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Pierre Frankhauser
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Deciding Where to Live

An Interdisciplinary Approach to
Residential Choice in its Social Context



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Pierre Frankhauser · Dominique Ansel
(Eds.)

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An Interdisciplinary Approach to
Residential Choice in its Social Context

With a Preface by Lena Sanders

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Preface

Lena Sanders

Deciding where to live—this is a fundamental issue for individuals and society alike, and it is also a great subject for interdisciplinary research because of the many complex aspects to this seemingly straightforward question. What makes this book original and rich is primarily that it looks at this issue from so many sides, with intersecting angles of approach and an interdisciplinary grounding. Rather than being a series of chapters in which each discipline sets out its point of view, with its questions and methods, one of the features of great interest in this book is that all the chapters are written by several hands, most of them involving three or four separate disciplines. This approach implies forms of “negotiation” among the authors, who have managed to put across didactically what each discipline has to contribute to the question of deciding to move and choosing where to live. Almost all the chapters are co-signed by geographers and psychologists, reflecting the backgrounds of the two editors of the book. This underlying interdisciplinarity is enhanced by the outlooks of economists (also associated with very many chapters), neurologists, sociologists, linguists, and a physicist (one of the editors began his academic career in theoretical physics). Each of these outlooks illuminates the others. Three aspects of the work seem to me worth highlighting:

– the approach is resolutely *multiscalar* and *multidimensional*: on an individual level consideration is given to individuals’ neurological and psychological workings, their inheritance and past experience, their mode of evaluation and rationality; the effects of context influencing their decision-making process are contemplated in all their dimensions (family, environment); lastly, the dynamics of residential spaces and planning strategies are addressed on the collective

level of society and territory. Each level is addressed per se and in terms of its mutual interactions with the others.

– The approach is a *systemic* one and the concept of system, which is a pre-eminently cross-disciplinary one, is mobilized in several chapters. The systems and interactions at work in deciding where to live are highly diverse, some being intra-individual, with the various components of emotion (physiological, behavioural, and cognitive) and the executive cerebral system (emotional, cognitive, and motivational processes); some inter-individual and inter-locational, with the spatial system bringing into play interactions among places, accessibility, migratory flows, and more generally among individuals, groups, and the environment with respect to the system of relations between the residential setting, the way inhabitants perceive it, and their satisfaction with it. The concepts relating to the systemic approach such as feedback (e.g. between individual behaviour and collective references), emergence (especially urban patterns, segregation patterns), and self-organization (e.g. in the phenomenon of periurbanization) are explained from the point of view of theory and are mobilized in several chapters on varied topics.

– The *theoretical underpinnings* of the book are robust and manifest themselves in two ways: (1) within each chapter, with theory serving a line of argument that is followed through to the end, for example, that of evaluation of an environment or the psychological context of residential choice; (2) in a more transversal approach that consists in explaining and comparing theoretical frameworks through which to describe and model complex systems, account for a decision-making process, examine the objects of observation, or juggle with the questions of uncertainty and imprecision. Accordingly, the interest of this book extends beyond the theme of deciding where to live, and the conceptual thinking proposed here could readily be extended to other topics.

The introduction to the book presents the chapters in the logical sequence chosen by the authors. However, it seems to me that the various chapters can stand alone while at the same time contributing to the collective work and can be read in other orders, depending on the reader's own interests. This approach is facilitated by the frequent cross-references that make it easy to navigate among the chapters.

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Introduction

Pierre Frankhauser and Dominique Ansel

Choosing where to live has certainly been a fundamental act in human society ever since people became sedentary. This choice is largely determined by the cultural, historical, social, and spatial context in which people live. However, the place where an individual, household, or group settles contributes greatly to their well-being or uneasiness and may prompt them to move, within the bounds of their possibilities.

In evaluating a place to live, account is taken not just of the housing but also the environment in which it is located and more generally the places that are regularly frequented. The image associated with such spaces is an essential component in appraising the residential environment and the degree of satisfaction of the resident population.

In developed countries, the spectacular improvement of means of travel has facilitated the appropriation of places within an ever increasing radius and so modified the relationship between the individual and the space experienced, which now covers a vaster area and more diversified usages. Growing mobility has also increased the potential for choice and decision-making and contributed to making the relation with space more complex.

Recurrent spatial practices and residential choice act directly on anthropized space by transforming it and generating daily travel flows. Such flows are an important issue in territorial dynamics. But these transformations also modify the space experienced and the way users perceive it. What are the factors that push individuals to move home and how do they reach that decision? That is the general question we address in this multi-authored book. The individual who chooses a place to live acts by integrating factors relating to her personal history in conjunction with her spatial experiences but also aspects pertaining to the perception of her social and spatial environment that are socially constructed

and contribute to the implementation of multiple individual and collective facets of identity.

The complex interactions between space and user that condition the processes of choice in question provide a priori an incentive to develop an approach combining different disciplines (geography, psychology, economics, sociology, linguistics, medicine) that attempt to understand, explain, and model these processes of choice and decision-making. However, we observe a certain shortfall in communication among disciplines that contribute in a complementary way to furthering knowledge in this domain.

To develop such a cross-disciplinary approach is the main objective of this book, which has been written as part of the ECDESUP project (*l'évaluation, le choix et la décision dans l'usage des espaces urbains et périurbains*) financed by France's Agence nationale de la Recherche (ANR). The book associates three main inputs with this approach:

- allowance for geographical space through the reading of theoretical and quantitative geography;
- consideration of humans in constant interaction with their environment through the social psychology and environmental social psychology approach;
- focus on choice by means of a more individual-centred contribution as proposed by economic theory.

In keeping with the objective of developing intersecting views from the various disciplines, we have associated representatives of various disciplines in each of the chapters. Special attention is given to clarifying the concepts developed in the various disciplines in order to agree on their meaning in the given context. It has thus been possible to avoid a juxtaposition of disciplinary approaches and to develop a synthetic view instead. This orientation of the work is far from anecdotal. It is the manifestation of an intention to think of human activity in its totality and to contemplate the research process directed at complex phenomena.

As we emphasize the decisions involved in moving home, we consider de facto in this book the description and modelling of the choice and decision-making process, which seems to give precedence to that part of the population in a position to make such choices. It is obvious that growing mobility has excluded some people who are restricted in their daily travel patterns as in their residential choices. Even so, albeit with reduced margins of freedom, in particular in economic terms, the aspirations of anyone with respect to a place to live remain strong. Thus, although most moves are dictated by budget constraints, this aspect will be only marginal in this book.

The book is for post-graduates and experienced researchers alike. While it follows the rationale of a handbook, it is neither the intention nor is it possible to give a complete overview of the approaches developed in the associated disciplines. The concepts and approaches are dealt with here with a specific purpose

in mind. The aim is to consider residential choice and the decisions associated with it from the perspective of possible formal modelling of the decision-making processes associated with residential choice. Notice that such modelling has not been achieved either in psychology or in economics or quantitative geography, even if various inroads have been made. However, the value of such modelling is manifold. In terms of academic research, it compels us to clarify the features that condition decision-making and to account for the factors that help or on the contrary hinder decision-making. It thus enables us to enhance the theoretical concepts in question. From a perspective of more applied research, it is possible to integrate such modelling into the design of models for simulating territorial dynamics. Although the objective is not, then, to present any particular model to satisfy the objectives of modelling, we do wish to contribute to scientific debate in this domain.

These objectives have oriented the plan of the work which is structured into two main parts. The first considers the residential choice context from various angles (first five chapters) and the second looks more especially at modelling the decision-making process by taking account of the individual's position in the societal context (last five chapters).

Chapter 1 looks at how individuals create and modify their spatial references over the course of their lifetime. Self-awareness relative to their environment and the way individuals appropriate and feel that environment comes in later in their evaluations. Thus it is likely that we tend to seek out the ambience of a setting we experienced as reassuring or pleasant and avoid atmospheres that recall unpleasant memories. But beyond individual experiences we are also conditioned by the references of our environment and therefore the cultural context but also by certain universal symbols. This aspect is taken up again in chapter 2, which develops dialectic linkages between individual position and collective references in the decision-making process.

Chapters 3 and 4 look at aspects that may condition the actual decision-making process. Thus on the subject of geographical mobility, whether daily or not, the concept of accessibility is central in human geography. Accessibility is also used in other disciplines such as sociology when examining social mobility or psychology when investigating the level of awareness of a form of behaviour, knowledge, or emotion. Accessibility studied in terms of disability is also a useful "detour" for addressing the socio-cognitive dimension. Chapter 4 also develops the way theories have progressively taken account of subjectivity and the affective dimensions in modelling the decision-making process. Running through this just below the surface we can read the development of the idea of rationality. Accordingly we thought it worth including in our considerations recent results of work in neuroscience that have made it possible to clarify in this perspective the role of cognitive and affective factors that may modulate choice (chapter 5).

Our individual spatial behaviours are guided by collective references. The purpose of chapter 6 is to discuss the role of such references in choices concerning spatial mobility in light of the different social sciences. Chapter 7 looks more specifically at the concepts used for modelling interaction between individuals and the societal context within the context of residential choice. Emphasis is on the approaches used for modelling self-organizing phenomena and the emergence of spatial and societal structures. First we consider models that highlight “macroscopic” structures, that is, the distribution of population on the aggregate scale of a city or region. Then we consider models that are directed more at modelling the behaviour of individuals and their interactions.

The scientific study of any phenomenon requires some reflection on the methods most suitable for acquiring such knowledge. This aspect is broached in chapter 8. It should be recalled that one objective in our approach is to obtain such information in a form that can be integrated into a mathematical or computer model. This is therefore a complex observational context that requires in-depth reflection on suitable methods for obtaining the desired information. This leads us to epistemological considerations on scientific observation which is addressed through a cross-disciplinary interpretation and enables us to specify requirements of the observational methods to be used.

Chapter 9 shows how the notions of preferences, utility, choice, and attractiveness are interdependent. We examine the process of choice leading to a decision and an action with spatial consequences, essentially from the point of view of residential mobility even if elements relating to local daily mobility such as choice of mode of transport, destination, or path are evoked.

The final chapter examines how this decision-making can be formalized. This question is seldom considered, at least in the research context in question. With this in mind, the various concepts of modelling decision-making are recalled. Beginning with the classical probabilistic approach traditionally used in decision-making in economics, the criticism levelled at this approach is presented and the more recent development of the probabilistic concept that stems from it. The next section is a reflection on the contribution from thinking developed in quantum mechanics and overall the generalization of the probabilistic approach that makes it possible to address the question of choice from a particular angle. A relation is established with fuzzy set theory which invites us as our final step to rethink decision-making mechanisms.

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Individuals in Their Spatial and Social Environments

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and Victor Alexandre

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the psychological context in which individuals find themselves when they have to choose a place to live (to rent or buy) in a given setting. The act of living in a particular place and type of dwelling arises out of a specific process. It is this decision mechanism that we wish to account for here. Most studies provide figures, percentages, and economic references but very little information about the details of the human dimension of residential choice. The basis for the decision is usually ignored. Yet, an individual's well-being does not come down just to the price of land, number of rooms, or the image projected by living in such or such a place. We must also consider the mental construction of the living space. This fresh viewpoint broadly takes into account family, social, and cultural references but also criteria concerning each individual's personality. What matters here is an understanding of the mental phenomena that determine, condition, and induce our choices and decisions, often without our knowing it.

Urban space is therefore thought of as human space in which everyone explores their person/space relationships in terms of representations and interactions in the world. Our aim is to show how the various approaches and disciplines of the human and social sciences (psychology, human geography, language sciences, sociology, and so on) are mutually enhancing. We shall be dealing, then, with appropriating space in its personal and interactive dimensions. Human development is a fundamental given in our approach to space.

From it will develop a knowledge of intimacy and the social realm, the differentiation between public and private spheres, and integration within urban space depending on how that space is shared. Once human competency is acquired in a relative way, next comes urban competency.

Residential mobility implies movement in space, relocation, moving home, settling somewhere new and perhaps a total change of scenery. That involves a cognitive and affective process developed since infancy that has enabled us to acquire certain aptitudes: the possibility of moving around in space physically and mentally, while being firmly grounded, so as to be able to form relationships with other individuals. Residential choices are the outcome of a set of skills acquired over the course of time. The appropriation of individual space arises out of humankind's appropriation of space in general. Two time scales are therefore involved.

– The *individual* time scale concerns whatever provides access to space and time, to the ability to settle and to up-and-go (nomadism), which occurs over the course of the child's development through their upbringing in a particular family and a particular cultural and sociological environment. We shall therefore address what it is that determines human beings over the course of their development, in their relations with others and the environment, including their choice of living place, since childhood references greatly influence what becomes of us.

– The *anthropological* time scale flows from human evolution, which is itself related to the appropriation of geographical space, to exploring and discovering the world and the way it has been signified.

The way in which human offspring grow and forge themselves is the outcome of the evolution of the species itself and certain behaviour cannot be understood without the accompanying historical context. Gregariousness or sociability, it matters little which. We observe that humankind has clustered for specific purposes: for survival, for effective self-protection, for trust-building (towards the environment and other humans), to the point of creating a dynamic of exchange and positive or negative interactions. Over the course of time, this clustering has continued unabated, but safety and communication are still aspects of it.

After elaborating on these aspects, we shall turn to the traces left by our personal and universal history, in western society, and more especially through language and interactions. We shall see how humankind has experienced space, named it and represented it; how, by defining themselves in a personal space, people have come to live increasingly in interaction with their environment, by learning to observe distances and boundaries with others.

Accordingly — this is our postulate — an individual's historical (social, family, etc.) circumstances within a given culture (landscape, climate, lifestyle, rites of interaction, language, etc.) influence or even determine residential choices and spatial practices.

2. Constructing one's place in the world

"Finding one's place" is essential in the life of every individual. The body in space calls for a delimitation of a personal space allowing for the boundaries between self and non-self. This apprenticeship of inside/outside, within/without will have repercussions on the ability to set limits and to endure the limits of others. Individuation makes it possible to differentiate oneself from others, initially, but also to accede to others. All the stages of self-construction and encountering others will then make it possible to set about living in society.

2.1 Towards individuation

Individuation¹ (Simondon 1989) is the process which, by integrating unconscious contents, allows the individual personality to develop, to be specified as a full-fledged being, separate from any filial dependency. "Being in the world" is not innate. Proving oneself as a subject involves this capacity to stand apart from others and from the surrounding space.

The appropriation of space during infancy

"Attachment theory" was developed between the 1940s and 1970s by Bowlby (1978) from work in psychoanalysis by Harlow and Winnicott (1957) and Ainsworth et al. (1978)² and by the ethnologists Lorenz (1970) and Hinde (1982). Bowlby showed that the infant's prime need is to feel attached, bound, in relation with a "good-enough" mother who provides care and affection coherently and continuously while gradually fading out. If she is "containing", she enables the child to feel supported (what Winnicott calls "holding"³). This is the first anchor point, the first landmark. Is not talk of an attachment to place (Fleury-Bahi 2000, Altman et al. 1992) tied in with this cognitive-affective process?⁴ This justifies place-related identity described by Proshansky et al. (1983) and even urban-related identity described by Lalli (1992). There is a feeling of belonging to the place where we grew up that influences our later choice of where to live.⁵

1 A concept devised by Jung (1990), Piaget (1937), Winnicott (1957a) and others, and taken up by Gilbert Simondon in 1989.

2 Ainsworth et al. conducted a test (the strange situation) evaluating the "how" of early attachment, showing that the attachment figure provides a safe base at the time the child is opening up to the physical and social world.

3 **Holding corresponds to a stable environment, with the mother capable enough of physically and mentally bearing her child.**

4 This may seem metaphorical, but metaphor is the basis of the construction of meaning, language and human evolution.

5 Guérin-Pace (2006) observes that roots are sometimes expressed more in terms of family and friends than geography.

So the child, once reassured about this safe landmark, may move away from it without feeling lost. The child's construction of its identity involves it becoming separated from the undifferentiated world. It is the separation from the (reassuring) mother that gives the child to understand that the world exists. That is when the child gradually moves into its space. The "skin-ego" concept described by Anzieu (1985) refers to the relationship with the world and states that the difference between the real exterior and the exterior as perceived depends on the individual's construction. Just as the skin encloses the body, there is a protection around the mind serving as a container, a boundary with the outside, and which marks the line of demarcation between inside and outside.

Attachment theory shows that once they become adults, sufficiently "reassured" children engage in independent exploratory behaviour and maintain the same behaviour under stressful circumstances. But it is not all plain sailing, as Freud (1938), Klein (1957), and Winnicott (1975) all showed. Differentiating the self from the world is no easy matter. What psychoanalysis and child psychology teach is that the very young child does not differentiate itself from its mother or its surroundings. It "is" the world. Little by little, the child discovers that it does not remotely control its surroundings when it wants and as it wants. It takes its "first steps" in the world as a living and thinking being. In classical Freudian theory, the father or a third party brings the child to differentiate itself and to grow aware of the interior and exterior of its body and the environment, in a painful but foundational moment. *The other is the very first environment*, which influences us as much as we would like to influence it. That environment is both protective and potentially dangerous whether because of external physical aggression or because it fails to leave the other room to grow (intrusion, lack of intimacy, incest, etc.). The child learns to tame this environment and negotiate with it. Paradoxically, it is the ability to be alone that makes it possible to enter into relations with others later on (Winnicott 1958).

The body is the fundamental component in appropriating space. It is a sensory conveyance moving from one place to another, transmitting information about what is happening in the environment. It is the body that constructs the city in occupying and moving through space. Goffman (1973b) spoke of "vehicular unit" attesting to the appropriation of shifting territory. The "mirror stage" described by Lacan (1949)⁶ brings the child an awareness of its bodily unity. It gives the child the pleasure of looking at itself while feeling differentiated from its image. The encounter between the child and its mirror image confronts it with the first function of the image of its body, enabling it to acquire a "bodily schema". This is the initial stage that is to lead to mental development, symbolization, identification of itself: the being takes shape, recognizes itself, becomes distinct from its environment. Its movements in space provide

6 The initial concept, taken up by René Zazzo, is from Henri Wallon. The stage between 6 and 8 months of age.

different sensations. Walking, which is acquired by the age of about one year, is the vehicle of this appropriation of space and relations. This transition from the body as felt to the body as experienced may be set in parallel with space perceived and space experienced.

Autonomy in the service of identity

With the concept of “fort-da” or the reel game, Freud (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) shows that the game involving an object that appears and disappears in succession allows the child to experiment with and surmount his mother’s absence. For Winnicott, the child’s first “non-me” possessions, such as a blanket, are objects that are created at the same time as they are found. They stand out from external objects because the child “recognizes” itself in them. The blanket, which is significant of childhood attachment, creates in the child’s mental experience an intermediate zone between the ego and external objects, a “potential space” that remains active life long. It is this that makes the idea of separation possible for the child: the other still exists even far from its field of view; separation is not permanent (Winnicott 1958, 1957b).

This “extending of territory” involves sight. Initially, before looking, the eye is used for direction finding. The view of the landscape is an important component. Is it better to live in an unprepossessing dwelling overlooking a forest or in a fine house beside a busy road? Is the sense of direction related to difficulties in moving around in space and creating ties? Is “not finding your way around” not recognizing yourself in space? Does catching a look of space enable spatial appropriation, the ability to find one’s marks. This is related to what Piaget (1937) called the “permanence object”: what vanishes from sight continues to exist. Taking up the concept later, Winnicott spoke of the permanence of the “continuing feeling of being” (1957b). It is the time when the child feels that the objects around it exist outside of it, but above all continue to exist even when it cannot see them. This mental image is the basis of the capacity for *representation*. The child sees the image of its bodily envelope appear, which then becomes symbolic of its self. This bodily limit, by providing a frame, enables the child to come to an understanding of its own existence.

Depending on all these stages, the simplicity or complexity of the city is appreciated in different ways—in the complexity of its geographical landmarks, but also in its acceptance of other individuals. Here there forms the importance accorded or not to the crowd, noise, promiscuity, and to what Chombart de Lauwe (1965) named “crowding”: the impression of being closed-in or of stifling that is felt in an urban setting.

There is a space of the self that structures one’s identity, a zone that is both mobile and bounded depending on the person and the situation. Whoever the authors, the construction of mental space is likened to a subjective zone.

Personal space structures our personal identity. It forms a system of defence and protection of intimacy, by regulating interactions with the social environment. Freud (1923), Klein (1957), and Anzieu (1987) spoke of psychic envelopes, Bion (1983) of *psychic space*, *mental space*, *emotional space*, *thinking apparatus*, Hall (1971) of *bubbles*, Sommer (1973) of *portable territories*, Moles (1968, 1972) of *concentric shells*, Goffman (1973b) of *territories of the self*, Horowitz of a *body-buffer zone* like a boundary between the self and others, Anzieu (1985) of *skin-ego*, Sloterdijk (2006) of *spheres* and *foam*.

Before being able to take on the world, the child learns the ropes with the family environment and its living space, the home. The child occupies the space making it its own via the object but also via language: its room, its toys, its bike, etc. In terms of ontogenesis, the psycholinguistic study of the representation of space in the child's language (in the wake of Piaget) shows universal regularities in the development stages but also important differences from one language to another, especially in the rhythm of acquisition. Hill (2003) argues that children lexicalize their changes of place in line with the typological properties of their language.

From the time the child takes its first steps, it "bumps into" the real world in bumping into the objects around it. But the more it occupies space, the more it delimits itself; the more it finds its marks in space, the more it finds itself as a full-blown individual and can begin to take its place among its family. The child must therefore at one and the same time individualize itself, protect itself from others, and be capable of living with them.

Inner and outer space are very much interlinked. "Internal psychic space, as a place in which the individual constructs himself and his relationship with the world, is not unrelated to the day-to-day experience of the surrounding space" (Fourment-Aptekman 2004:8). Space is mobile and is both what surrounds us (the environment) and what moves around with us: bodily limits but also (family, social, and cultural) history—history that permeates us.

Historical, social and family effects on residential choice

Time is important, too. Our upbringing but also the places in which we have grown up and the time spent there have all shaped us in a particular way. Piaget (1946) showed that logical relationships became established between time, space, and speed. It is the idea of duration that interests us here: when it comes to going to live somewhere new, we project ourselves in this future place both spatially (by imagining the place) and temporally. The affective aspect of a place where we lived in childhood is found again in the choice of or inability to choose a place to live. If the affect is positive, the choices may be about a "paradise lost" forever or endlessly sought out, with respect to the loss of place being the loss of childhood. In contradistinction, a type of place to live in may be shunned if

the feelings and recollections are too painful. For Peytard (1993:167), "Choosing implies excluding (...). The things excluded are not erased, though. They remain in the memory, as waste or as loss, but held in reserve, as it were, always available".

Settling somewhere is much like saying, "This is where I am from". Our choices tell of our origins... whether we accept them or reject them. The child begins to create landmarks, schemas based on what it sees and what surrounds it. From these "models", thought of perhaps either as paragons or as things to be fled, will flow the child's expectations, future choices, and preferences as to residential environment. In their discourse, parents provide a model with the need to comply or on the contrary to change. Residential choices are induced by this sociological aspect: for an entire generation of parents, urging children to "get on in the world" by getting an education, a good job, and money has been essential. The type and place of home then changed, sometimes painfully as it meant denying what had been given until then. There is a family loyalty not to do better than one's parents, complicated by the fact that parents themselves ask their children to do so. This is what de Gaulejac (1987) says in speaking of "class neurosis". He was the first to show that social climbing could be experienced as suffering. Some people cannot live in the city centre or in an upmarket district without feeling like impostors. And vice-versa, some "sensitive" districts will frighten residents used to greater comfort and/or less promiscuity. All of this causes internal conflict. Currently, social conditions suggest that children will not live as well as their parents and will not necessarily be able to buy their own homes (or at least not under the same circumstances), or even live in their parents' house if they cannot pay the inheritance tax.

Access to ownership has historically been an essential turning point. But the psychological cost (of owning space) is sometimes greater than the financial cost. It may be that the place where one lives and the type of housing make reference to *social representations*. When one moves to settle in a new city, the house fronts provide information of which we may not be aware. One imagines oneself living there... or not. And those same façades also give an image of those who live there to outsiders.⁷ Some will prefer to skimp to live in what looks a fine building (façade, district, historical aspect) rather than a more spacious outlying district⁸ because it is what they have known to date.

The new place to live may also be chosen because it is reminiscent of one's place of origin (country, region, district, housing type, etc.). The concept of mobility, highly fashionable as it is, uproots people as much as it broadens their minds. Short of being able to stay in a place to which one has attachments, it may be possible to remain close to it symbolically.

7 The word façade comes from the Italian *faccia*: face.

8 This may be associated with an impression of safety or insecurity.

Capacity for mobility

One can *imagine* living somewhere depending on one's childhood, depending on what is assumed to be pleasant or dangerous, adapted or not to one's standing. The construction of the dangerous character of a place would here be the expression of a representation based on presuppositions that are not necessarily materially expressed or on material signs with specific meaning for each individual depending on their past experience. Initially, towns formed around "natural" points of attraction: rivers, quarries, crops, strongholds, etc. The history of the place where one grew up (metropolis, village, market town, hamlet, city or countryside, house or flat) and one's life history in that place determine subsequent choices. Everything will therefore depend on the size of the accommodation, the housing type, its location in the city and the neighbourhood (different demands for social contacts), on the location of the city itself, social and cultural origins, etc., but also on one's status as owner or tenant. Does the idea of well-being depend on this? Here we find the importance of *being and having*: is the feeling of being "at home" stronger if one is the home owner? Is it not also a way of rationalizing things? After such an expensive investment, is it conceivable that one might not feel at home?

What Moscovici (1984) calls *anchoring* or grounding refers to the social rooting of representation, which is done by incorporating new factors added and attached to others, in reference to beliefs, values, and pre-existing knowledge of the culture to which the subject belongs. This makes it possible to make the environment familiar, to regulate behaviour, to ensure a communication function, and therefore to enable interactions and provide a consensus basis for sharing the same value systems. It is also what promotes a degree of capacity for mobility.⁹

The reasons for residential choice take up much of the space in the place ultimately chosen. There is a need to meet a demand or requirement. The "choice" made is that of a place to reside, but not necessarily to have to leave the place where one lives. It is possible to study through "the idea of 'residential choice' [the] forms of social construction and [the] socio-economic and territorial effects" (Authier et al. 2010:9). Is there a question of bringing the family together, psychological aspects (blended families), or economic aspects (house-sharing by young adult workers)? Redundancy, for example, means one can no longer stay in a flat for which the rent has become too expensive, hence a move towards an outlying place or a smaller place. The answer will be different depending on age and family status (alone, with one's own children or step children?). Modern lifestyles and occupational mobility induce original and sometimes non-rational behaviour. Couples do not always live together if the two work in

9 Mobility, which Simmel (1908) speaks of in Grafmeyer and Joseph (1990), in the case of a stranger in a city, both fixed in a point in space and detached from that same point.

different cities. Some families see one of the parents leave the home during the week and then come back to base at the weekend; others are required to move for their work (members of the armed forces, government employees, etc.). All of this entails economic but also psychological and organizational constraints.

So, contrary to what might be thought, a removal (like a birth or a promotion) may induce depression. In appearance, there is nothing to explain the sense of ill-being. The problem arises from the weak ability to have created bonds as a child. The initial up-anchoring is revived and the removal distances one from a geographical zone that represents stability and safety. Now, as we have just seen, safety is the fundamental parameter for any individual; sometimes their survival depends on it. "Urban space and experience of it may be considered as a metaphor for psychic space" (Fourment-Aptekman, 2004). It is a matter, then, of finding the words to express what one feels.

2.2 Naming space

Anchoring is therefore physical (it is the body that is at issue), but it is also a question of representing the self in its environment (imagining oneself somewhere) and a question of *language*. We express our feelings as a function of our personal history and of human history. We name the space around us and the actions that take place there so situating ourselves in that space. Not all cultures have this anthropocentric approach and not all symbolize space by placing mankind in the midst of it all. Yet this is the vision of our western world and the residential choices made fit in with this representation.

Constructing oneself as an individual in the space-world already involves being able to describe it and name it. Language reflects the relationship with the geographical and physical environment. How can one find one's bearings in space and what effect does it have? How is residential urban space named, represented via language and concepts, and how do some scientific disciplines make of it a specific subject of analysis? This is what interests us here.

From language to languages: spatial usage

The relationship of language with space in general and urban space in particular is part of a mental and social process of appropriation by the individual, community, and culture. The production of meaning operates at all physical and mental levels, but it counts with respect to subjectivity and identity for all users of urban space. Culture is subject to the city, which also builds it, and there is a specific urban culture.

Even before language constructed humankind and marked our evolution, place names marked out space and its inhabitants. People were from the "Wood", "Lake", or "Ford"; they were endowed with some feature whether physical (Long, Short, Large, Redhead), historical (family origins or trade), or

geographical (from the village of..., from the place where there are frogs, orchards, a stream, etc.). Places are identified verbally, indicating who lives there and how. People “belong” to a place of origin. Surnames are also a form of appropriation since they refer to a geographical origin. Even a name derived from a trade can be identified by the local region and dialect. Names give an idea of the regional experience and even contribute to learning about space—from which strategies of spatial practices derive, which depend, it will be recalled, on the culture in which we live. “To delimit is to give meaning to spatial extension, and that could only be done once people had managed to handle the symbolic dimension, that is, with the advent of language as a tool with which to communicate” (Segaud 2007:126).

Language is a material held in common and available to speakers with a meaning to transmit, that can be understood by all. It makes it possible to *represent* an object that is absent, thereby making it possible to “transport” one’s environment with one. It also enables exchange among individuals and contributes to the evolution of humankind and the dynamics of groups formed in socialized spaces. *Language* is a universal faculty just as time and space are universals of experience. But it is important not to overlook the diversity of *languages*.

An investigation of spatial and temporal deixis¹⁰ in various parts of the world (Africa, North America, and East Asia) of speakers of different languages living in different environments and speakers living in the same environment reveals two types of “cognitive models”: one type is “globalized because based on constants of human experience” (Hill, 2003:161), and the other “localized” being related more to cultural givens (writing, religious practices, history of relations among peoples). Chinese, for example, gives “priority to horizontality”, a localized model, which may be related to the fact that the horizontal marks are drawn first when forming the characters of the vertical script.

One of the “most obvious” globalized models “rests on isomorphism among expressions meaning *in front of/behind* and *before/after*” and in most languages “the predominance of the vertical orientation” (Hill, 2003). For example, in indicating the cardinal points, we say north-east and not east-north. Besides this choice of word order, the predominance appears in more numerous “lexical resources” and “metaphorical extensions” relating to a varied range of domains: whichever the cultures and words employed, this idea of spatial symbol is invariably found. The cognitive basis for this predominance might be a universal given: that of “the standing position generally adopted by humans in reaction to the force of gravity” (Hill, 2003:166). There is a transposition of human verticality—the place people occupy in the world—to the surrounding environment. The perception of the city is influenced by this. Many representations are pyramid

10 Deixis means all the resources of a language by which subjects can give markers in time and space relative to themselves. For example, *here* is the place where I am when I speak while *there* is the place where I am not.

shaped. The construction of ever higher towers, a true technological challenge, is a direct expression of this.¹¹ The tower is a symbol of power, authority, and virility. The Chicago school showed that the “wealthy” live on high ground or on the outskirts, so they can keep their distance and protect themselves. But again everything depends on geographical and economic conditions. Skyscrapers in the United Arab Emirates or favelas, suburban housing in Europe or dormitory city tower blocks. What is at issue is the symbolic value of places and the way that value is expressed.

The use of language is therefore significant of the relationship human beings maintain with their geographical and mental environments through discourse that takes shape in individual languages, which are both filters of the real world and windows on the world. Language is a cultural heritage. Every utterance is a vehicle of what characterizes individuals and the society they live in. Maurice Halbwachs (1968) makes the point that “Collective memory rests upon spatial images... Each society divides up space in its own way... so as to form a fixed framework in which it encloses and finds its recollections”. Names in particular keep a record of this.

Let us take the example of a few English expressions showing that space inhabits language and that language showcases space, doubly structuring mind and memory.

Spatial expressions of language

Humans have explored the world, going ever further (behind the hill, over the mountains, or across the sea, and so on) thanks to ever more present technology. Words were being invented all the while to stand for the acts and objects in question. Humans were then able to remember space by locating the features around them, but they were also able to gain access to time by situating events in duration. This is what marked the beginnings of humanity: the ability to rely on time, the past—each experience, each stage in the progression being memorized.

Language naturally evolved with the new discoveries and inventions. This is what linguistic expressions speaking of space show. They can be used in geographical space as well as in the space of the mind. Examples include *not knowing where one stands*, *losing one's bearings*, *being eccentric*, *being on the edge of the abyss*, *climbing mountains*, *being all at sea*, *being on a slippery slope*, but also *finding one's marks*, *getting a direction*, *being at the helm*, *getting back on track*, and *marking one's territory*, etc. Lynch (1976:84) emphasizes “The very word ‘lost’ in

11 Towers have symbolic value whether of religious power as with bell towers challenged by certain monastic reforms (Cistercians); public power with castle keeps and belfries in competition with church steeples. Nowadays banks and corporate headquarters, and so on.

our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster”.

Because everything has moved very quickly since the late nineteenth century, the pace of life and knowledge of the world have accelerated, and language has had difficulty keeping up. Reference is still made in the main to facts and features of the past, in connection with the earliest discoveries of the world. Examples include *getting into the saddle, missing the boat, making headway, tilting at windmills, being a slow coach*, and so on. The expression *to have a home port* expresses the link, the anchoring in an original point in space and time (a place where many generations have lived). There is currently a paucity of expressions directly representing this difficulty of “making do” with the acceleration of modern life and the psychic disruptions it induces. Such expressions are mostly (about three in four)¹² used to reflect difficulties felt: it seems we encounter more obstacles than we have ways of overcoming them. When a space becomes narrower, whether physically or virtually, humans get a “shrinking” feeling. This shows to what extent situating oneself, finding one’s place in society is problematic for people, both in the spatial appropriation of the surrounding features and in relations with others.

In these expression, recent everyday urban life is barely represented. There are *the man on the Clapham omnibus, lighting-up time, living above the shop, being streetwise, being dragged through the gutter, kerb crawling*, etc. But overall they deal mostly with human infrastructures and means of locomotion such as ports and ships (*find a safe haven, any port in a storm, to cast off, to up anchor, be at the helm, change tack, pile on sail*), roads and vehicles (*drive round the bend, be at a crossroads, hit the road, backfire, live life in the fast lane*) or others (*enter the arena, step into the ring*).

These expressions, which are part of a linguistic and cultural heritage, beyond and short of verbal language, are also part of a semiotic perspective on spatial symbolics. Spatial symbolics shows us that left to right¹³ and above all top to bottom are a way of behaving in space but also a way of being perceived by others. Geographical and social elevation are truly accorded more value. It is always positive to get to the top, with the social ladder being open “in theory” to all. Examples include: *to climb mountains, to be set on a pedestal, to rise to the occasion, to be at the height of fashion, to be bogged down, to hit rock bottom, to be deep in depression, to have that sinking feeling, to be feeling low*, etc. Movement from above to below is the symbolic representation of inertia (or even death) with respect to effective movement. It is likely that religion induced such representations: *to sit at God’s right hand and in seventh heaven*, far from the flames of hell and the belly of the earth. Height “uplifts” humanity taking us closer to God. The heavens

12 Reference to the corpus in French compiled by S. Mariani-Rousset of about a thousand metaphorical spatial expressions using geographical features or spatial actions in a figurative meaning. Forthcoming 2016.

13 We represent time on a left-right axis.

are vast and represent every possibility; the depths of the earth are dark, enclosed, and the dead are buried there. “Up” therefore represents light, great aspirations, philosophy, the mind, whereas “down” symbolizes roots, secrets, the subconscious, sexuality, the depths, etc.¹⁴ Any dwelling on high ground in a particular geographical setting grants some form of power. There are therefore several ways of seeing tall buildings: for protection and keeping watch (castles), for spiritual uplift (cathedrals), for dominating and displaying power (skyscrapers), or for cutting oneself off (ivory towers), and saving space and money (tower blocks).

This architectural metaphorical language can be studied in spoken language. There are many ways of thinking of the city and living there and just as many ways of expressing it. Contradictions between desires and reality, whether voluntary or subconscious—depending on utopias and urban emotions—give rise to satisfaction or dissatisfaction that can be more or less successfully expressed. Sometimes it takes several moves to clarify one’s residential project.

From the faculty for language to different languages and from words to speech

Residential choice is thought through in words, when planning a move, and is then manifested concretely in discussions and sharing of views with the family and lastly when interacting with estate agencies. There comes a time when image and desire must be materialized so they can be communicated. What the locals have to say about certain places affects the decisions of the prospective inhabitant, in the range of uncertainty extending from the idea they have about their future location and the time when reality sets in: the city is expensive (another part of town has to be chosen, but which one?); the first requirement cannot be met (living close to water: there isn’t any); amenities are far fewer than in the previous city; the location is ideal but too popular (high density); and so on.

The relationship between language and space, which is essential in articulating cognition through representation and verbalization is therefore contemplated—especially when addressing urban space—on two levels:

- the level of *multiplicity of language*, because spoken language is not the only form of signifying and interpreting in the urban space (gestures, tags, actions, etc.);
- the level of *complexity of discourse*, of which words are the component parts but which are only understood in texts that are constructed and make allowance for the speakers, situations, values, and an ideological and action-based dimension.

The study of signifying configurations and urban discourse can be approached from three angles: a semiotic angle proposing a predominantly logico-philosophical analysis of forms; what might be called a semiological angle,

14 This symbolism can be found in psychology (tree or village test) or in graphology.

associating forms of the urban world and discourse about those forms; and a more narrowly linguistic or sociolinguistic angle centred more on discourse.

Thus how space is represented and expressed follows from the way it is perceived. For example, "I wouldn't like to live there!" shows that it is not possible to imagine oneself in a certain type of place (in a particular district, near a railway line, in a new block of flats, etc.). Each of the elements encountered must be identified and analysed for it to be meaningful. This already involves the (internal) representation that one has of oneself in space (psychology of space), then the (external) concrete representation of that space. From this ability to establish a connection between one's personal space and the outside arises the possibility of living among others, in the city and in one's home with all the constraints that it imposes. For Stock (2006), "individual and society are not opposed, but can be used as concepts designating two separate manifestations of humanity". Several questions then arise: How do things work between an individual and the numerous other urbanites around them, pedestrians, drivers, etc., but also neighbours? How is the sharing of space organized? How can one maintain one's personal space without encroaching on that of others, while protecting oneself adequately and effectively?

The semiotic angle

The subject of semiotics is not space but spatiality. Semiotics brings to light general categories of perception as much as of knowledge and culture (e.g. here/elsewhere, intensity/extension, boundaries/edges, separation/union) to apprehend both "thought about space globally" and spatial domains (painting, architecture, urban space, etc.). Semiotics therefore looks at "microanalyses" of verbal expressions (e.g. prepositions) and at "microanalyses of configurations that define different *models* of spatiality in a work, in a genre, in a culture" (Bertrand and Bordron 2009). Marcos (2008) explains that "architecture and town planning are intelligible forms of human activity... that can be apprehended in an organized and rational way" in their "communicational dimension". For Lamizet (2008), urban space is defined by the "confrontation of identities", integrating politics, culture, and linguistics in a triple *real, symbolic, and imaginary* plane.¹⁵ This brings us to the notion of frontier, which may be as much physical as symbolic, as much social as imaginary. The level of the real describes the physical characteristics of an environment, the symbolic level brings us back to the meaning of words and representations, and the imaginary level relates to dreams. As a geographical site with its properties of physical space, the city is also a political system and a public space with its institutions, its places of exchange and encounter (*agora* or *forum*, cafés and marketplaces), its emblems of power and its protest movements, its fictional representation (theatre, cinema, novel, etc.). Lastly,

temporality is an essential dimension because “urban identities are not expressed only in the present of actual social practices but also in the past and the long duration of the history of the city” (Lynch, 1976). The most formal semiotic research joins up with research in the psycho-cognitive domain, and with research on mental images (Lynch, 1976) or Greimas’¹⁶ project of “topological semiotics” designed to study spatial languages of non-verbal objects to form a “grammar of sensitivity”.

The semiological angle

In keeping with a suggestion by Barthes¹⁷ likening the city-dweller to a reader of the city, contemplating the city itself as a discourse-text (and so the discourse-texts in the city) comes under the semiological or semiolinguistic angle because the systems and processes of meaning are articulated around what is verbal. Objects may be the signalactics of it, with a practical function of directing and marking out, as may the verbal or multi-code traces specific to the urban world such as tags or posters or discourse held or picked up in the city by the inhabitants or passers by. It is a sociosemiology of the city of Grenoble that Lucci et al. (1998) for example, develop by taking account of the graphical and scriptural, instrumental and anthropological aspects of writings in the city (shop signs, subversive literature of tags and graffiti). Their social functions of identification and differentiation cross cut the issue of varyingly transgressive “interstitial urban cultures”. The written word, because it is spatial and involves sight, takes precedence over the deambulation of the body as the condition of perception.

The linguistic or sociolinguistic angle

Urban sociolinguistics gives precedence to “language variation” in correlation with socio-spatial structures to “analyse the territorial organization of urban spaces” (Bulut 2001). It therefore fits into a linguistic perspective, but in subscribing to the definition of the city as a spatial form, cultural phenomenon, and historical phenomenon (Calvet 1994). Postulating that “being from a place is all about being able to say where one is from” (Bulut 1998), urban sociolinguistics is interested, for example, in the different names of city spaces and in categorizations, or even discriminations that they display. The words and discourse about (in and on) the city can therefore be apprehended from a linguistic angle ranging from linguistics *stricto sensu* to discourse analysis. The study of city words can be part of lexical and semantic analysis in one language or comparatively across languages. It then cross-cuts the questioning about the relationship between cognition and cultural factors. But the interdependence among languages, social practices, and discourses in urban spaces promotes multi-disciplinarity (sociology, social geography, discourse

analysis) insofar as “discourses by inhabitants are also components of urban reality” and “urban identity lies between what languages say about living there and what living there says about languages” (Bulot 1998). Discourse analysis associated with urban sociolinguistics and socio-semiotics presupposes that the verbal-discursive dimension is not to be considered a reflection of reality but as constituting and producing representations and actions, as a factor of transformation of identities and practices.

3. The ability to live in society

Territory is delimited (at a time *t*), it is related to *having*; space is mobile, it is related to *being*. We occupy a lived space, indirectly related to territorialization. Territory is an object of desire (we want to acquire, to conquer land, etc.), whereas space belongs to everyone. Here we find the relations between outside and inside. Having is the subdivision people have made of space (territories, borders, countries, home),¹⁵ whereas being relates to symbolic space; the space that humans make their own in the possible “social” field left by their counterparts (especially public space). I *am* necessarily in a space that does not necessarily *belong* to me, but that I make my own regardless.

3.1 Practices of territoriality

It is important to us here to determine how spatial practices play a decisive part in specific conducts of spatial mobility and residential choices. We have seen that in defining personal spaces commentators speak of “bubbles”, “buffer zones”, and “shells”. The words used are evocative. Whichever the name given, it is always an intimate zone to which admission is controlled as far as possible by the individual and reserved to “authorized” persons. The separation is real (by the skin or by an object) but it is above all symbolic or even imaginary. It serves to protect the individual. It surrounds them. It moves with them. This idea seems to be central in understanding phenomena of co-existence raised by the city since the direct material translation of this conceptualization of the notion of territoriality is that of conflict in use, that is, the claims that two individuals may make to one and the same place, at the same time and for what may be different uses.

Personal space and proxemics

Personal space is a zone surrounding an individual the functions of which vary with psychological and cultural factors (Hall 1971). Hall showed that personal

15 Will residential choice indicate what stems from having (home ownership) or being (location, life choice)?