

***Unplugged* - Relating place to organization: A situated tribute to Doreen Massey**

Bertrand Sergot ● Anne-Laure Saives

Abstract. British geographer Doreen Massey died on March 11, 2016. Her death spurred numerous tributes in the field of human geography acknowledging the depth of her intellectual influence. However, Massey's thinking and works largely transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries. In this article, we argue that, in the wake of the spatial turn undertaken in the last few years, Massey's relational approach to space and place represents a potentially significant legacy for organization studies (OS). In the first part of the paper, we present the main conceptual elements of this relational approach as exposed by Massey herself, especially in her 2005 book, *For Space*. In the second part, we endeavor to show how this relational approach allows scholars to think about the interrelations between space, place, and organization in a different and subtler way. To this end, we first rely on the handful of publications in OS that have begun to exploit the analytical potential of Massey's vision, most notably combining it with the communication-as-constitutive perspective on organization. So far, this has been done only in terms of space. We thereby underline how Massey's relational approach to place might allow OS researchers to venture beyond the container metaphor—i.e., the tendency to represent the organization as one or several clearly delineated and stabilized workplaces—which continues to dominate vast swathes of the OS literature. Finally, we identify three main avenues for research, aiming to exploit Massey's relational approach to place in full.

Keywords: Massey, organization, place, processual and relational approaches, space

Bertrand Sergot

RITM
Université Paris-Sud
France
bertrand.sergot@u-psud.fr

Anne-Laure Saives

Université du Québec à Montréal
Canada
saives.anne-laure@uqam.ca

IN MEMORY OF DOREEN MASSEY (1944–2016)

INTRODUCTION

Doreen Massey passed away on March 11, 2016. She was a British geographer, and widely regarded as one of the brightest minds in contemporary English-language human geography (Callard, 2011). Her work, spanning several decades—from the 1970s to her passing—has significantly enriched and revitalized academic thinking in this field. The density and fecundity of Massey’s thought also allowed her to transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries (see *Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey*, Featherstone & Painter, 2013, where political scientists such as Chantal Mouffe and sociologists such as Michael Rustin pay tribute, alongside geographers and political figures, to the depth of the political and social implications of her thought). Doreen Massey was also an engaged scholar. She willingly displayed her feminist and Marxist-inspired convictions, integrating them into her thinking in very personal and original ways (Featherstone & Painter, 2013). She did not hesitate to support causes that were dear to her heart openly: sitting, at the beginning of the 1980s, on the Greater London Enterprise Board set up by Ken Livingstone to reflect on social, economic, and spatial problems in Greater London and develop proposals to correct them; inspiring Hugo Chávez’s government in Venezuela during the 2000s; and stirring up the crowd of the “Occupy London” movement in 2011.

Our aim in this article is not to pay a classical, exhaustive tribute to Doreen Massey and the work she carried out. Others who had the privilege of working directly with her and knowing her personally have already done that more ably than we ever¹. Instead, we want to honor her memory by stressing the potentially significant contribution she left for OS scholars. We have chosen to focus on one of the many books published by Massey, *For Space* (2005), our reading of which had a lasting and profound impact on us. In particular, we focus on one of the concepts that caught her attention, especially in *For Space*, namely that of place (or *lieu*² in French). Our tribute is offered in a specific academic context, since we clearly position ourselves as OS scholars.

Our decision to select the concept of place is far from innocent. First, it is central in Massey’s work. It is therefore particularly revealing of the way Massey builds on her intellectual curiosity and political commitments to develop original and stimulating spatial thinking. Her relational approach to space and place—and especially the detailed and erudite version of it that she exposes in *For Space* (2005)—concentrates in a single, extended analytical framework all the reflections and struggles she engaged in over the years regarding the mechanisms underlying regional inequalities (Massey, 1984), the spatialization of power relationships between genders (ibid.), and the need to take space and time simultaneously into account if economic and political changes are to be understood and alternatives are to emerge (ibid.).

Second, the word “place” is not entirely unfamiliar in our academic field. In fact, it has been in use for a long time now, especially in the word “workplace.” However, this word has tended to be used (and is still largely used) without any explicit definition, as if its meaning were unequivocal for everyone and had no implication for the way OS scholars conceptualize

1. Castree (2016) and the tribute website set up by the Open University, the British institution where Massey spent most of her academic career (<http://www.open.ac.uk/researchcentres/osrc/news/doreen-massey-1944-2016>, accessed on May 12, 2016).

2. It should be noted that, although *lieu* is usually regarded as the French equivalent to the English word “place,” it has been loaded, over the years, with distinctly different meanings in the French-language academic literature (see, for instance, Di Méo & Buléon, 2005: 86–87).

how individuals behave and interact while working. This tendency has been curbed in the last few years. In the wake of the “spatial turn” witnessed in OS (Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Warf and Arias, 2009), the word “place” is now increasingly approached in the field as an epistemological construct requiring explicit definition and clearer articulation with the other elements of researchers’ conceptual frameworks. A small body of works examining the concept of place in a more reflexive way has thus been published recently in sub-fields as diverse as sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (Guthey, Whiteman & Elmes, 2014; Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013), entrepreneurship (Gill & Larson, 2014), international management (Dai, Eden & Beamish, 2013), the management of information systems (Goel, Johnson, Junglas & Ives, 2011, who apply the concept of place to virtual worlds), and territorial marketing (Giovanardi, Lucarelli & Pasquinelli, 2013).

We argue that Doreen Massey’s relational approach to space and place is particularly useful in helping OS scholars to integrate the spatial dimensions of organizational phenomena more thoroughly into their analysis. To highlight this, the article is organized as follows. We first present Massey’s vision of space and place as well as its main analytical implications. In this first part of the paper, we complement Massey’s writings with the works of geographers Noel Castree (Castree 2003, 2004; Castree, Featherstone, Herod & Cox, 2006) and Tim Cresswell (2004, 2013), who clearly position her vision inside the academic literature in human geography, particularly in relation to the other relational approaches of space and place developed in the field. In the second part of the paper, we explain why Massey’s specific vision of place is potentially fruitful for the field of OS, especially for conceptualizing one of the central research objects of OS scholars, namely organization. We stress the fact that Massey’s relational thinking is part of a larger academic evolution common to all social sciences (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014), including OS, which “involves a critical revision in our ontological commitments from an ontology of being to an ontology of becoming” (Chia, 1995: 594) and “emphasizes a transient, ephemeral and emergent reality” (ibid.: 579). In OS, this evolution leads to an understanding of organization as referring not to already-there, stabilized, and formal organizational entities but, instead, to emergent, ongoing acts of organizing that may transgress formal organizational boundaries. Massey’s relational approach to space and place therefore displays a high degree of compatibility with the various processual approaches of organization forming what Knox, O’Doherty, Vurdubakis & Westrup (2015: 14) call “process organization studies.” In fact, as we show in the second part of the article, researchers relying on the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) perspective have already begun to put this compatibility to good academic use.

DOREEN MASSEY’S RELATIONAL VIEW OF SPACE AND PLACE

FIGHTING AGAINST PURIFIED SPATIAL IMAGINATIONS

In her book *For Space*, Doreen Massey presents her view of space and place as a reaction to repeated attempts by contemporary political or economic actors to impose two purified ways of imagining space: on one hand, as a space of pure flux; and, on the other hand, as a space subdivided into reified, stabilized entities (national or regional) separated by hermetic boundaries (Massey, 2005: 101 & 86). Those attempts are

based, according to Massey, on three binary overlapping oppositions that mutually reinforce one another.

The first binary opposition, particularly inspired by the work of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, but also by structuralist approaches, has been built between space on one hand and time on the other. It associates space with stabilization and “petrification” (Massey, 2005: 28). Within this perspective, space is “conceived to be the absolute negation of time” (2005: 37) and of mobility.

The second binary opposition, strongly rooted in human geography since Tuan’s seminal work (1977), leads us to distinguish place understood as the exclusive domain of the lived, the concrete, the sensitive, and the embodied as filled with social meanings (2005: 185), and space conceived as an abstract notion, far from the concerns of place-based individuals and out of their reach. The third, connected opposition underlined by Massey, between the local and the global (2005: 183), reinforces the previous one.

The combination of those three binary oppositions is at the core of the deprivation (even auto-deprivation) of those who perceive themselves as rooted in a particular place from their agency on trans-local phenomena, such as so-called global phenomena. On the contrary, Massey’s aim is to build, based on her relational approach, a vision of space and place that would be “politically progressive” (2005: 124). She aspires not only to a simple intellectual renewal or change in perspective, but also to an “imaginative opening up of space” (2005: 120) that would allow us to acknowledge the multiplicity of possible becomings and open the door to alternative politics (2005: 183). She thus aims to give back to all social actors their agency but also a fairer perception of their responsibilities regarding global phenomena (2005: 181). From this standpoint, Massey is very critical of all forms of “exclusivist localisms based on claims of some eternal authenticity” (2005: 20), including those proposed by some left-wing politicians or activists who all too easily set a “local” ownership considered in principle to be “good,” in contrast with an external control that is judged in principle to be bad (2005: 181). Instead, she argues for “the possibility of imagining alternative ways of generating globalisation” (Featherstone & Painter, 2013: 6).

Summarizing Massey’s relational view in the form of a straightforward list of particular characteristics applicable to the notions of place and space does not do justice to the richness and subtlety of her thought. For this to be achieved, a more elaborate analytical frame is necessary. An in-depth reading of Massey’s writings regarding this relational approach leads us to opt for a representation composed of three interrelated levels: one central principle on which her whole conceptualization of space and place is based, three premises, and five main defining dimensions of place.

A CENTRAL PRINCIPLE: THE RELATIONAL NATURE OF SPACE AND PLACE

Massey’s analysis rests upon an understanding of space “as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions” (2005: 9), “relations” being defined, in *For Space*, as “embedded practices of material engagement” (2005: 10 & 61). Massey relies on this central principle to go beyond the traditional binary opposition that she firmly criticizes: “how can we resolve the binary between place and space? Well one way is precisely by integrating them relationally” (Massey et al., 2009: 412). The distinction between space and place, as conceived by Massey, is therefore less strict than in pre-existing conceptualizations. Nevertheless, it still remains.

Without roundly rejecting classical approaches to place, such as that of Tuan (1977), her insistence on the central role of relations in the construction of place (and in the reduction of the traditional dualistic opposition between place and space) aims to regard places as deeply interconnected, and therefore interdependent, but also as different from one another and, as a consequence, unique (Castree, 2003). To this end, she proposes “a notion of place where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—now to be disrupted by globalization—but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found there” (Massey, 1999: 22, cited by Castree et al., 2006: 310).

THREE ESSENTIAL PREMISES

A VISION OF SPACE AS A CONSTRUCT

Massey explicitly analyzes space and place as social and material constructs. According to her, they are first and foremost the products of spatialized relations: “entities and identities (be they places, or political constituencies, or mountains) are collectively produced through practices which form relations” (2005: 148). Thus, while moving (for example, by train), “you are not just travelling, through space or across it, you are altering it a little” (2005: 118). More than on Henri Lefebvre’s celebrated work *The Production of Space* (1991), her constructivist view of space and place explicitly relies on the anti-essentialism of Chantal Mouffe (1993) and the relational understanding of the world that this author defends. Massey intends to extend and complete Mouffe’s relational conceptualization of politics by insisting on the spatial dimension of entities, identities (including political subjectivities), and interrelations that meet in place (Massey, 2005: 10).

SIMULTANEOUSLY CONSIDERING SPACE AND TIME

The second premise reflects on the idea that space and time are interlocked and must be thought of as such. In this way, Massey’s conception of place indissolubly associates spatial and temporal dimensions. According to her, what we usually describe as “here” is only a localized encounter of diverse individual trajectories that will disperse immediately afterwards. It is therefore “irretrievably, here and now” (2005: 139). This vision of space and time as deeply entangled derives directly from her critique of the static vision of space proposed by some academics (which she describes as a “means of taming the spatial,” 2005: 61), and particularly of those that contrast this static, frozen space with a time associated with change and movement. For Massey, “you can’t hold places still” (2005: 125). On the contrary, her relational approach leads to a conception of space as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (2005: 24).

A POLITICAL READING OF SPACE AND PLACE

Space and place are, according to Massey, fundamentally political as they raise the question of our living together. Moreover, the way in which space and place are conceptualized, especially when those conceptualizations remain implicit, is particularly restrictive as the conceptualizations that prevail in the social environment inside which human beings evolve at a given moment constrain their capacity to resist

and build alternatives (Massey, 2005: 99). Her relational approach, in line with Mouffe's work, aims explicitly to provide politicians, activists, and indeed everyone else with the ability to consider space and place in a more open and potentially multiple way, and to find alternatives to any attempt to impose a purified, hegemonic vision. This approach leads to a view of space and place as chaotic and unstable, requiring spatial politics "concerned with how such chaos can be ordered, how juxtapositions may be regulated, how space might be coded, how the terms of connectivity might be negotiated" (2005: 153).

THE MAIN DEFINING DIMENSIONS OF PLACE ACCORDING TO MASSEY

Doreen Massey's particular approach to space and place leads her to confer upon place a set of distinctive, defining dimensions. She further associates each of these defining dimensions with implications regarding the relations that individuals or collectives have with places and their possibilities for place-based action. Massey does not put forward an explicit list of those dimensions in her different writings. We therefore elaborate one based on a close cross-reading of her work. However, these dimensions should not be regarded as distinct from one another; they are closely interconnected, and even interwoven. It is precisely this interweaving that gives Massey's thought its coherence and allows us to consider this set of dimensions as forming a unified and specific conceptualization of place.

THE RELATIONALITY OF PLACES

This dimension is central to Massey's conceptualization of place since it is the transposition of the central tenet of her approach to space to the concept of place. Massey considers that the connections are (or should be) central in the understanding of place (2005: 188). According to her, place is continuously built and rebuilt through relations. This insistence on relations in the construction of place leads her to relativize differences among places, considering that "the distant is implicated in our 'here'" (2005: 192). It also leads her to reconsider the relationship between geographical scales, and especially the ubiquitous distinction between the local and the global. According to her, the global and the local are inevitably mutually constituted (2005: 102). She therefore pleads for "a politics of outwardlookingness, from place beyond place" (2005: 192; see also Massey, 1994) that does not rely on the view of the local as passive, or even as a victim of globalization (Escobar, 2001). From this perspective, agency over global phenomena resides in places, not in some elusive, out-of-reach global realm.

PLACES AS SPATIO-TEMPORAL EVENTS

The need to apprehend spatial and temporal dimensions simultaneously leads Massey to define places as "spatio-temporal events" (2005: 131). According to her, a place is indeed constituted of the coming together, the "happenstance juxtaposition" (2005: 94) in a precise point in space and time of a multiplicity of individual human and non-human trajectories that will disperse again at their own rhythm (*ibid.*). A place is "a moment within power-geometries" (2005: 131). This conceptualization of place has deep underlying implications. Apart from the

chaotic and unstable character of place, Massey retains two implications that we will deal with in the following sections: Place is internally multiple; and place is open (2005: 141).

THE INTERNAL HETEROGENEITY OF PLACES AND HOW IT IS NEGOTIATED

What makes place unique, according to Massey, is first and foremost its internal heterogeneity. This heterogeneity stems directly from what the author (2005: 99) terms the “co-evalness³” of the individual trajectories that meet in place. Within a place, different human agents, as well as different non-human entities, come into contact with each other (with Massey evoking, in this regard, the idea of “throwntogetherness,” 2005: 140) without necessarily premeditating it. According to Massey, this “throwntogetherness” of place has two major consequences.

First, it is in places that “the chance of space” (2005: 111) can be fully measured—i.e., the capacity of space to put ourselves in contact with surprise, novelty, and alterity. This confrontation with alterity gives place its creative character. Here lies “the productiveness of spatiality” (2005: 94), which—from situated and unexpected encounters—might give birth to something new: “Places, rather than being locations of coherence, become the foci of the meeting and the non-meeting of the previously unrelated and thus integral to the generation of novelty” (2005: 71). Massey admits that it is possible to regulate “the range and nature of the adventures and chance encounters which are permissible” (2005: 180). To this end, she relies on the example of scientific parks, showing how the incoming and outgoing movements are restricted both materially (by virtue of security systems or security guards) and symbolically (through signs of scientific excellence and functional hyper-specialization that manifest themselves in the parks’ overall aesthetics “favouring a tamed suburban ‘rurality’” (2005: 143) and the architecture of their buildings). However, Massey highlights the fact that those regulation attempts never do away completely with the possibility of unexpected encounters. A “politics of connectivity” (2005: 181), concerned with the definition of the “the terms of openness and closure” (ibid.), therefore constitutes the first part of the “relational politics of place” (ibid.) that Massey advocates.

Place is also a source of conflict. Our presence in a place involves us, whether we like it or not, in the life of the other human beings who also happen to be in the same place at the same time. It confronts us with the “unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now” (2005: 140). Conflicts arise from the differences in the way individuals meeting in a place practice and imagine this place, which requires constant negotiation. As underlined by Castree et al. (2006: 310), “the fact of geographical propinquity, Massey has rightly argued, does not produce any ready consensus about what local interests and identities are or ought to be.” This negotiation is at the heart of the material and social production of places, which is also, reciprocally, a production or alteration of the individuals who are practicing those places. As a consequence, the need to “confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity” (2005: 141) constitutes the second part of the “relational politics of place” posited by Massey.

3. This term refers to the temporal and spatial concomitance (“the radical contemporaneity,” 2005: 99) of individual trajectories.

PLACES AS ALWAYS UNFINISHED AND OPEN

Since, according to Massey, space is “always unfinished and open” (2005: 111), “there can be no assumption of pre-given coherence” (2005: 141) of places. Nor can there be any purification of places through the construction of “hegemonising identities” (2005: 158). Insofar as places result from the encounter of a multiplicity of trajectories and therefore of individual stories, place identity and place-based meanings are always open to contestation and conflict. Massey, inspired by (among others) Derrida (1972), considers these “cracks in the carapace” (2005: 116) in an extremely positive light because they constitute different ways of thinking space and place and therefore of developing alternatives against attempts to discursively or materially impose a hegemonic spatial order: “the very impossibility of closing space, of reducing it to order (or even of ‘conquering’ it), gives hope that there is always a chance of avoiding recuperation” (2005: 116).

THE RELATIONAL UNIQUENESS OF PLACE

Massey’s analytical framework does not lead her to give up a view of places as unique. The explicit objective of her chapter on the notion of place published in 1994 is to answer the dilemma of “how to hold on to the notion of geographical difference, uniqueness, even rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary” (Massey, 1994: 152). In Massey’s work, this uniqueness is not purely internal. It does not grow out of the soil. It stems from the specific way in which trajectories intersect, giving rise to place as a spatio-temporal event. As a consequence, it is therefore directly dependent on “interactions with the beyond” (2005: 66). Within this conceptual framework, place must be understood as a meeting place “where the ‘difference’ of a place must be conceptualised more in the ineffable sense of the constant emergence of uniqueness out of (and within) the specific constellations of interrelations within which that place is set” (Massey, 2005: 68; see also her example of Kilburn High Road in London, 1994, 2005). Massey’s understanding of place is therefore thoroughly extroverted (Castree, 2003; Cresswell, 2013). Besides, to be able to fully appreciate a place’s specificity, one has to be aware of the other places with which it is connected. As a consequence, Massey proposes the adoption of a “politics of grounded connectedness” (2005: 66), which would be based on the recognition of the irretrievable interlocking of (on one hand) a place’s uniqueness and (on the other hand) the relations that always connect it to other places.

SPACE, PLACE, AND ORGANIZATION: THE FRUITFULNESS OF MASSEY’S RELATIONAL APPROACH FOR OS

In the last few years, Doreen Massey’s writings have been regularly cited in OS publications in relation to the concepts of space and, albeit more rarely, place. Nevertheless, most of these citations remain superficial since they do not fully take into account the specificity of Massey’s relational approach to space and place as presented in the first part of this article. As a consequence, these publications do not allow researchers to appreciate entirely the analytical implications associated with this particular approach. A small body of works offers a more thorough analysis of the way in which Massey’s relational thinking may enrich analysis of and

debates about a concept that is central to OS scholars: organization (Crevani, 2015; Hirst and Humphreys, 2013; Knox et al., 2015; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). We have chosen to draw on those works as the starting point for a more detailed exploration of how Massey's relational approach to space and place can be transposed into OS, the potential fruitfulness of such a transposition, and also its limitations. We first focus on the concept of space, since almost all the works referred to above only associate Massey's relational approach with the word "space." We then argue that the most fruitful avenues for research now relate to the transposition of Massey's vision of the concept of place into OS. We expose these avenues for research in the final section of the article.

WHAT CONCEPTUALIZATION(S) OF ORGANIZATION ARE COMPATIBLE WITH MASSEY'S RELATIONAL APPROACH TO SPACE?

All recent work in OS linking Massey's relational approach to space with the concept of organization rely, at least in part, on the CCO perspective that has developed in the field over the last few years (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud & Taylor, 2014; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen & Clark, 2011). To be more precise, it relies on a particular school of CCO thought, namely that of the Montreal School of Organizational Communication (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Brummans et al., 2014; Schoeneborn et al., 2014). In this conceptual framework, organizations are seen as being enacted through meaningful interactions involving human beings but also non-human actants⁴ (written texts, e-mails, logos, buildings, physical objects, etc.). Organization therefore appears as both a discursive and a material enactment. Some of these human and non-human actants materially give flesh to or represent⁵ a particular organizational entity (Cooren, Brummans & Charrieras, 2008) through their interactions with other actants and the conversations these interactions allow (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). They take an active part in the organization's ongoing building process. These conversations are therefore the generative acts out of which organizational reality emerges (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Brummans et al., 2014). Massey's relational approach to space and the CCO perspective thus seem to exhibit a high degree of compatibility. What is the basis for this compatibility? As we will demonstrate below, the answer to this question is particularly helpful in understanding how the two conceptual frameworks enrich each other. It may also reveal whether that compatibility can be extended to other conceptualizations of organization and, if so, which ones.

A first explanation for the aforementioned high degree of compatibility lies in the deeply relational nature of the conceptual frameworks involved. The conceptualizations of space (in the case of Massey) and organization (in the case of the CCO perspective) are both based on connections or interactions between actants. Moreover, in both frameworks, these interactions are regarded as performative. Neither of these approaches treats its main research object (organization for one, space for the other) as reified, closed, or forever stabilized (or, as Massey would have said, as "already-there"). Instead, they both regard them as ongoing constructions enacted through the practices of a multiplicity of human and non-human actants and, therefore, always open to change.

A second and connected explanation derives from the multiplicity of the agencies (with Cooren, 2006, speaking of a "plenum of agencies," and

4. To use the term coined by the promoters of actor-network theory (ANT).

5. Cooren et al. (2008: 1364) term this process, through which "something is made present through the actions of various human and nonhuman agents," "presentification."

Massey, 2005: 9, of a “coexisting heterogeneity”) that are involved, according to these two frameworks, in the production (or, more aptly, co-production: Cooren et al., 2011) of space and organization. As a result, for both of them, the trajectory of space and organization is irreducibly indeterminate.

Recognizing the multiplicity of the agencies involved in these construction processes attenuates the possibility of centralized control (be it from corporate managers or governments) over the phenomena under study. This questioning is central to Hirst & Humphreys’ (2013) work. They show how the way in which a British local authority operates—and even what it fundamentally is—is altered after its employees move to two new buildings such that they are physically and functionally separated from one another. This alteration results from the dynamic interactions between (on one hand) the workplaces as initially conceived (using Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of conceived space) by managers, architects, and designers and (on the other hand) the particular ways in which the organization’s employees appropriate the affordances (Fayard & Weeks, 2007⁶) of these workplaces, partly conforming to their creators’ expectations, and partly resisting and subverting them. For Massey, as in the CCO perspective, space and organization are always open to resistance. Defined as the construction, diffusion, and performance of alternative visions of space and organization, resistance always remains a possibility because of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the agencies involved in their enactment.

Finally, these two conceptual frameworks are also potentially susceptible to issues of power⁷. The conceptualization of space and organization as ongoing constructions emerging from the interactions between multiples actants sheds a particularly crude light on the imbalances in the abilities of the various actants involved to influence these construction processes. On a more enabling note, it also throws into relief the fact that all actants have an influence on these processes and can therefore modify them, however slightly.

IS MASSEY’S RELATIONAL APPROACH COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF ORGANIZATION?

Massey’s relational approach to space is structured around the following principle, which, according to the British geographer Cresswell (2013: 218), is common to all “relational geographies”: “rather than thinking about the inhabited world as a set of discrete things with their own essences (this place, different from that place), we can think about the world as formed through the ways in which things relate to each other” (ibid.). Beyond the CCO perspective, Massey’s approach may therefore be combined with all the processual approaches of organization (for more details, see Sergot & Saives, 2016). They all reject “entitative” (Chia, 2005: 115) conceptions of organizational realities, insisting instead on “the inherently processual and dynamic character of organizational phenomena” (Schoeneborn, Vásquez & Cornelissen, 2016: 917). All these approaches analyze organization in terms of “becoming” (Chia, 1995; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Similarly, for Massey, space is “in a constant state of becoming” (Cresswell, 2013: 220). The compatibility between Massey’s relational approach to space and processual readings of organization in terms of materiality is thus established, especially through the works of Dale and Burrell, who explicitly

6. Initially developed in the field of biology, the theory of affordances underlines how “an individual’s behavior in a setting is shaped, but never fully determined, by the physical and social characteristics of that setting” (Fayard & Weeks, 2007: 606).

7. However, the Montreal School’s approach to CCO has been criticized for not being sensitive enough to questions of power (Brummans et al., 2014).

refer to Massey (Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008), even if their understanding of space primarily rests on Lefebvre's thinking.

WHICH NEW INSIGHTS DOES MASSEY'S RELATIONAL APPROACH TO SPACE BRING FOR SCHOLARS INTERESTED IN THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATION?

Massey's relational approach to space is drawn upon in combination with the CCO perspective in order to better account for the inherently situated—both in space and in time—nature of the conversations enacting organizations (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). Authors referring to her thus benefit from a conceptualization of space that is both complex and open: complex because it makes it possible to go beyond the mere concept of spacing (see Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 51, borrowing from the French philosopher Derrida, 1972; Knox et al., 2015: 7, borrowing from the French sociologist and key name in ANT, Bruno Latour, 1997; and Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). This concept of spacing is interesting by dint of the analogy it allows with the concept of organizing (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). However, it needs to be completed in order to be operationalized. In fact, Massey's framework is frequently called upon alongside ANT (Hirst & Humphreys, 2013; Knox et al., 2015). ANT brings a representation of the social as relational and performative, in which the agency of non-human actants is fully recognized and the enactment of the social derives from "the formation and undoing of associations between human and nonhuman entities" (Hirst & Humphreys, 2013: 1507). ANT is therefore both compatible with and Complementary to Massey's relational approach to space. This conceptual combination is particularly fruitful. It allows for a better understanding of how distinct conversations, which are necessarily "distributed in space and time" (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013: 42), connect with one another. In order to make an organization present, these conversations need to display some form of coherence and stability in time and space. The relative durability and—in most cases—transportability of non-human entities (including texts that may be transmitted from one place and from one moment to another in a material or dematerialized form) endow them with a central role in the presentification of organization: "Objects imbricated with particular intentions thus enable people to act at a distance and over time by appropriating the action of other actors" (Hirst & Humphreys, 2013: 1510; see also Cooren, 2006). Combining the CCO perspective with Massey's approach helps to conceive the space of organization not as a set of containers enclosed behind the walls of the buildings owned or rented by the focal organizational entity, but instead as "a much more unsteady medium giving rise to multiple and unpredictable 'spatial-becomings' (Massey, 2005) that transgress any easily identifiable location such as might be provided by the typical duality of inside/outside demarcations" (Knox et al., 2015: 7). Vásquez & Cooren (2013) thus analyze Explora, an educational program sponsored by the Chilean government to promote science and technology among the country's schoolchildren, as a dispersed organization able to travel thanks to the various individuals that represent it all around Chile, the documents bearing its logo, the particular ways the deadline and goals associated with Explora's projects are set, and the data and stories used to account for its activities. All these actants lend coherence and stability to the organization in question despite the wide spatio-temporal dispersion of the activities performed in its name (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013).

The combination of Massey's relational approach to space with the CCO perspective on organization thus shows that the production of space

and that of organization are irreducibly imbricated with one another. From this point of view, organization can be understood as a purposeful search for spatio-temporal ordering defined as “a spacing practice through which actors distribute, in an orderly fashion, other actors and elements in space and time” (Knox et al., 2015: 11; see also Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). However, this imbrication is particular since Massey (2005: 151) regards “the combination of order and chance” as inherent to space. Knox et al. (2015) attempt to apply this vision to the British international airport they study. They see it both as a localized collection of organizations (comprising the company managing the airport, airlines, baggage handling companies, retailers, law enforcement agencies, etc.), and as the product of events, emerging processes of organization and disorganization transcending formal organizational boundaries. These two logics of organization constantly coexist in the airport’s day-to-day operations. Most of the time, the impression of “spatio-textual” (ibid.: 9) order dominates: Each organizational entity seems to play its predefined role and control the (re)-production of airport spaces. However, this apparent ordering breaks down every time an unexpected event, such as the suspicious behavior of a potential terrorist, is noticed, and this reveals the precariousness and instability—always spectrally (ibid.: 11) present—or organization of and in the airport. The airport then appears as a problematic space, difficult “to read” (ibid.: 9) and “to calm down” (ibid.: 10) for the actors in charge of it.

WHICH NEW INSIGHTS DOES MASSEY’S RELATIONAL APPROACH TO PLACE BRING FOR SCHOLARS INTERESTED IN THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATION?

As indicated in the title of this section, Massey’s relational approach does not concern space alone; it is a relational approach to space and place. We have chosen to save the concept of place and Massey’s particular vision of place for this last section. In fact, it is with regard to place that the fruitfulness of Massey’s relational thinking has been the most underexploited to date in the field of OS. OS scholars have so far dedicated only limited attention to the concept of place when analyzing the spatial dimensions of organizational phenomena. All the references we use as the basis for this second part of the article, with the notable exception of Crevani (2015), approach Massey’s relational thinking exclusively in terms of space. This stands in stark contrast with English-language human geography, where the concept of place has benefited, since the seventies, from renewed attention and heated debate. How can we explain this discrepancy?

As geographers Noel Castree (2003) and Tim Cresswell (2004) have rightly underlined, one of the main difficulties faced by researchers aiming to conceptualize place derives from the fact that the word features in everyone’s day-to-day vocabulary. It is therefore not easy to go beyond the multiple and often implicit meanings with which this word has become loaded over its repeated, everyday use.

In English, the word “place,” in its most commonly used senses, tends to be tightly associated with the idea of order (“to be in place,” “to be out of place,” and “to take place”). Dale & Burrell (2008) and Knox et al. (2015) show how pregnant this association between place and order still is and how deeply it impregnates the academic literature in OS. Dale & Burrell (2008) thus use the word “place” when they turn to “organized space” (ibid.: 9)—i.e., “the deliberate constructions of space to embody certain conceptualizations (e.g. functionality and control) in materialised form” (ibid.). According to them, organized space, thus defined,

corresponds to Lefebvre's notion of conceived space. Knox et al.'s (2015) work is characterized by a binary opposition that, albeit different from the opposition existing in human geography and condemned by Massey, is no less consequential. Knox et al. regard space as an interactionist, emerging production, always threatened by disorder, always on the brink of becoming "problematic" (ibid: 7). By contrast, the word "place" is associated, in their article, with a stabilized, and even reified, state of organization, with order defined as the "correct place-ing and thus clear definition of the 'contents' of organization" (ibid.: 9). This tendency to associate place and order in OS is reinforced by the persisting pregnancy, especially in research on workplaces, of what Ashcraft (Ashcraft, 2007; Ashcraft et al., 2009) calls the "container metaphor." In this metaphor, any workplace tends to be understood as "a finite place where work gets done" (Ashcraft, 2007: 11), and the organization as physically and unequivocally delineated by the walls that formal organizational entities own or rent. This metaphor results in a disciplined vision of place in relation to organization⁸. Massey's relational approach to place may be a great help for OS researchers wishing to go beyond this traditional and disciplined reading and to understand organizational place in a more open way. The concept of place seems particularly useful for analyzing the formation and development of contemporary forms of organized work displaying increasingly varied spatializations (Clegg & van Iterson, 2013; Delbridge & Sallaz, 2015) as it questions two central aspects of place (see, in human geography, Castree, 2003; Cresswell, 2004): (1) the existence of differences in space (it being not inconsequential for a social or organizational actor to be here rather than there), which are the basis of all the academic definitions of place because it is precisely those differences that give place its unique character and its unicity; and (2) the notion of spatial delimitation. We use the term "delimitation" because it encompasses all the possible logics of spatial differentiation, be they based on separation (resulting in the creation, protection, and modification of boundaries), fusion (resulting in the creation of "areas of transition", Hernes, 2004: 11; see also Massey, 2005: 21), or liminal spaces (i.e., in-between spaces that are at the same time outside and inside organized space and whose delimitation, destination, and appropriation remain ambiguous and open—Dale & Burrell, 2008; Shortt, 2015). Unicity and delimitation represent two of the founding principles of what Dobusch & Schoeneborn (2015) call "organizationality," i.e., what differentiates organizations from other forms of collective action⁹.

A first avenue for research revealed by Vásquez & Cooren's (2013) work invites researchers to consider organization and place (re)construction processes as simultaneous and deeply intertwined. Vásquez & Cooren rely on Massey in arguing that the organization emerges out of the alignment, through communication, of a multiplicity of human and non-human individual trajectories "in the singularity of a 'we'" (2013: 42). Thanks to sets of situated conversations connected by various non-human actants (physical objects, texts taking the form of paper documents or e-mails, buildings, etc.), the organization is enacted as the ordered distribution "of actors, actions and responsibilities" (ibid.) in space and time. Although Vásquez & Cooren (2013) never mention the word "place," their conceptualization of Explora is structured around principles of spatio-temporal differentiation and internal coherence, and therefore both spatial unicity and uniqueness. Explora, as they analyze it, therefore

8. We will term this "organizational place."

9. Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015:1009) refer to unicity and delimitation using the expression "identity and boundary."

appears both as an organization and as a place. This is precisely the thesis defended by Crevani (2015), which goes against the postulate of areal continuity underlying most academic definitions of place (Lussault, 2007) and gives credence to the idea that an organizational place may be dispersed both spatially and temporally, and may travel (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013: 41). Such a thesis is in line with Massey's thinking. It invites researchers to overcome inside–outside dualisms and the reification of spatial boundaries, especially those implied by the container metaphor mentioned above (see Knox et al., 2015; and, in human geography, Cresswell, 2013).

However, the spacing and timing activities that, according to Vásquez & Cooren, enact organization do not necessarily result in the emergence of a unique and distinct organizational place. Seeing the construction processes of organization and place as mixed up exposes researchers to the risk of drifting toward the kind of purified imagination of place that Massey vigorously condemned: Each formal organizational entity would correspond to an organizational place, analyzed as a clearly delineated portion of physical space particularly open to the taming influences of organizational leaders, even though these influences would be negotiated, translated, and/or debated with the other human and non-human entities involved (Cooren et al, 2011).

Rather, following Massey implies thinking about place in terms of multiplicity. This multiplicity is internal to each place as it derives from the ongoing negotiation between the various actants that meet there. It is also the multiplicity of the places that populate space as practiced and lived by individuals. This is particularly true at a time when work and individuals at work are increasingly dispersed and multi-localized (Clegg & van Iterson, 2013; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Hislop & Axtell, 2009; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Against this backdrop, working individuals should not be regarded as helping to construct a single organizational place but, rather, as taking part in the simultaneous (re)construction of multiple places that display no functional purity thanks to the increased blurring of the boundaries between places of work, leisure, and family life (Fleming & Spicer, 2004), spurred by such practices as homeworking (Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Wapshott & Mallett, 2012) or the ways Fablabs and other makerspaces are used (Lallement, 2015). Organization and place are intertwined in particularly complex ways in the processes of construction, protection, and contestation of places' delimitation. This complexity derives, on one hand, from the heterogeneity in individuals' ways of imagining and practicing a specific place and therefore the heterogeneity in the way they delimit it (what Cresswell, 2004: 4, calls "the rich tapestry of place making") and, on the other hand, from the overlaps between the places associated with distinct organizational entities. On this last point, Knox et al. (2015: 8) refer to "overlapping orderings." According to them, these overlapping orderings lay the ground for the acts of organization/disorganizing transcending conventional organizational boundaries they observe at the international airport they study. This avenue for research remains largely open since it has not yet been explored using the concept of place.

Finally, Massey's relational approach to place should also be applied literally to the analysis of conventional workplaces—i.e., workplaces that are physically delineated (separate buildings, particular floors of a building, or parts of a floor enclosed behind walls or partitions), contractually owned, or rented for a relatively long period of time by a single organizational entity (company, public administration, non-governmental organization, etc.) so that individuals can undertake activities there on its behalf. The aim of such analysis will be to understand how (if at all) incoming and outgoing human

and non-human mobility (and the relationships this mobility helps to weave between the focal workplace and other distinct places or places inside which the workplace is embedded—Crevani, 2015) contribute to the enactment of this workplace as a distinct place. Researchers will also need to uncover how these eventual (work)place-making processes are linked to organizational processes. To our knowledge, this has not yet been thoroughly explored in OS, and therefore represents a particularly promising avenue for future research.

CONCLUSION

Our aim in this article was to honor the British geographer Doreen Massey, who recently passed away, by underlining the potential significance of her relational approach to space and place for the field of OS. This legacy goes well beyond recognition of the spatialization of inter-gender power relationships (Massey, 1994) or global-local imbrication (Massey, 1991), both of which have already percolated inside our field.

After exposing the main elements of Massey's relational approach, we have shown that, by virtue of major convergences between the conceptual foundations of her relational thinking and the CCO perspective on organization, this legacy was already effective regarding the concept of space but has yet to materialize for the concept of place. Place, and the particular way in which Massey analyzes it, therefore represents a potentially important basis for enriching academic thinking about contemporary forms of organized collective action. Finally, we have distinguished three main avenues for research regarding how processual approaches of the ongoing enactments of organization and place can be combined in order to exploit this potential more fully.

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