

# The multi-dimensionality of space - an analytical framework for the empirical investigation of the production of place

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## THE MULTI-DIMENSIONALITY OF SPACE - AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF PLACE

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With 7 figures

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**Summary:** The spatial-conceptual basis of the construction of place across the social sciences, including in human geography (and particularly in the field of area studies), has long been questioned and criticised for its strong grip on territorial and container-like thinking on spatiality. Alternative spatial dimensions, such as scale, place and networks, have been put forward by a range of authors. Building on these critical perspectives, this article proposes rethinking ‘spatial bias’, or what we would call the ‘one-dimensional framing of space’, and combining the most promising perspectives on spatial construction in a multi-dimensional analytical framework, in order to synergise their individual strengths instead of playing off one against another. The framework, considered a heuristic tool for empirical analysis, combines the categories of space as place, territory, network, positionality and mobility from a relational, actor-centred and translocal perspective. Operationalised for the empirical analysis of socio-spatial dynamics and phenomena, it allows one to trace interconnections between different spatial dimensions and offers a range of different entry points for empirical inquiry. We demonstrate the utility and practical value of the suggested analytical framework through its application in one empirical case study in northern Pakistan.

**Zusammenfassung:** Die räumlich-konzeptionelle Grundlage für die Analyse der Konstruktion von Orten in den Sozialwissenschaften, darunter in der Humangeographie (und insbesondere im Forschungsfeld der Regionalstudien), wird seit Längerem aufgrund ihres starren Festhaltens an einem territorialen und auf Containerräumen beruhenden Raumverständnis kritisiert. Die Einbeziehung alternativer räumlicher Dimensionen, wie etwa Maßstab, Ort und Netzwerke wurden von einigen Autoren vorgebracht. Aufbauend auf dieser Kritik schlägt dieser Beitrag vor, die eindimensionale (territoriale) Rahmung von Raum zu überdenken. Wir bringen stattdessen eine Kombination vielversprechender Ebenen zum Verständnis von Raumproduktion in einem multi-dimensionalen Analyseschema zusammen, um die Synthese derer individueller Stärken zu fördern, statt sie gegeneinander auszuspielen. Der Analyserahmen, gedacht als heuristisches Instrument, integriert Kategorien wie Ort, Territorium, Netzwerk, Positionalität und Mobilität in relationaler, akteurszentrierter und translokaler Perspektive. Für empirische Untersuchungen zur Analyse sozialräumlicher Dynamiken und Phänomene operationalisiert, erlaubt uns ein solcher Ansatz, Interaktionen und Interdependenzen verschiedener räumlicher Dimensionen nachzugehen und eröffnet zudem vielfältige Zugangsmöglichkeiten für die sozialräumliche Forschung. Wir demonstrieren die Nutzbarkeit und den praktischen Wert des Analyserahmens am Beispiel einer empirischen Fallstudie aus dem nördlichen Pakistan.

**Keywords:** translocality, networks, territory, mobility, positionality, Pakistan

### 1 Introduction

The subject of space, and the need for a re-conceptualisation of spatial perspectives in empirical analysis beyond the ‘territorial trap’ of container-thinking, has long been discussed throughout the social sciences, particularly in the field of area studies. A broad range of different readings of space and spatiality has been suggested in spatial theory over the last three decades. Different spatial categories, such as place, network, scale or territory, have been put forward as lenses through which to explore the constitution of space. In this article, we propose – inspired by the pioneering works of LEITNER, SHEPPARD, JESSOP and others (JESSOP et al. 2008; LEITNER et al. 2008; SHEPPARD 2002) – to rethink what could be de-

finied as ‘spatial bias’ and combine the most promising perspectives on spatial construction in a single, multi-dimensional analytical framework, in order to synergise their individual strengths instead of playing off one against another. We suggest a combination of the readings of space as place, territory, network, socio-spatial positionality and mobility. Our framework, which includes these spatial categories, is based on the analytical underpinnings of social constructivism, actor-orientation, relationality and translocality. Through its application in empirical socio-spatial research, the suggested framework, we argue, challenges spatial bias by employing a multitude of perspectives on a certain case, each of them shedding light on particular aspects otherwise hidden or disregarded by a one-dimensional perspective’s blind

spots. Yet, in our opinion, it also allows for tracing the interlinkages and interdependencies of phenomena and dynamics made visible through different and overlapping spatial perspectives. Every one of the five spatial categories included herein can be used as an entry point for socio-spatial analysis.

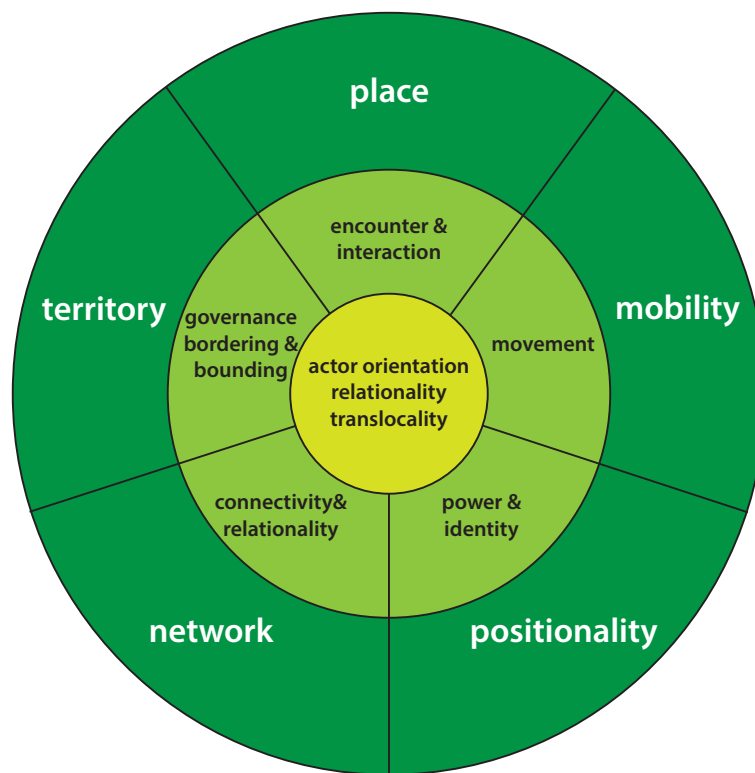
It has to be noted that this article is thought of neither as a conceptual paper contributing to the development of spatial theory nor as a mere case study paper. Our intention is rather to provide an analytical framework for case study research, and so we consider it a necessity not only to draft the analytical framework but also to demonstrate its utility and practicality by applying it to a real case study. This is reflected by the structure of the article. In the first part we sketch out our suggested analytical framework before we demonstrate its practical value through its application on one empirical case study from recent research in northern Pakistan. In the context of student migration in Gilgit-Baltistan, the particular interplay of places, territory, networks, mobility and socio-spatial positionality is elaborated with the help of the suggested framework.

## 2 A Multi-dimensional framework for analysing socio-spatial phenomena and dynamics

In the course of our empirical research on education migration from Gojal, Pakistan and small-scale trade processes across the borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang we struggled with the task of conceptualising adequately the production of particular places, given the intense and yet uneven mobility, exchanges and connections of actors that often link and transform them. Therefore, the general question we posed when starting the intellectual endeavour that led to the present paper was thus: how can we grasp socio-spatial phenomena beyond the 'territorial trap' of container-like concepts of places, areas and society, on the one hand, without over-prioritising or essentialising the role of mobilities, flows and networks, on the other? We postulated that a meaningful analytical approach to the construction of place(s) (and areas) must necessarily be multi-dimensional and polymorphic in character, focusing not on one but rather on several interconnected spatial dimensions and their co-implications. Thus, we suggest deploying an analytical framework of spatial multi-dimensionality, which is both helpful in visualising the interconnectedness of spatialities and provides access points for spatial analysis in empirical research (see Fig. 1).

The issue of the multi-dimensionality of space has long been on the agenda of the social sciences and humanities, reflecting the need to overcome methodological territorialism and state-centrism (BRENNER 1999; WIMMER and GLICK SCHILLER 2002) and to strengthen emic perspectives on the construction of places. Particularly human geographers, but also sociologists and political scientists, have brought forward inspiring ways of rethinking the production of space from a multi-dimensional analytical perspective (AMIN 2004; ETZOLD and SAKDAPOLRAK 2016; JESSOP et al. 2008; KNOBLAUCH and LÖW 2017; LEITNER et al. 2008; NICHOLLS 2009; PAASI 2004). JESSOP et al. (2008), for instance, explored analytically the co-implications of territories, places, scales and networks in spatial relations, whilst LEITNER et al. (2008), on the other hand, in their example of grasping the geographies of contentious politics, took the categories of scale, place, networking and socio-spatial positionality as the multivalent and intertwined dimensions of spatial production, also noting the co-implications of these spatial dimensions. All of these authors justify their multi-dimensional approach to space with the restricted gaze informed through different 'turns' in spatial theory (the scalar, the relational, lately the mobilities turn) that have strongly emphasised one dimension only, and largely neglected, or deliberately sidelined, others. We agree with these authors that instead of focusing on one socio-spatial dimension only, a multitude of spatial dimensions has to be included in the analytical framework, without prioritising one over another, in order to achieve a balanced understanding of the construction of space.

More specifically, and in addition to existing work on the construction of places, we argue that relational perspectives on spatial construction, the heuristic tool of translocality and the emphasis on actor- and practice-centred research are important conceptual additions for grasping the co-implications of spatial dimensions. Translocality is considered here as an analytical perspective that pronounces the interconnected and interactional character of empirically analysable social phenomena across space, and particularly across various locales. In our view, the inclusion of translocality as an analytical perspective alongside relationality and actor-centrism in our suggested framework is helpful, in that it questions pre-assumed concepts of spatial containers (place, territory, scale) by foregrounding the role of dynamic and contingent (ex-)change of people, things and values on spatial production. Under actor-orientation, we subsume an empirical focus on the agency of the individual human actors and institutions involved actively and pas-



**Fig. 1: Multi-dimensional spatial framework**

sively in spatial construction. We follow here Anthony Giddens' structuration theory by paying attention to the agency of both individual actors and institutions in constituting social space and society (GIDDENS 1984).

The choice and significance of linkages between different spatial categories in multi-dimensional analytical frameworks are strongly debated among spatial theorists (JESSOP et al. 2008; JONAS 2012; LEITNER et al. 2008; PORST and SAKDAPOLRAK 2017). From our research experience, the spatial dimensions of place, territory, network, positionality and mobility fit best to the purpose of reflecting adequately the construction of space in our respective fields of scientific enquiry. This is due to their complementary character, each of them being able to act as an entry point from which to scrutinise multi-dimensional spatial production in particular cases, emphasising at the same the relational and processual character of the construction of place (LÖW 2001). Thus, the choice of the categories of place, territory, network, positionality and mobility is due to analytical efficacy and heuristic value rather than being driven by theoretical delimitations.

The category of scale we would nevertheless like to omit from our framework somewhat tends to imply a territorialisation of the world in a nested and pre-conditioned hierarchy of bounded units. The 'global'

is often constructed as the most influential of scales, which leads to the imagined deprivation of subjects from agency on lower scales (see MARSTON et al. 2005). Thus, similarly to the category of territory, scale suggests an ordering frame that may lead to a simplistic and power-driven pre-determination of spatialities. In individual actors' everyday practices, and thus in their emic construction of space, these spatial constructs, however, may be meaningless or at the very least disputed. We thus believe that our model, combining the above five categories, serves well as a basis for empirical inquiries in fields like migration, borderland and development research with a strong area studies focus, each of which is affected increasingly by dynamic globalising tendencies. Below, we wish to conceptualise briefly our take on the included spatial dimensions.

## 2.1 Place

We suggest a relational and processual reading of place as an arena for interactions between differently positioned actors. In our approach, we follow JOHN AGNEW's (1987) threefold division of 'place' by considering its meanings in terms of a) locale, b) location and c) a sense of place. According to AGNEW,

place as a locale refers to a setting or a context for social interaction, typically involving co-present actors. Place as a location, on the other hand, describes the geographical area encompassing the setting (AGNEW 1987). Of special importance in an actor-centred perspective on spatial production, focusing on how places are represented and narrated, is AGNEW's notion of a sense of place, which refers to the communicative production thereof, i.e. the cultural representation of place, including its symbolic meaning. It thus emphasises the emic perspectives on place(s), namely the spatial imaginaries, which give the people a sense of meaning in their particular world (AGNEW 1987).

We align furthermore with DOREEN MASSEY and other spatial theorists, who stress the relational production of place creating a "meeting place" for a heterogeneous and a constantly shifting set of (inter-) actors (MASSEY 1991). Place, therefore, is conceptualised as open, dynamic and hybrid, as it evolves along with the flows that cross places and the networks that link them together. Another significant characteristic of place is evident in the interplay between moments of conjoining and moments of division. Consequently, place, on the one hand, offers rich opportunities for face-to-face contacts, communication and interaction between diverse actors, thereby bridging differences, weakening social boundaries, building alliances and ensuring collective action. On the other hand, it is also characterised by moments of division, separation and boundary-drawing, i.e. social and territorial segregation, shaped by and which challenge power imbalances. A somewhat related aspect of place is the distinct materiality thereof, which forms a specific "action setting" (WEICHART 2004) that "regulates and mediates social relations and daily routines within a place" (LEITNER et al. 2008, 161). Thus, the structuration of place(s) and the power relations of which they are a product (FOUCAULT 1975, 2007) are often inscribed in the materiality of place and help control and discipline the practices of actors on an everyday basis.

## 2.2 Territory

Territory is the most problematic of the spatial categories included in our model, given that it presupposes coherent and clearly bounded areas, reflecting a dominant statist perspective on ordering and delineating space (SCOTT 1999). Thus, use of the 'territory' concept may lead easily to a 'methodological territorialism' with a tendency to ho-

mogenise the inside as containing distinctive and persistent socio-cultural traits (AGNEW 1999, 95; VAN SCHENDEL and DE MAAKER 2014; WIMMER and GLICK SCHILLER 2002). Therefore, in our view, the use of the notion of territory (and closely related with it the notion of scale) as an ontological concept makes sense only with respect to questions of governance, i.e. regarding claims of juridical, political or informal normative power for a defined territory, often demarcated by the principles of bordering and bounding (JESSOP et al. 2008, 393). Beyond this ontological meaning of territory, which is connected to the spatial practice of the state and its institutions, we suggest using the concept in terms of an epistemological structure (see the recent conceptual work of ANTONSICH 2011, 2017 and of ELDEN 2013 on territory for that matter), as an ordering frame that implies an understanding of territory as a series of social constructions produced and reproduced from a particular position at a particular point in time and "situated in a community of producers and readers" (JONES 1998, 26) for purposeful ends. Thus, it is considered as a "representational practice of participants in political struggles" (MARSTON et al. 2005, 420). In this context, collective identity formation and processes of othering (separating 'us' from 'them') are often mirrored in and reinforced by territorial boundary-drawing, separating 'our' territory from 'theirs' (PAASI 2002, 139).

## 2.3 Network

The central principles of the socio-spatial dimension 'network' are connectivity and relationality. In the social sciences, networks are generally based on a model of nodes and edges, symbolising and visualising entities and their connections. This image figures prominently in sociological network analysis, where relations between pre-given entities are analysed, often in a quantitative way.

In contrast to this rather static imaginary of networks, we suggest a qualitative and more thoroughly relational network perspective, as suggested by trans-actionist approaches (CASSIRER 1910; EMIRBAYER 1997, 286-287), in which the connected actors are not considered pre-given but rather as being constituted through their relations. From this perspective, the nodes of the network, e.g. actors or institutions, are defined relationally by their interconnections, while relations and interactions have a transformative impact on them. Thus, as EMIRBAYER (1997) argues, they cannot be studied independently in isolation



but only embedded in the context of their relations.<sup>1)</sup> Networks often cut across and connect elements in the other socio-spatial dimensions, but they also cut across and connect different places, different territories and different positions, and they link mobile to immobile actors and objects. Networks even cut across and connect different networks, thereby establishing networks of networks.

## 2.4 Positionality

The idea behind positionality, whereby actors are positioned and negotiate dynamically their mutual situatedness, is already present in BOURDIEU's capital theory and particularly in his concept of habitus (BOURDIEU 1977). Nonetheless, BOURDIEU neglects social categories such as gender, age, ethnicity and especially the spatial dimension in analysing how socio-spatial closeness and distance between groups or actors are produced (MANDERSCHIED 2009). SHEPPARD's (2002) concept of positionality instead places particular importance on spatial aspects. Positionality in his understanding is inherently relational and power-laden, emphasising that a) the possibilities of actors are dependent upon their position in terms of other actors, and b) power relations and inequalities are constantly (re-)produced through interactions between differently positioned actors. A particular positionality can be both persistent, in a way that previous configurations of positionality are likely to be reproduced in a path-dependent way, and subject to unexpected change, as repetitions of positionality are imperfect (SHEPPARD 2002, 318).

'Positioning', according to TANIA MURRAY LI (2000) drawing upon STUART HALL (1990, 1995), is neither simply invented or adopted nor 'natural' or inevitable. Rather, it "draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle" (LI 2000, 151). Positioning, thus, is enacted through the cultural and political work of articulation (LI 2000), making it to negotiate 'places of recognition' or 'regimes of representation'. A particular positionality of an actor,

therefore, is context-dependent and instrumental. Subsequently, the construction of positionality as an actor-based process of appropriation and allocation includes processes of identity formation (in terms of gender, class, ethnicity etc.) and therefore practices of boundary production or undoing by actors and groups ('othering'). Positionality therefore refers to the principles of power and identity.

## 2.5 Mobility

We suggest grasping the mobility dimension of our model in the way SHELLER's mobilities theory does, namely by "[encompassing] both the embodied practice of movement and the representations, ideologies and meanings attached to both movement and stillness" of people, objects and ideas (SHELLER 2011, 1). Mobilities are configured and disrupted by material and immaterial infrastructures (moorings) such as roads, airports, networks, borders and boundaries (HANNAM et al. 2006) and they are never homogenous but always entail a moment of fragmentation negotiated through interactions along the lines of social inequalities (ALFF et al. 2014). Mobility, as well as stillness, is subject to the capability of actors to be or become mobile, or to be forced to be immobile (MASSEY 1991). This power-laden determinism has been called "mobility capital" (KESSELRING 2006) or "motility" (KAUFMANN 2002), defining it as "the manner in which an individual or group appropriates the field of possibilities relative to movement and uses them" (KAUFMANN and MONTULET 2008, 45). It has to be noted that spatial and social mobility often overlap and enforce or disrupt each other, which is why we aim at an analytical perspective from which to inquire upon the co-implications and interlinkages of spatial and social mobility.

## 2.6 Accessing spatial multi-dimensionality

Our take on the multi-dimensionality of space focuses on socio-spatial relations, i.e. it is about actors, their interactions and relations and the translocal character of these actions and relations. Actor-orientation allows for paying attention to different actors' perspectives, including their understandings and concepts of place, territory, mobility and so forth, i.e. the emic conceptions, which exist for each dimension. The actor-perspective, at the same time, invites us to pay more attention to the immaterial aspects of space and to geographical imaginations, and

<sup>1)</sup> Some authors even go a step further by suggesting alternative images of the network, such as a 'meshwork' (e.g. INGOLD 2011; VERNE 2012) or the 'rhizome' (DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987). In these concepts, a network is thought of as a field of interwoven lines, often symbolising flows. While the nodes of the network are replaced by intersections of these lines, the latter do not start or end in 'nodes' but rather create multiple points of intersections along their course.

thus to the symbolical meaning that often is inherent in spatial production. The actor orientation, furthermore, allows us to shed light on the communicative construction of socio-spatialities.

The socio-spatial dimensions we suggest herein all operate in a threefold way (following GIDDENS' structuration theory (GIDDENS 1984)), in that they a) provide the necessary preconditions and possibilities for social action and enable or constrain certain actions, b) provide the arenas in which social action actually takes place and c) themselves are re-produced and structured through these actions. They are constantly negotiated and contested, and they can be seen as the outcome of struggles and manifestations of unequal power relations.

Each socio-spatial dimension may serve as an entry point for empirical studies, but moving forward, the analysis should progress to the other dimensions and include them whenever they provide additional heuristic value. For a concrete combination of characteristics in each socio-spatial dimension at a certain moment in time, JESSOP et al. (2008) use the term "socio-spatial landscape." Over the course of time, these socio-spatial landscapes undergo dynamic transformations, accompanied by new forms of place-making, territorialisation, networking, positioning and mobilisation. From a historical perspective, the particular trajectory of path-dependent change in socio-spatial landscapes can be traced, with varying combinations of continuities (socio-spatial fixes), gradual changes or ruptures in the different dimensions or the whole configuration. To sum up, the framework we have suggested herein ties in with the major ongoing discussions in socio-spatial theory. It is open and flexible enough to fit to a very broad range of socio-spatial research questions and fields of scholarly inquiry, and it integrates insights from empirical and conceptual work. Moreover, it is actor-oriented and relational, and it is conducive enough to overcome bounded container-thinking in areas studies by offering an open, relational and multi-dimensional approach.

In the following empirical example, we demonstrate the utility and analytical strength of the suggested framework by disentangling complexities and interwoven phenomena in the context of student migration to the city of Gilgit in the northern Pakistani high-mountain region of Gilgit-Baltistan. It will be shown that with the application of each of the five spatial categories, ever-new aspects of the socio-spatial landscapes will emerge and additional insights will be gained, leading to a more comprehensive picture of the phenomena under scrutiny.

### 3 Applying multi-dimensional spatial thinking: student migration from Gojal to Gilgit, Northern Pakistan

The Karakoram high-mountain region Gojal (Fig. 2) has undergone far-reaching transitions, turning a region characterised up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by severe poverty, pervasive illiteracy and highly constrained outward mobility into one of the leading regions of rural Pakistan with respect to development, education and mobility levels (BENZ 2013, 2014b; KREUTZMANN 1989, 1993, 1996; MALIK and PIRACHA 2006). Formal education was first introduced in the late 1940s in Gojal (BENZ 2014a; FELMY 2006), and many of the graduates of the first boys' primary schools continued their education in cities in the Pakistani lowlands, mostly in Karachi (BENZ 2013). These pioneers set the path for many student migrants following their example, leading to rapidly rising levels of formal education among the Gojalis. The establishment of local girls' schools, and subsequent female student migration, set in a few decades later but rapidly gained momentum. In the young generation, male and female Gojali education levels have now reached parity, and they both sit well above the Pakistani average (BENZ 2014b). Today, student migration from Gojal involves virtually the entire cohort of local schools' graduates. The following inquiry focuses on student migration to Gilgit-Baltistan's capital, Gilgit, which has become a regional education hub. The study is based on 3 months of field research undertaken in 2011 and 2012 in Gojal, Gilgit and other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Key sources are migration histories of people from the villages of Hussaini and Passu, which were collected in household-based village surveys (full coverage of all 185 households, revealing 1,750 individual migration biographies), as well as biographical, oral history and focused narrative interviews conducted with former and current migrants (among them 45 interviews with former and 33 with current student migrants), village elders, teachers and representatives of village organisations and social sector NGOs.

What insights can be gained and which new aspects taken into consideration by applying the five spatial dimensions of our suggested analytical framework to the subject? And how do they add up to a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-spatial relationships, processes and outcomes of student migration from Gojal to Gilgit?



Fig. 2: Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan

### 3.1 Place

Applying the perspective of 'place' and its central principles of encounter and interaction as analytical entry points reveals that student migration to Gilgit is actually not a move to a single and uniform place but rather to a whole range of very different places, together constituting the everyday lifeworld of a migrant in Gilgit. Such places of student migra-

tion involve, for example, the female student hostel, private school premises, the stationary shop or the university campus, and each of them forms a specific arena for encounters and interactions in which particular objects, symbolic ascriptions and constellations of actors converge. The perspective of space as 'place' allows one to understand that each of these student migration places has its own norms and 'rules in place', which exercise disciplinary power and



regulate actors' access, roles, behaviours and interactions. This may be called the 'institutionalisation' or the 'governmentality' of places. This institutionalisation, with institutions understood as "the rules of the game" (WILLIAMSON 1998,75) and "humanly devised constraints" (NORTH 1991, 91), emerges from all of the three meanings of place mentioned above. Essentially, it is embedded in the symbolic meanings attached to places ('sense of place'), which contain norms about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and actions in place, it is inscribed in the topology and physical arrangement of objects in place by forming a certain action setting, suggesting certain types of behaviour and discouraging or preventing others ('location'), and it needs to be reproduced constantly by the actors in place ('locale'), since the persistence of the 'rules of the game' depends on actors who continue to act in relation to them. Female student hostels in Gilgit, for example, are highly protected and regulated places (Figs. 3 and 4) (BENZ 2017), closed off from the outside world by high walls and gates, by surveillance of security guards, by the ban on mobile phones and internet access, by harsh controls of entry to the compound, by the very few occasions on which boarders are given permission to go out and clear-cut rules for the selection of these boarders. The hostel place is constructed and institutionalised as a place of homogeneity to the inside with actors of the same gender, age group, sect and often ethno-linguistic and regional background. The hostel regime pursues the objective to provide security and protection for the inside and to exclude 'alien' and potentially dangerous elements in the outside world. This underlines how closely the making of place is linked to the territorial principles of governance and boundary-drawing. The female boarders live in an artificial uniform bubble cut off from the outside world of the bustling, diverse and challenging context of Gilgit city.



Fig. 3: Shared room in a girls' student hostel

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TIMING	ACTIVITIES	تواضع و ضوابط
4:30-5:00	MORNING PRAY	* فضائی پر توجہ
5:00-6:30	STUDY	* ایجنڈائی پر توجہ
7:00-7:15	BREAK FAST	* بیڑوں کا کھانا ماننا
7:15-7:30	ROOM cleaning	* تھوٹوں سے پیار
7:30-7:45	Preparation & College	* قوانین و ضوابط کا احترام
2:30-3:00	LUNCH	
3:00-4:00	RELAXATION	* ایجنڈا جارت سے دوسروں
4:00-4:30	TEA BREAK	* کچا چہرہ سے سوال نہ کرنا
4:30-6:30	ENTRANCE STUDY	* لڑائی جھگڑا نہ کریں
6:30-8:00	PRAY + REC + DINNER	* ایک دوسرے سے سنا سناؤ
8:00-10:30	STUDY	* تعاون کرنا
ROOM cleaning		
MEHREEN	UZMA KARIM	* بغیر مقدمہ سے دوسرے
ROZINA	NASIRA HAFIZ	* روم میں Room میں نہ جانا
NAVEEN	NAILA KHAN	* روم میں گروپ Study نہ کرنا
SHUMILA	MAJU KHAN	
SAFINA	SHAKILA	
FATMA	SAFINA	
SHAKILA	SHUMILA	
MAJU KHAN	NAVEEN	* ایجنڈا باتوں سے بیز کرنا
NAILA KHAN	ROZINA	
NASIRA HAFIZ	MEHREEN	
UZMA KARIM		
WRITTEN BY		MAJU + Naila

Fig. 4: Poster displaying in a girls' student hostel the tight daily schedule and chores for boarders, forming part of the 'norms in place'

But what happens when these female students cross over to the campus at the Karakoram University for the sake of their studies? They suddenly enter another world, another place with different rules, objects and actors, giving way to very different encounters and interactions. Here, male students and male university staff are present, and here the denominational homogeneity of the hostel place is replaced by confessional heterogeneity and unavoidable interactions with members of other sects. Here, mobile phones abound and internet access is readily available. All of the protective efforts undertaken in the hostel place, in order to regulate the female student's behaviour and to prevent what is perceived as moral misconduct posing a threat to the family's honour, are thwarted when it comes to the campus. What happens on the campus can be revealed further by applying the spatial perspective of positionality.

### 3.2 Positionality

Positionality is about identity and power, it is about how a person is positioned by others (ascribed identity) and how a person tries to position

oneself (articulation of identity) in a certain context and at a certain point in time. The campus place can be read as an arena for struggles over positionality, power and identity. At the same time, the rules in place are highly contested and fluid, since students from different places and social contexts, with very heterogeneous normative setups, meet and interact. The positionality of these campus students is linked to their positionality in other places, e.g. their positionality in their religious community and native village, in their extended family and their household. On campus, elements of actors' positionality, taken from other places, and the respective rules-in-place appear and come into contact with each other, often leading to maladapted 'out of place' behaviour accompanied by misperceptions held by differently positioned actors. Some Ismaili girls from Gojal, for instance, behave and interact on campus in the same way they act within the protected area of their homogeneously Ismaili native villages: they show up in fashionable dresses, often unveiled, and chat and interact with male students from other sects in the same way they are used to doing with their male Ismaili fellows. This is often misunderstood by male students from the Twelver Shiite and Sunni sects as a signal of a certain openness to friendships and romantic relations, since the 'normal' and expected conduct for women differs in these sects and prescribes discreet clothing, veiling and reserved behaviour towards non-kin men. Based on this misperception, Ismaili girls are positioned by Shiite and Sunni students as girls of 'easy virtue'. This re-positioning within the "sectarian imaginaries" (ALI, 2010), aligned with related rumours of attempted advances made by Shiite and Sunni students, not only has implications on the positionality of Ismaili students in the campus place, but also affects Ismaili students' positionality in the other places of their lifeworlds. Moreover, it threatens the positionality of their families as well as that of the Ismaili community in the region in general and thus bears the potential to disturb the fragile balance between inter-sectarian relations and modes of co-existence in a region troubled by sectarian conflict.

### 3.3 Network

The ways in which an actor's different positionalities in the multiple places of her/his lifeworld are connected and interdependent can be scrutinised by applying the spatial perspective of

the 'network' and its basic principle of connectivity. Social spaces are formed by social relations and exchanges between individuals. In the context of migration, these individuals are spread across space and located in a variety of different – often geographically distant – places. Their connections in social space cut across geographical space and integrate the individuals and their everyday places in a translocal social network. The positionality, for example, of a female Ismaili student in Gilgit, living in a student hostel and studying at the university, depends on her positionality in other places within her social network, particularly in the parental household. It makes a big difference regarding her educational opportunities if she is positioned in the household as an unmarried daughter, a recently married daughter-in-law, if she has children or not, if there are other family members living in Gilgit or other cities ready to support her and if her household and family are economically well-off or not. It is mainly the household where the necessary resources for education strategies are mobilised, the livelihood strategies for income generation are pursued and decisions about resource utilisation and redistribution are taken. The positionality of a household member strongly influences decisions about education migration, whilst further resources are drawn from extended family and communal networks. These material and immaterial resources mobilised in translocal household and family networks, in most cases, decide the viability of education migration strategies. In Gojal, the major proportion of household income is generated by migrating household members and redistributed to other household members, often living in a range of different places (BENZ 2016, 148-149). This challenges the 'classic' assumption of remittances flowing from a defined migration destination to a delimitable sending region, suggesting instead multi-local flows of what could be called 'network-remittances' (Fig. 5). Without these translocal support networks and network remittances, education migration would not have been possible for many Gojalis, thus forming the backbone of and social infrastructure for educational advancement and development in Gojal since the 1950s (BENZ 2016). Furthermore, communal Ismaili networks have played a central role in the choice of destination for education migration, which may be analysed further by applying the spatial category of 'territory', understood as socially constructed regionalisation based on the principles of bordering and bounding.

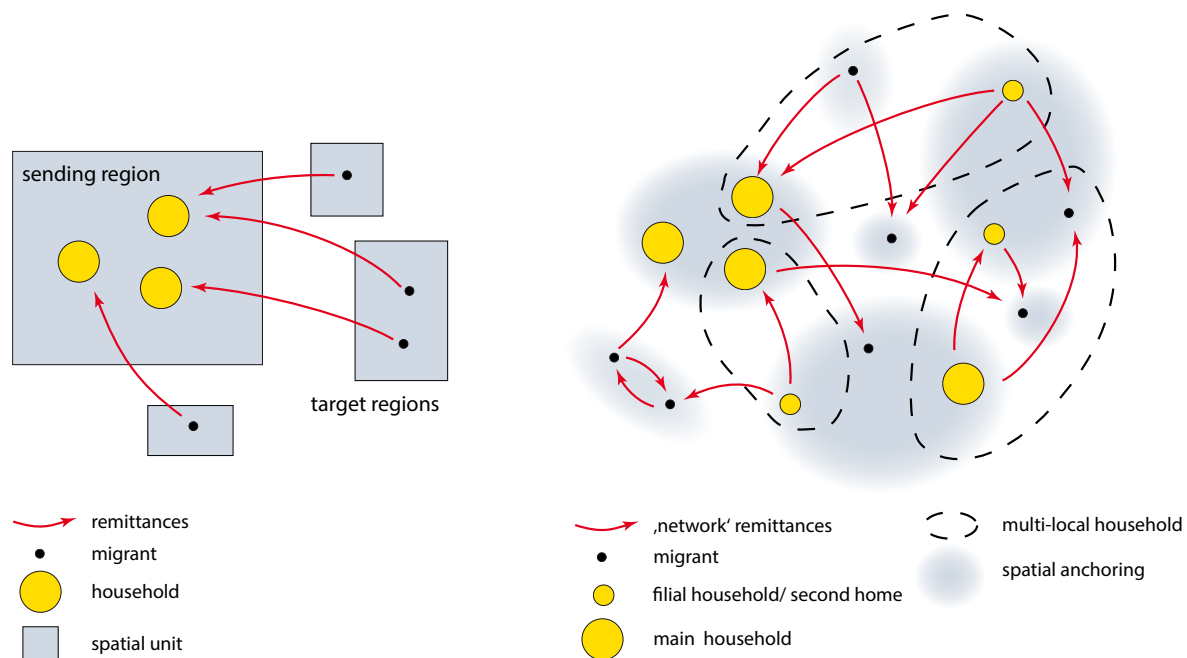


Fig. 5: Classic approach to remittances (left) and the translocal approach to remittances informed by the network perspective.

### 3.4 Territory

The overwhelming majority of migrants in the early decades of out-migration from Gojal, starting in the 1950s, headed to the most distant city in the Pakistani lowlands, Karachi, where they could benefit from the support of the *kehoja* Ismailis, a community of affluent traders, entrepreneurs and industrialists. Interestingly, the *kehoja* as well as the newly arrived Gojali (and other mountain Ismaili) migrants settled and concentrated in a few specific residential quarters, where they began to form the majority of the population and where communal institutions were established, turning these areas into ‘territories of support’ for Ismaili migrants. Here, they could expect protection, assistance, housing, jobs, income, education and religious association (KREUTZMANN 1989, 182-192; 1996, 307-314; 2015, 415). Similar structures also formed in Gilgit, which turned increasingly into a migration hub not only for Gojalis and other mountain Ismailis, but also for migrants from other sects. Each migrant group, identified by sect as well as regional and ethno-linguistic background, established its own ‘territories of support’ in Gilgit, leading to a city structure fragmented into a range of ethnic neighbourhoods (Fig. 6; GRIESER and SÖKEFELD 2015). This goes far beyond mere residential segregation along the mentioned lines of difference, as it also

includes segregated public infrastructure, such as separate schools, student hostels, health facilities, retail stores and service providers (HUNZAI 2013; VARLEY 2008, 2010, 2015). Moreover, this fragmentation into segregated ethnic territories implies claims to set and enforce certain norms and rules in one’s respective territory, thus leading to a mosaic of territories of a particular governmentality. This ethnic-confessional regionalisation, and socially constructed territorialisation, is embedded firmly in decades of sectarian tensions and violence in Gilgit and its surroundings (ALI 2010; HUNZAI 2013; SÖKEFELD 1997; STÖBER 2007). The perceived degree of security, protection and support, strongly linked to the availability of a local Ismaili (or even Gojali) community branch and related neighbourhoods as ‘territories of support’, is a highly influential factor in decisions about migration destinations.

### 3.5 Mobility

While territory does indeed point to segregation, boundary-drawing and conflict, as well as to terrains of assistance and support, the spatial dimension of ‘mobility’ may be understood not only as pointing to possibilities and options accessed through movements, but also as staying put or getting stuck. In the former understanding of



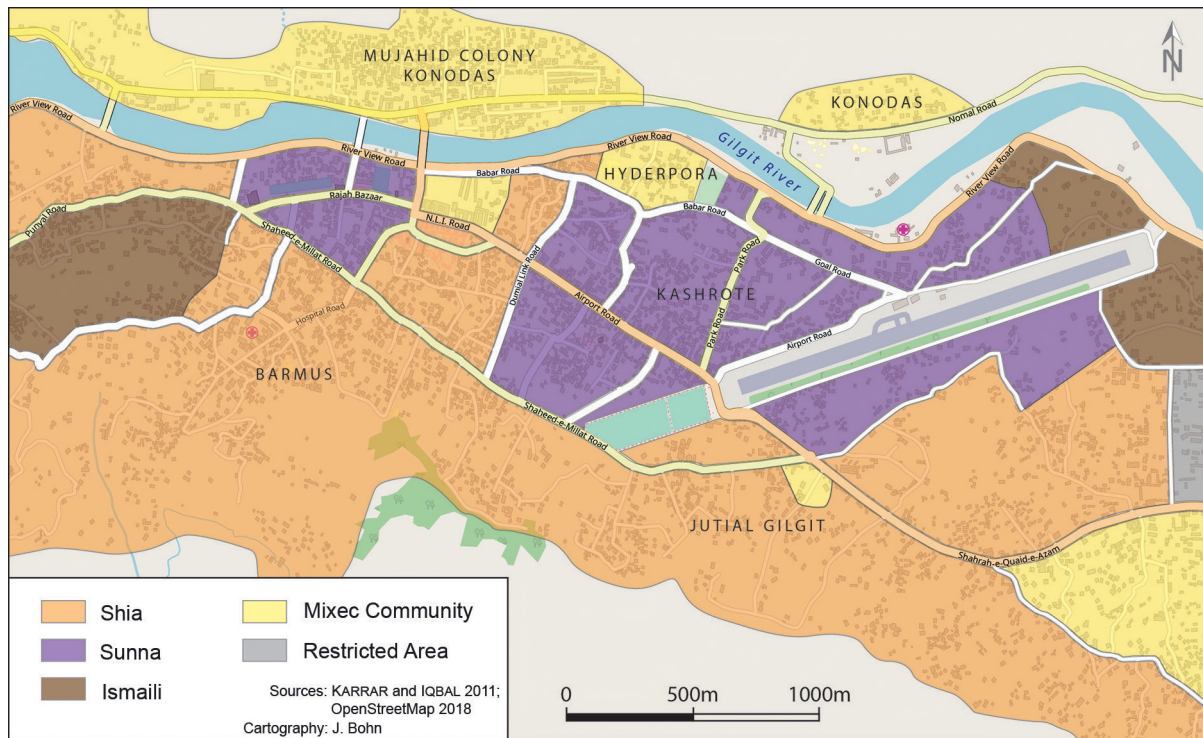


Fig. 6: Sectarian division in Gilgit city. Source: Modified after KARRAR and IQBAL 2011,70.

the mobility perspective, spaces appear as ‘spaces of opportunities’, and mobility in this regard turns out to be a precondition for accessing external resources and opportunities for building sustainable livelihoods. Local resource constraints can be overcome and livelihood activities and income sources diversified by tapping non-local resources. The impressive expansion of higher education, the realisation of professional careers in highly-skilled jobs and the increasing off-farm income generation of the Gojalis could only be realised through mobility and migration, as well as by translocal resource and income redistribution (Fig. 7; BENZ, 2014b, 2016).

Applying the spatial category of ‘mobility’ also provides important interlinkages between the phenomena revealed in the other spatial dimensions. An actor’s positionality is challenged and renegotiated with every new place entered in the context of mobility. In turn, positionality has decisive impacts on the capability of an actor to become mobile, which points to the important interlinkage between mobility and networks, in that having access to the ‘right’ translocal and in-place support networks often is a precondition for becoming mobile. Furthermore, mobility is interwoven with territory, since on the one hand ethnic neighbourhoods are

formed by inner-city residential mobility and by the residential choices of newly arriving migrants, but on the other hand migration is induced and directed by the availability of ‘terrains of support’ at the potential destination. Mobility is also linked to place, since the dynamics of places as arenas of interactions are stimulated by new actors entering the scene and others leaving. Mobility is therefore one of the most important drivers and factors of dynamics of places. Similar interlinkages could be drawn between all the other spatial dimensions.

### 3.6 A multi-dimensional perspective on student migration from Gojal to Gilgit

Each spatial perspective applied in the preceding chapters has added new insights to aspects of student migration from Gojal to Gilgit, which in sum allow for an improved and more comprehensive understanding of this social phenomenon, its structures and processes.

The multiplicity of new **places** added in the context of spatial **mobility** to the everyday life-world of migrant students at the destination, along with their very different sets of co-present actors and rules-in-place, structures the scope of potential



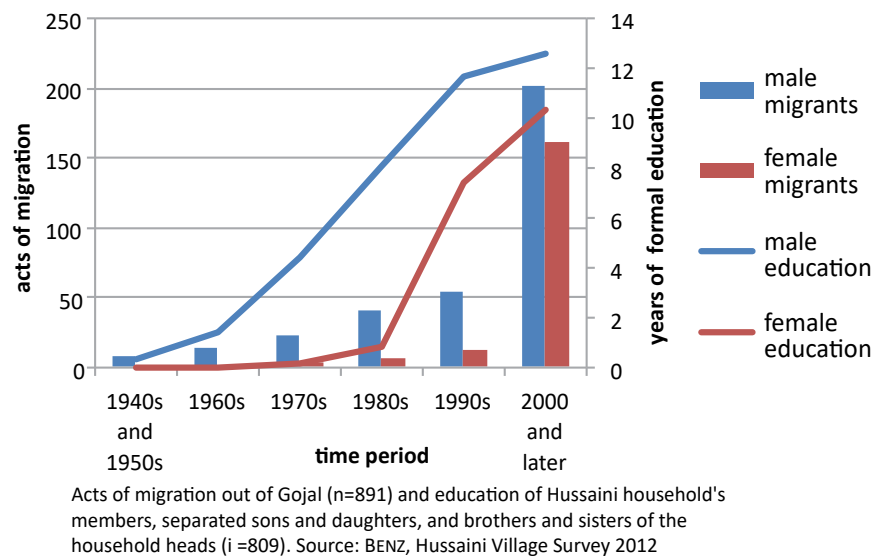


Fig. 7: Rising education levels in the village of Hussaini, Gojal, as a consequence of increased migration rates. Source: Modified after BENZ 2015.

interactions and accepted behaviour. These places are scattered across different **territories**, with boundaries drawn on the basis of sectarian imaginations, thereby dividing the city of Gilgit into socially constructed and separated spatial fragments. Navigating these heterogeneous place-territory topologies poses a huge challenge for student migrants from Gojal, particularly for young women, whose pre-migratory socio-spatial **positionality** becomes fluid in the context of migration. On the one hand, access to higher education strengthens their positionality in the household and family networks and improves their future opportunities and prospects for social **mobility**. On the other hand, their positionality is weakened and exposed to contestations, whereby they have to accept and subordinate to rigid hostel regimes severely limiting their personal freedoms, or when they struggle against being positioned on campus by other actors and actor groups. Resources mobilised in translocal social **networks**, particularly sectarian and kinship networks, form the preconditions for enabling student migrants' mobility and decisions made about the places and territories of their migratory everyday lifeworld, and they are also important determinants of their socio-spatial positionality. This particular interplay between places, territories, networks, mobility and socio-spatial positionality has given way to the impressive rise in education levels of Gojalis and their improved well-being and living standards, realised in the context of **translocal** livelihood strategies.

#### 4 Conclusion

From the outlined example of student migration in northern Pakistan, it became clear that scrutinising every one of the five spatial dimensions sheds light on a particular aspect of the constitution and social construction of space, through either the discursive or performative practices of the involved actors. In a dialectic manner, social practices take place within the prevalent socio-spatial (action) settings, institutional arrangements, discourses, imaginaries and boundary-settings, albeit these are themselves constantly modified as an outcome of socio-spatial practices (in line with GIDDENS' (1984) Theory of Structuration). As a consequence, we need to acknowledge that space is not objectively 'just there' but appears in a different light, depending on the individual actor's perspective and his/her socio-spatial positionality (e.g. adherence to a certain group and its spatial and symbolic discourses). Consequently, there is no such thing as 'the space', but there are as many facets thereof as there are actors and actors' interactive constellations in certain places.

Following on from this point, we argue that space and spatial phenomena can be accessed in a more beneficial way from a social constructivist approach, by utilising a research agenda that combines actor-orientation with an interactional and translocal perspective, and which pays respect to the multi-dimensionality of space in the dimensions place, network, positionality, territory and mobility. With the analytical framework outlined and empirically tested

in this article, we follow such an approach and provide a respective analytical tool for multi-dimensional spatial analysis. By paying equal respect to all mentioned spatial dimensions, it prevents 'spatial bias' and allows for a more comprehensive, multifaceted inquiry into the subject matter by combining insights gained from the application of each spatial perspective as well as their diverse interplays. The conceptual framework offers valuable guidance on reflexive case study and actor-based empirical research and remains flexible enough for a wide range of research situations in the social sciences and humanities. In addition, each spatial dimension may serve as a potential analytical entry point from which all the other spatial dimensions, but also the connections between them, may be accessed and analysed gradually.

In light of the above, we are convinced that the analytical framework presented herein has much more to offer for contemporary area studies than just avoiding the territorial trap and methodological regionalism: it allows one to trace translocal connectedness and interactions in a globalised, increasingly interconnected and hybrid world.

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