

# **Re-Imagining Spaces and Places**

# **Emerald Interdisciplinary Connexions**

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# **Re-Imagining Spaces and Places: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Relationship between Identity, Space, and Place**

EDITED BY

**STEFANO ROZZONI**

*University of Bergamo, Italy*

**BEITSKE BOONSTRA**

*Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

And

**TERESA CUTLER-BROYLES**

*University of New Mexico, USA*



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## About the Contributors

**Esra Akbalık** is an Architect and works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture, Doğuş University, Istanbul, Turkey. She completed her PhD in 2017 with her thesis titled *Architectural Artifacts and Starchitects in Global Geographies*. Tangible and intangible processes of space production, politics and urban space, neoliberal discourse, and its spatial reflections compose her main research interests. She instructs third-year architectural design studios and offers elective courses including Social Aspects of Architecture, Architecture-Reading and Writing and Space, Participation and Design. She embraces architecture as a tool that helps to understand the emancipation and power relations in societies.

**Dana Alhasan** is an Architect and Educator from Kuwait, with a background in city planning and heritage conservation. After graduating with a B. Arch from Kuwait University in 2011, she worked at Kuwait Municipality and then went on to pursue an MSc in Architecture (2017) that explored the role of collective memory on heritage conservation. She later joined the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters focusing on modern architectural heritage. For the past three years Dana has been teaching at the College of Architecture at Kuwait University.

**Anas Alomaim** is an Assistant Professor of Architecture and the acting Vice Chair of the Department of Architecture, College of Architecture, Kuwait University. After finishing his Master of Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia University, he moved to California to pursue his PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles where he worked on the history of nation building in Kuwait. Alomaim worked in several companies and institutions in London, New York City, Los Angeles, and Kuwait. Besides working as an architect and an educator, Alomaim has curated, cocurated, and participated in several art and architecture exhibitions in Los Angeles, New York, Dubai, and Kuwait.

**Sami Chohan** is an Architect, Urban thinker, and Educator based in Karachi, Pakistan. His research and pedagogical interests explore emerging spatial perspectives, practices, and productions that resist and counter the hegemonic spatial developments promoted by neoliberal policies, particularly in the Global South. He currently serves as Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, where he teaches both studio and seminar courses through disciplinary synthesis and interactions. He has also served as curator of the first-ever National Pavilion of Pakistan in the 2018 edition

of the Venice Biennale of Architecture. Titled *The Fold*, the national exhibition project was inspired by the physical and social dimensions of the many informal settlements embedded in the fabric of Karachi. Sami holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and a Master of Arts in Interior Architectural Design from Hochschule für Technik Stuttgart with an exchange semester at İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi.

**Olivia Krauze** is a researcher in English at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Deputy Editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Romance, Revolution and Reform*. Olivia's research interests include sexuality, violence, the emotions and affect, medicine and science, and the novel. Her PhD thesis, provisionally entitled "'Violent Emotion' in the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel, c 1850-1900," sets out to deconstruct and situate this concept within a larger emerging discourse of Victorian medical writing on the emotions. She has previously written and presented on Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Wilkie Collins, W. T. Stead, and nineteenth-century pornography.

**Khaled I. Nabil**, Professor of Architecture, obtained his BSc in Architectural Engineering from Alexandria University in 1981 and his Master's Degree later from Zagazig University in Egypt. He received his PhD in Architecture from Cairo University, Egypt, with the collaboration of Pennsylvania State University, in 1995. He has been practicing architectural design and construction supervision since graduation and became a Housing Design Consultant in 1996. He has won several architectural competitions. Since 2006, Dr Nabil has been a Professor of Architecture and Building Technology. Professor Nabil believes in technological innovation, and has succeeded to register six US Patents. Furthermore, Professor Nabil has recently published a book titled: *Building Technology of Affordable Housing*. He has a wide professional and academic experience, which entitled him to teach at 11 different universities in Egypt and abroad. He is currently teaching at Zagazig and British University in Egypt. His publications are at his site: [www.khalednabil.net](http://www.khalednabil.net).

**Dr-Ing Nakul Nitin Gote**, born in Pune, India, completed his postgraduate work in Urban and Rural Planning at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IITR), during which his thesis was awarded by the Indian Institute of Town Planners. Thereafter, he joined the Technische Universität Dresden (TUD), Germany, where he pursued his doctoral research under the aegis of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER). His focus during his doctoral research, and ever since, has been on governance, urban resilience, and systems thinking. Nakul's research interest lies in the application of systems theory for addressing the problems faced by urban systems in a rapidly changing world. In his spare time, he likes to marvel at the parallels between modern scientific insights and the wise words of ancient seekers and philosophers.

**Stefano Rozzoni** is a PhD candidate in "Transcultural Studies in Humanities" at the University of Bergamo, Italy, in cotutelle with Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany, where he is a member of the International PhD Program "Literary and Cultural Studies," and an affiliate member of the European



doctoral program PhdNet “Literary and Cultural Studies.” He is also a member of the Research Group “Ecology and the Study of Culture” at the Graduate Center for the Study of Culture (GCSC) in Gießen. His research interests focus on ecocriticism, posthuman studies, British Modernism, Virginia Woolf, and pastoral poetry.

**Elisabete Mendes Silva** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal, where she teaches English Language and Culture. She holds a PhD in English Literature and Culture studies. In her MA studies she specialized in English Culture. She has been a researcher at University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies since 2005. Her main areas of interest include Culture studies, English Culture, History of Ideas, Political Thought, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). She has published widely in the areas of English culture, TEFL, and TELL. She is the coeditor of *Teaching Crossroads*. She has been involved in several international projects (e.g., Intact; AduLeT: CTwoSEAS; QuILL) within the Erasmus+ programme since 2012.

**Angela Specht** is an Academic Coordinator in the Master of Arts-Interdisciplinary Studies program at Athabasca University (Alberta, Canada). She teaches in the community studies and governance and is focus area steward for Community Studies. She received her PhD from the University of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta). In her spare time, she is an avid photographer, birder, gardener, volunteer, and loving caregiver to her elderly mom.

**Wolfgang Wende** is a Landscape Planner who studied at the Technical University Berlin (TUB). After he graduated with a Diploma of Planning Engineering, he followed a doctorate fellowship of the State of Berlin for young scientists. From 2006 to 2008 he was announced as a visiting professor at TUB. His additional research from that time through today has focused on European Landscape Planning and International Biodiversity and Ecosystem Offsetting Systems. In 2008–2009 he changed his position to the Federal Environment Agency Germany and worked as a research officer. Since 2010 he has been a professor at the TU Dresden and head of a research area at the IOER. He possesses comprehensive international experience, for example as a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore for landscape policies and President of the German Environmental Impact Assessment Association. Wolfgang is also a member of the Leibniz Citizens Science Network.

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# Preface

*Re-Imagining Spaces and Places: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Relationship between Identity, Space, and Place* is the outcome of a brilliant conference organized by Progressive Connexions that took place in Bruges, Belgium, on April 13 and 14, 2019. The aim of the event was to create an inspiring, professional, and creative environment for intellectual exchange among international scholars and other professionals from very diverse research fields, experiences, and geopolitical contexts about space- and place-related issues.

The quality of the presentations and the generous transdisciplinary discussions among the participants immediately revealed the potentials of the preliminary studies offered during the event: therefore, the possibility of creating a collection of chapters based on the conference papers seemed natural. Yet this book should not be considered as a mere combination of conference proceedings; rather it represents a self-sustaining publishing project that includes work deriving from a full reelaboration, rewriting, re-thinking, and reimagination of the groundwork achieved in Bruges.

The ethos of Progressive Connexions reminds us that, “interdisciplinary experiences [are] rooted in the values of inclusiveness, egalitarianism, collegiality and critical inquiry [which are...] pushing the boundaries of perceptions and insights which shape the world.”<sup>1</sup> Along this line, this volume serves as evidence of how a dialogue – or, rather, a *multi*-logue – among different perspectives on key cultural concepts, such as space, place, and identity, is highly productive and greatly needed when reflecting on the world that we inhabit.

Over time, the concepts of spaces and places have been widely debated in the academic and professional world. Yet there remain opportunities and margins for (ever-) new understandings and reframings of well-established assumptions regarding these themes. This belief clearly emerged from the authors when they met physically in Belgium in 2019, and a similar consideration accompanied the editorial process of this volume. Moreover, the recent pandemic has made it even more relevant how familiar notions, habits, and rooted knowledge concerning spatiality can become objects of sudden, crucial transformation. Writing, editing, and finessing the chapters during the pandemic has thus fostered the idea that reimagining spaces and places is a fundamental operation for responding to the

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<sup>1</sup>Progressive connexions. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.progressiveconnexions.net/ethos/>. Accessed on August 25, 2021.

many crises of our times. In this sense, the present book stresses the idea of reimagining spaces and places as a way for inspiring its readers to find unexpected strengths and overcome the ever-new challenges that they face.

In spite of all these challenges, editing the present volume was a particularly motivating and engaging process, especially due to the positive attitude of the contributors and to the great assistance provided by the publishing team. Therefore, this book, which is the result of an unexpected *connection* of minds and bodies, has come to represent a *progressive* collective work as well as the end of a journey that will hopefully inspire future studies and encourage innovative encounters for discussing spaces and places among scholars from all over the world.

# Acknowledgments

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We also exhibit our gratitude to Progressive Connexions, which allowed for the inspiring Spaces and Places Conference in Bruges, Belgium, in April 2019. This gathering provided the initial spark for what became this collection. In particular, many thanks to Teresa Cutler-Broyles, the soul of this event, and the first fan of the wonderful presentations delivered during the conference: it is due to your intuition that nine of these preliminary studies on spaces and places have now become brilliant chapters in the present book. Thanks as well to Beitske Boonstra for your insights and perceptions which lent us clarity as we moved forward. And to Stefano Rozzoni for your tireless work, your inspiration in ensuring that these chapters came together in wonderful conversation, and for your always encouraging words, thank you. Without you, we would not be here.

Finally, we would like to thank all the contributors of this collection. Even though the years since the conference have been challenging – especially due to the twists and turns caused by the pandemic, which has prolonged the timing of this publication – the contributors of this volume have exhibited a tenacity that can only be admired. Their openness to our suggestions and their promptness in embracing our requests has not only been inspiring, but it has also been greatly appreciated. Finally, it has made our editorial job easier, allowing for our own personal and professional growth as well.