashmore (2002) suggests, is a move toward a more “socialized spatial archaeology” that emphasizes meaning and individual agency.

I need to make clear that the kind of landscape archaeology that I will be speaking of is more a British approach, although some North American scholars may be included in this discussion. The divide between British and American schools of thought with respect to defining and doing landscape archaeology is well illustrated in a special section of *Antiquity* (1999) meant to focus on landscapes. Whereas British landscape archaeologies focus on humanized aspects of landscape, these (North American) journal articles were still very much concerned with a systemic/ scientific approach reminiscent of earlier spatial studies.

How is landscape archaeology different from regional settlement studies? First, the former does not focus entirely on the sameness of settlement sites but incorporates a wide range of difference and of different *scales*, that are both cultural and physical places that are meaningful for people who live in that landscape. Second, landscape archaeologies are not interested only in places as destination, a “thereness” implying stasis, but are concerned with the *process of moving* between these locations. Finally (and related to the previous point), landscape archaeologies require a re-examination of the assumptions of what constitutes relevant archaeological places (neither dependent on dense collections of material culture nor associated merely with a place of resource exploitation) (cf. Binford 1982). Broadening the scope of what is deemed archaeologically relevant places in the landscape is thus *politically* aware and reflective and potentially politically charged.

Emphasis on regional studies did contribute to the development of certain methods and techniques that are useful in exploring a changing environment. These include procedures such as AMS dating, a wide range of sediment analyses as well as other geoarchaeological techniques. These methods and techniques provided a means of examining the environment at a level of detail and accuracy. Simultaneously, GIS-related techniques allowed for sophisticated macro-spatial processes. However, in themselves these methods did not reflect the emergent questions associated with the new landscape approach.

We must recognize that doing landscape archaeology is more humanistic, concerned with the role of social memory and social meaning of individual agents. What landscape

archaeology marked was a critical shift in how archaeologists think about space and place and the individuals who experience them. Landscape archaeologies recognized that that experience involved moving through and across the landscape at different spatial scales and that that experience was often politically laden.

### Landscape Archaeologies:

Landscape studies have a different history that only merges with archaeology at the point when these criticisms of spatial and settlement archaeology arise. While time does not permit me to expand on that history here, I should however note that geographical and historical landscape studies in the 1950s and 60s (most notably in Britain), distinguished between built *places* as cultural and non-built *spaces* as natural, similar to settlement archaeologists.

It is only in the early 1990s that landscape archaeologies begin to become a popular means of doing research. This is largely as a result of the growing literature in geography, philosophy, anthropology and archaeology concerned with spatial and place theory. What is critical about these theories is that they emphasize space no longer as “the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile”, to cite the often-quoted Foucault (1986: 23), but as socially significant as is time and history for shaping and producing the social relations of societies. Space then is defined as in flux, in action, in practice and always re-creating itself. It is set apart from the definition of place that is interpreted as a sense of rootedness and memory that enables personal and collective identities and sense of belonging to history and place.

Now how do archaeologists deal with this new and heady theory in practicing their research? How do they grapple with these concepts? Many archaeologists, first in Britain and more recently in North America, use “phenomenology” as a means to understanding landscapes. Phenomenology is the understanding of the material/ social/ ideological world through the everyday life experiences of individuals (cf. Bender 1993, Foucault 1984, Soja 1989, Tilley 1994). Individual agents glean meaning, knowledge and understanding through their bodily experiences of acting in, moving through, seeing, hearing, touching the world-space in which they live. Memories of these experiences embed a sense of rootedness and attachment of the individual to a place that provides a sense of belonging and identity. Referring back to how recent spatial and place theories define space and place, we see how phenomenological perspectives of the landscape incorporate both a sense of space and place. Thus the previous sharp boundaries between these are broken down, and we recognize that both space and place are cultural constructions witnessed in the landscape of the individual.

Using phenomenology, landscape archaeologies focus on both dwelling in a place and moving through space (Tilley 1994). These studies take into consideration non-built physical places that are culturally meaningful for a sense of attachment to place, such as mountain-scapes, lakeshores, or cave-sites. A wider range of different kinds of sites is possible (including, I will add, culturally built places not usually considered, such as contemporary city sites). Instead of looking only inward at individual isolated and socially bounded sites, landscape archaeologists look outward, broadening the scale and scope of the research and crossing the boundaries that have defined more traditional

spatial analysis of settlements. In doing so, landscape archaeology emphasizes interaction, social and political (and sometimes leading to contestations), among these differentiated sites in a wide network of difference rather than sameness.

Further, a phenomenological approach is a more embodied understanding of the landscape: individuals act on, move through and live in the landscape and thus help to create the landscape, at the same time the landscape helps to shape those experiences and thus create those individuals. By focusing on individuals this approach allows for diversity emphasizing differences in relation not only to race, class and gender, but also ethnicity, age, and religion, etc. Finally, a phenomenological landscape approach is concerned with how and why the spatial and social boundaries are negotiated, crossed and/or resisted through the actions of the individual. Individual agency is part of the local histories, but both the local and the individual are also closely linked to large-scale structures that are either reaffirmed or are challenged and resisted by the actions at the local level. In this way landscape archaeologies are political and (as I will explore in my contemporary case study) connect the local to the global.

Landscape Archaeologies: the Politics of Spatial Scales, Movement & Representation:

The volume *Landscapes of Clearance* (Smith and Gazin-Schwartz 2008), examines landscapes of abandonment and/or exile through colonial and postcolonial processes of contestation and removal of local inhabitants to illustrate the political, social and economic impact as individuals and groups move or are moved across the landscape.

These displaced people move across spatial boundaries and spatial scales through the act

of physical and ideological clearances. Similarly, in her article “Landscape on the move” (2001) and in *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Bender and Winer 2001), Bender discusses this idea of movement of individuals across the landscape and has related it specifically to the experiences of postcolonial diasporic peoples crossing national borders.

Whether colonial or postcolonial, landscape archaeologies explore the social landscapes at a more humanistic and intimate scale. In the remainder of the paper I outline two different case studies of my research that illustrate my focus on space and spatial relations in understanding social interactions of power, whether in the representation of 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey maps or in the spatial engineering of asylum seeker detention centres in the contemporary Irish landscape.

### ***19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland:***

For my PhD research at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, I focused on 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland made by British soldier-surveyors. The research combined landscape archaeology and historical anthropology. For this, I was concerned with the spatiality of the places being mapped as well as a critique and analysis of how the maps – spatial artifacts of landscape representation – were made. I was interested in the colonial power and the making of maps as a managerial tool to know and control the people and their place in the landscape, exploring *how place and the control over place was fundamentally linked to identity and to power*. Specifically, I explored how the mapped landscape represented ideologies of the contemporary social relations of power;

and of the heritage and culture of Irish identities through the mapped placenames and archaeology. This research aimed to focus on multiple socio-spatial scales, from the local to the national and to the international colonial (Smith 2001, 2003, 2007).

In 1824, the British Ordnance Survey of Ireland was established, not as previous mapping projects had been as part of a military campaign, but rather to produce a national map to re-evaluate the county tax which paid for many of the country's roads and bridges and much of its local government machinery. Thus the map was an administrative mechanism of the colonial British State aimed to gain better economic and political control over the local level landscape and access of movement through it. The scale of the map at 6 inches to the mile and the unprecedented detail that this allowed meant that the State's gaze penetrated far into the intimate local workings of the landscape. The gentry class estates were highlighted on the maps but also recorded were the local Irish tenant farmers' individual houses, farm buildings and field boundaries. It was possible from the maps to know exactly who lived on the land and under what kind of arrangements.

Examining the archival records of the first edition 6-inch maps of 1837 for the area of Carrowkeel-Lough Arrow in southern Co. Sligo, situated in the northwest of Ireland, I analyzed the ways in which the mapping survey was carried out by the Royal Engineers and Royal Sappers and Miners of the British Ordnance Survey. Knowing who did which tasks and how the process of the mapping took place allowed me to better grasp the landscape perspective both of those doing the work on the ground as well as those administrators back in the Dublin office who sought to standardize, regularize and in

some case anglicize the landscape. Townland boundaries were made smaller or larger to better suit official managerial control in the local landscape. Similarly, placenames both of townlands and other features on the landscape, were simplified, standardized and anglicized. Further, features of importance to the local inhabitants, such as sacred wells or mountaintop sites, or archaeological sites of megalithic tombs and “fairyforts”, were not considered of significance to the map-makers and so were often mis-identified or left off the mapped landscape entirely. (This is of further consequence to current archaeologists who use these 19<sup>th</sup> century maps as the starting point of any landscape survey and study.)

I remember that at my proposal defense, I was asked the question: “will you aim then to make a ‘better map’ of Ireland than did the British?” My aim was not to make a ‘better map’ but it made me think about what that meant? What was a ‘better map’? Did that mean that I would use “improved” spatial methods and technology to record the spatial patterning of the landscape? How would that – or could that? – create a ‘better map’?

This makes me consider the tools and means that archaeologists and anthropologists (along with map-makers and geographers) use to represent, study, and analyze space and spatiality. It makes me aware that mapping, whether in the hands of British soldier-surveyors, or in the hands of archaeologists (since mapping is a fundamental tool of our spatial methods) is wrought with cultural biases. Maps are about the cultural choices of what to include and what not to include, and how to represent that which is included using the standardized conventions of the map-maker. Which way is the map oriented?

Are boundaries marked? Are placenames recorded or changed on the map? Are places that are important to local inhabitants but not to the map-maker, recorded or left off the map? These are all deliberate decisions that are culturally and socially embedded in the (political/ cultural) position of the map-maker. Thus all maps are political. All maps are, at best, incomplete and partial stories or representations.

Indeed, from this perspective, I argue that if we critically assess our spatial methods, we gain a better understanding of those who are *doing* the methods, *doing* the research and, in my particular case, *making* the maps, whether they are 19<sup>th</sup> century British Ordnance Surveyors or contemporary archaeologists. It allows us to better understand the politics of our representations and the politics of spatiality, while it allows us to recognize that *who* controls the representation of space and landscape, wields a great amount of power.

***Migration Landscapes of Asylum Seeker Detention Centres:***

The idea of politics of spatiality – and especially the notion of spatial governance – is central to my current spatial study of the contemporary archaeological landscapes of asylum seeker holding centres in post-colonial 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland. In a kind of “archaeology of now” I explore asylum seekers’ space & identity in Ireland, where asylum seekers are the most marginalized of all transnational migrants in Ireland – in a state of legal, social and spatial limbo as they await a decision on their refugee claim in State operated “Direct Provision Accommodation Centres” located around the country (Smith 2008, 2009).

I am concerned with how the State engineers the space afforded to asylum seekers in these Centres where they are obliged to stay for an average of 5 years, neither allowed to work nor attend post-secondary education. In engineering this space and restricting the movement of asylum seekers once within Ireland, the State controls its national and cultural borders in a physical, social and ideological act of exclusion and marginalization.

Ireland, once a place of emigration, is now a *destination place*. In 1992, only 39 individuals sought asylum in Ireland, by 2000 that number had increased to almost 12,000 – for a country with such a low population, around 4 million – these numbers are significant. The largest percentage of asylum seekers (about 68%) is African and the largest nationality group (at 30-35%) is Nigerian. Up until 2004 the ratio of women to men seeking asylum was 2:1.

How has this new immigration affected and influenced Ireland's sense of identity, culture and place in itself and within the European Union? I bring to this study from my archaeological background, a focus on the spatial patterns and practices, and on the artifacts of cultural identity as a way to understand the social and ideological implications of this “new” transnational landscape of movement of people into Ireland.

In my research, I survey and analyze the multiple spatial scales of this transnational migration: from the transnational migration; to the national process of centralization and dispersal; to the regional situatedness of the Centres throughout the country; to the local

(internal) space of the Centres themselves; and finally, to the bodily scale of the asylum seekers' experiences.

At the national level, the process is both centralized and decentralized. It is centralized in the sense that all aspects of the process are channeled through the Dublin Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and that the Reception and Integration Agency (a branch of Justice) operationalizes the whole of the process. However, this agency has little to do with "integration" for asylum seekers. Once the asylum seeker is "received", fingerprinted, documented, and given a temporary residency certificate and instructions about health services, etc., they are then "dispersed" to Direct Provision Centres around the country, as a means to control against concentrated densities of asylum seekers. Fear of "ghettoization" means that asylum seekers are located around the country in centres, supposedly with the aim to balance the asylum seeker population to be less than one-third of 1% of the indigenous population of the local Health Board Area.

The Direct Provision Accommodation Centres are *transnational spaces*. They are the first and sometimes the last or only place of interaction between asylum seekers and the Irish society. They are places where the asylum seekers learn the practice of the Irish society; a place where many cultures meet; and where there is a negotiation between inclusion and exclusion. These Centres are in old hostels, hotels, old colleges/convents, or are in previous holiday centres or are system built barracks. At present there are 54 of these Centres around the country (although there have been as many as 70+ at one time). It is at these centres that asylum seekers are required to stay as they await (on average 5 years)

the decision on their refugee status. It is in examining the landscapes of these Centres within the context of transnational migration, that I explore how the Irish State seeks to control its borders, its identity and its image through the spatial managing of these newcomers.

In this contemporary landscape archaeology, I explore, transcend and traverse across the spatial – and temporal – boundaries of traditional archaeology. That an “archaeology of now” is not only possible but is pertinent, has to do with the very theoretical underpinnings of these kinds of phenomenological spatial/landscape archaeologies. First, it is concerned with scale and the political production of scale as a social process and contest over identity and belonging. Second, it emphasizes that while dealing with scale, it does not adhere to a static notion of bounded social entities, but is interested in the inter-relationality and movement between scales. There is a fluidity of experiences across these permeable spatial/social boundaries. Third, it recognizes that the local and the global scales are inextricably linked. The place is unintelligible without reference to its position in the larger context, and the global social structures are only practiced or challenged and changed through the experiences of the individual within the local place. Fourth, what this allows is the focus on diversity and difference – of the local within the global, of the individual experiencing the local and the global. This is not a theory of sameness (for which earlier spatial studies have been criticized) but of variegation, inequalities, negotiations and contestations. Finally, this theoretical framework can be explored to understand the attachment and belonging to local place enriched by

memories, rituals and traditions, or to understand the dislocation of diasporic peoples (whether in colonial re-writings of the mapped landscape, or in post-colonial transnational landscapes of asylum seeker holding centres). These displaced people cross national, regional and/or local boundaries balancing the politics of remembering with the politics of forgetting.

Phenomenological approaches to spatial and landscape archaeologies recognize the humanized and intimate scales of experience, while acknowledging and examining the spatial/social relations of power. By exploring landscape archaeologies of scale, movement and the politics of spatiality, my research challenges where and how we apply our spatial analysis, and calls for a broadening of our scope as well as a careful reflection on the spatial methods we use.

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