Martin Rothgangel, Kerstin von Brömssen,
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Location, Space and Place
in Religious Education

WAXMANN

Religious Diversity and Education
in Europe

edited by

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Volume 34

Globalisation and plurality are influencing all areas of education, including religious education. The inter-cultural and multi-religious situation in Europe demands a re-evaluation of the existing educational systems in particular countries as well as new thinking at the broader European level. This well-established peer reviewed book series is committed to the investigation and reflection on the changing role of religion and education in Europe, including the interface between European research, policy and practice and that of countries or regions outside Europe. Contributions will evaluate the situation, reflect on fundamental issues and develop perspectives for better policy making and pedagogy, especially in relation to practice in the classroom.

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Outline book proposals should be directed to one of the editors or to the publisher.

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Waxmann 2017
Münster • New York

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Martin Rothgangel, Kerstin von Brömssen, Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Geir Skeie

Introduction

1.   The issue

Religious Education (RE) in the public schools of secular societies provides a space for learning; some even claim that it provides a unique space, different from all other school subjects. This could be interpreted as space within the school curriculum to address questions of personal commitment and existential truth, as a particular place to develop skills related to reading religious texts and interpreting the world from a religious perspective, or as a particular space for learning valid knowledge about different religious traditions. It could also be understood as a meeting place where young people have the chance to get in touch with religious as well as non-religious world views, as a space for dialogue and the fostering of mutual understanding between different world views.

Given such diverse ways of describing the purpose and goals of RE, one may currently find a plethora of recent and contemporary RE research that considers the RE space metaphorically – as a curriculum area, as a realm of inner experience, as an interpersonal platform for communication, as a relationship between teacher and learners and so on. Nevertheless, there has been little interest in considering this space in terms of the very essence of this concept, i. e. taken literally.

If one were to compare RE as a field of research to the social sciences and humanities, such a lack of a substantial interest is puzzling. In other disciplines, research into the theoretical as well as empirical aspects of this issue has grown during the last thirty years. The "spatial turn" has become a fixed term in interdisciplinary discourses. Today it covers quite a vast field of inquiry which uses concepts such as location, space and place with different implications or meanings across the different disciplines. People form attachment to their home, their neighborhood and life world, to their region and nation. They belong to and express feelings about space and place not least because they are living in "the age of globalization." Hence, in religious studies, in theology, and in education, there is a growing interest in spatial theories in which space is constructed either within national borders or within international and transnational spaces.

The concepts of location, space and place are taken as special domains that mark and situate particular entities or bounded fields in terms of areas, positions and boundaries, yet the concepts also signify interconnection, movement and transformation. Location, space and place concern the manner in which social relationships – e. g. religious relations and expressions – are inscribed in and organized throughout space, be it home, church, a village, a suburb, a classroom, a school or a nation-state. Further, these concepts concern the way in which specific places become imbued

with particular social, symbolic and religious meanings as well as the way in which the meanings and representations of certain places are contested, negotiated, and transformed through individual and collective action.

The concepts of location, space, place, and their intersections with religion appear more and more important to human and social sciences in the post-9/11 world – in which some commentators speak in dualistic terms of a "clash of civilizations" and in which political and religious engagement reveals a multitude of contradictions and ambiguities. This has further been demonstrated by the 2011 Norway attacks in Oslo and Utøya.

2.   The origin

It is only a short step from these insights to a fundamental assumption about RE: *Every practice of religious education is situated and contextually dependent*. The present volume is devoted to clarifying this general insight into the intimate and inevitable relation between RE practice and spatial and situational conditions. The various contributions presented in this volume were developed in recent years through a collaborative effort of the European Network for Religious Education in Europe through Contextual Approaches (ENRECA); all of them variously focus on the central issue of space and place.

The choice of the issue fits the overall interests of the research network. ENRECA was set up in 1999 as a forum for mutual cooperation and reflection on the changing role of religious education in Europe. It brought together scholars from various countries, who are engaged in empirical and theoretical research on the aspects of religion and education that relate to intercultural issues. The group's commitment was to deal with the educational implications of the changing patterns of religious and secular plurality in European countries. ENRECA's recent work has been organized around three interdependent levels of analysis, each of which has a structuring influence on youth religious learning: the micro-level (focusing on pupil, teacher or classroom); the meso-level (focusing on the school as social system); and the macro-level (focusing on the region, nation-state, Europe, or processes of globalization).

The group's vision is grounded in two core concepts: *religious contextuality* (instead of doctrine; and with a focus on religious life in particular cultural situations and at local levels), and *religious competence* (as the ability of a student to negotiate religious meanings).

Given the strong interest of ENRECA towards contextual approaches in RE, from its very beginning on, it was a short, however decisive step to move on from other issues within the frame of contextual towards a project focusing clearly on the relevance of space and place in RE. However, this evolved eventually and it took time.

The groundwork was laid during the network's 2011 meeting in London. This conference extended and complemented the general interest of the network by focusing on a particular level of contextualization – that of the immediate locality and

local communities. The ENRECA 2011 conference was dedicated to local or neighborhood patterns of religious practice and belonging. Local contexts vary greatly across nations, regions and within the same town and city: there are places where the history, structures and values of the local community are largely defined by one particular form of religion; places where the identity of the locality has been forged through interaction (harmonious or conflictual) between different religious groups; places where the area is characterized by lack of religious engagement and experience with religious diversity; places where the local landscape or urban environment is dominated by a prominent religious site or building; or places where the neighborhood is undergoing rapid demographic change that affects the religious identity of the area and community. All of these local contexts and the many others in which young people are growing up are likely to impact their religious identity, religious understanding and religious learning.

Subsequently, colleagues organized a second network symposium to further develop this particular research focus. We deliberately selected the theoretical challenges provided by the "spatial turn" in the social sciences and humanities. In order to delve deeper into concrete phenomena and encourage conceptual clarification, at the 2013 conference in Gothenburg, Sweden, the group moved on to the topic of "location, space and place of religion in relation to religious education".

For a more structured approach to the subject matter of the overall project, a third and final symposium with the theme "Location, Space and Place in Religious Education" was held in 2015 at the University of Vienna. The main aim was to guide our discussion towards a more focused project. The initial part of this conference was rather basic, with several presentations to discuss and clarify the main concepts of "location," "space," and "place" from a theoretical point of view. The subsequent parts of the conference, on the other hand, were dedicated to the presentation of different studies regarding "space" and "place" and for concertizing the initial theoretical approach to the main concepts. Following this, our colleagues involved in the project revised their articles to reflect the results of the symposium's discussions.

3.   The articles

The seventeen articles in this volume could be presented in various ways. The logic of the present structure is that, after clarifying the main concepts in part 1, part 2 comprises articles referring to classroom studies, and part 3 is focused on studies about teachers of religion. Part 4 at last contains studies beyond the classroom, e. g. of school chapels, churches, and inner space.

Part 1: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects

The five articles in this part work to clarify the main concepts. Given the fact that there is no one leading theory of space, the authors situate their attempts in different theoretical starting points and therefore work with different aspects (social anthropology, religious studies, socio-ecology of learning, lifeworld theory …)

The need for conceptual clarification is obvious. However, this does not mean that we prefer a deductive approach. In one way or another, many of the articles in the other parts of the present volume relate back to these initial conceptual clarifications – while, vice versa, the formal definitions are referenced and enriched by subsequent analyses of concrete phenomena.

This part even moves on to the boundaries of a RE Theory which is focused on new discoveries of the spatial, it should not forget about the other fundamental axe of time.

Part 2: Classroom Studies

The four studies in this part approach challenges of classroom teaching and learning from perspectives informed by the theory of place and space. First, Osbeck, Sporre and Skeie address the issue of how to deal with the potential conflicts and exclusion mechanisms that sometimes arise from religious and worldview diversity in the classroom. An empirical example illustrating an unsafe classroom situation is analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. In order to function as a safe public space the teacher needs to protect this. While controversial issues may be discussed, it may help to introduce meta-teaching about how a safe space is established and how it can be destroyed. Von Brömssen and Risenfors focus on the conversation about religions and worldviews taking place in schools. Their investigation of Swedish upper secondary schools show that while religion is generally not perceived as important to the students, there are still differences that can be related to place and space. Discourses on religion are constructed in different places and within different spaces in various schools, which shows that differences are spatially constructed. The given, local balance between openness and power relations seems to be a critical factor.

Nigel Fancourt approaches the classroom space from a completely different perspective, discussing the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in *Lautsi v. Italy*, which concerned whether the display of a crucifix on the classroom's walls infringed on pupils' right to freedom of belief. Giving particular focus to how the effect of the crucifix in a classroom was conceptualized, Fancourt finds that the courts are "pedagogically unsystematic" and that while decisions are difficult to implement in practice, their consequences are important. A further conclusion of this chapter is the need to further study the dynamics of religious symbols in classrooms. Bakker and ter Avest focus on the material aspects of space in their chapter on architectonic characteristics, and how these may influence students' perceptions and experiences of

school and RE. While finding that spaces are loaded with meaning, the role and personality of the teacher seems to be instrumental to how this works out for the students in everyday school practice. Taken together, the four studies reaffirm the productivity of theoretical perspectives on space and place as well as the new perspectives that empirical research can offer on religion in education.

Part 3: RE Teachers

The three studies of this part have one thing in common: Their original focus wasn't on the relevance of "location," "space," and "place" for teachers of religious education. More specifically, each study is a reanalysis of a former study that did not explicitly deal with these main concepts. Furthermore, the research questions of the original studies as well as their methodological approaches and data sets are quite different. Thus, the original study of Geir Skeie is based on action research, the study of Kåre Fuglseth deals primarily with the phenomenological approach, and Martin Rothgangel's original survey employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Nonetheless the findings of the secondary analyses of Geir Skeie and Martin Rothgangel demonstrate the manifold relevance of the categories "space" and "place" for religious education, whereas Kåre Fuglseth also shows respective limitations and advocates especially for integrating temporal aspects.

Part 4: Beyond the Classroom

Although the classroom provides a crucial space for what takes place in RE, it is not separated from areas beyond it. The last part of this book contains five articles which broaden the perspective on place and space in RE in ways not directly related to schools. Three pieces (by Julia Ipgrave, Silke Leonhard, and Carsten Gennerich) focus on other locations where religious learning takes place, such as chapels, church facilities, and preferred places of recreation for youngsters. Another chapter (Hans-Günter Heimbrock) gives a contrasting view to real places, situating "inner space" and imagination in relation to RE. Finally the part concludes with David Käbisch's elaboration of "space" as a category of theoretical reflection for the historiography of RE.

Looking back at all the articles, it seems quite clear that the intent of this volume is not to offer a systematic approach or a final answer to all of the problems at stake. What we intend is to address important and up-till-now overlooked issues related to the main theme – like topics and conditions of the RE learning process, awareness of the learning architecture, the impact of particular forms of teacher education, the impact of theories on RE practice, and the politics of RE.

An interesting discovery the authors made alongside the research process was that the issue of space and place in RE is related to many other research fields in the discipline (e.g. professional studies and lifeworld theory).

4.   Acknowledgments

The editorial team is very grateful to the many people involved directly and indirectly in the preparation of this book. Although over the years, many more colleagues participated actively in the overall research process, we selected articles from fifteen colleagues from Austria, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. We wish to express our gratitude to all the authors for their contributions and for their patience and cooperation in meeting our revision requests.

We are likewise grateful to the Vienna team headed by Martin Rothgangel for its work on preparing the manuscript for final publication.

We are grateful to the editorial board of the *Religious Diversity and Education* series for including this volume in the program of the series. Likewise, we thank the Waxmann Publishing house for their continuous support and final work on preparing the manuscript for press.

Part 1
Theoretical and Methodological Aspects

Kerstin von Brömssen

Socio-spatial theories – a short introduction

The focus of this introduction is ideas of social space, or what are known as socio-spatial theories. The basic notion of these theories is that *space* is constructed by social interactions and interrelations. Space is not an empty vessel, but is instead made from processes and practices between human beings, but also by the physical world (Massey 1994, 2005). Naturally, this has consequences for how we see the world and analyze data. Consider the example of a school. Based on our theoretical understanding, the school is not just a building, but a building that impacts on actions through its physical being in a specific place. A *place* represents a distinctive type of space that is constructed through acts of naming, by activities and imaginings within a wider social space (Hubbard & Kitchin 2011, 6). In turn, these actions are interrelated to other forms of organizations by students, teachers, other school staff, and the wider society in which the school is placed. These interactions are not neutral, but are imbued with power relations that are contested and worked out in its relational space (Gulson 2015, 222–223). As Doreen Massey, one of the leading theorists in this field, stated in her much-cited work *Place, Space and Gender*, "A place is formed out of a particular set of social relations that are 'stretched out', that is dynamic, and imbued with power, meaning and symbolism" (1994, 2–3). Thus, space and place form individual identities in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and age, and such identities are bound together by multiple social relations, constructed both locally and globally (Massey 1994, 2005). Such social relationships are not considered as absolute and fixed, but as changeable, open and in motion, and they are also viewed differently by different participants (Massey 1994, 4–5). Therefore, combinations of experiences and perceptions of space and place are woven together and affect identifications that are central to the study of space and place.

Socio-spatial theories not only try to answer questions on why and how, but also *where* and how this *where* (that is, the *place* and *space*) constructs everyday activities, representations, and social life as a whole. While space is produced by social relations, space also produces social relations in a constantly ongoing process. As described by Massey (2009, 17):

> Space is always in a process of being made. It is always 'under construction'. It is never a fully connected and finalised thing … There are always relations which are still to be made, or unmade, or re-made. In this sense, space is a product of our on-going world. And in this manner, the dimension of space enters, necessarily, into the political world. And in this sense it is always open to the future. And, in consequence, it is always open to the political. The production of space is a social and political task. If it is conceptualised in this manner, the dimension of space enters, necessarily, into the political (for if the future were not open there would be no possibility of changing it and thus no possibility of politics).

In this view of space and place, time also becomes important; not in a one-dimensional way, but time as the simultaneity of inter-relational activities, open to different histories, trajectories and narratives that have been made already or are open to be made. As Gulson (2015, 219) pointed out, time and space are "distinct from each other, but also necessary for understanding each other." Thus, time is important in socio-spatial theorizing, but not in a linear and unproblematised way.

A view back

Interest in spatial analysis in the social sciences and humanities has increased over the last 30 years, and the concepts of *space* and *place* have to some extent replaced time as the structuring principle in much scientific work (cf. von Brömssen & Risenfors 2012, 632–645). Many researchers argue, that processes associated with modernity, as well as the later nineteenth-century rise of historicism and related developments of industrial capitalism, western Marxism, and the social sciences, have contributed to the privileging of time over space (Larsen & Beech 2014). As articulated by Michel Foucault (1986, 1), "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world." By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the spatial was (re)conceived as being fixed, immobile, and viewed as a closed system following a Newtonian conception of space as abstract space (Gulson 2015, 221). Space, as Foucault (1980, 70) wrote, "was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic." Thus, space became subjugated to time in critical social thought. In 1967 Foucault predicted that "The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. […]. The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (commented on in Foucault 1986, 22). This shift is often referred to as the "spatial turn". An initial stage is often associated with sociologists and geographers from the "Chicago School" in the 1950s and 1960s, who showed that ideas of space and place played a constitutive role in constructions of social relations (Warf & Arias 2009, 1–2).

Especially since the 1990s, a number of thinkers, such as Lefebvre (1991), Harvey (1996), Massey (1993, 1994, 2005), Thrift (1997) and Crang and Thrift (2000), have altered the view and use of space and place (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011) to the view of space as socially constructed and to dimensions that are not only passively affected, but also produce meaning through complex power structures that interrelate with different social relations.

Also, the concepts of space and place are often used to study processes of inclusion and exclusion. An often-cited quote from Merleau-Ponty is: "Space is not only the setting (real and logic) in which things are arranged, but also the means whereby positionings of things becomes possible" (Merleau-Ponty 1989, 218). Massey used

the concept of 'power-geometries' to conceptualize these kind of power relations, created both locally and globally (Massey 1994).

Religious studies and socio-spatial theories

Religious studies have also shown a new interest in spatial theories, even though place and space was an interesting concept even earlier in the sub-discipline of geography and religion, as well as in the theme of sacred space (Knott 2005, 94). Previously, theories many researchers used for these kind of studies were more inclined to view place and space as empty containers for 'the religious' that they were studying. The new interest in spatial theories is expressed in studies by, among others, Kim Knott (2005, 2009). As Knott wrote, the interest is now in "spaces themselves, irrespective of whether or not they appear to be religious or sacred, and to examine the location of religion within them" (Knott 2005, 94). Knott argues that an approach on locality seeks to reconnect religion with other social and cultural fields and to acknowledge the impact of local particularity on the religious life of an area. According to Knott, such studies challenge a view of religious studies as collecting, classifying, and comparing data. Instead, Knott envisaged a view of religion "as a plural, dynamic and engaged part of a complex social environment or habitat that is globally interconnected and suffused with power" (Knott 2009, 159), which is clearly in line with socio-spatial theories in social science and the humanities.

Education and socio-spatial theories

There is also growing interest in space and spatial theories across the field of education, either as constructed within national borders or within international and transnational spaces (cf. Asplund & Pérez Prieto 2013; Brooks, Fuller & Waters 2012; Cook & Hemming 2011; Edwards & Usher 2008; Fielding 2000; Gulson, Clarke & Bendix Petersen 2015; Hemming 2007; Paechter, 2004; Raffo 2011; Reh, Rabenstein & Fritzsche 2011). A seminal work in the field of spatial theories and education is the edited work by Gulson and Syme entitled 'Spatial Theories of Education' (2007).

Socio-spatial theories used in educational research aim to explore how and when – but also *where* and how this *where* (that is, social relations in space and place) – influence education. Schools and classrooms are physical things located in specific places that bring specific histories and metaphors, which are always being modified by students, teachers, and other kinds of school staff as they use different ways of teaching, directing, and disciplining, thereby creating and recreating social relations. Schools and classrooms are imbued with power relations such as class, gender, ethnicity and age that, in the words of Massey, form specific "power-geometries" (1994, 3–4, 164–167) as individuals and groups are positioned differently within these networks. Thus, schools and classrooms form specific places for learning and

can never be "the same". They are situated in space and within its specific social relations, thereby producing specific social relations and social orderings that are contested and competed for in the classroom and in the school. These contestations are ongoing, open, and provisional, which means that, by moving through space, space is moved and altered a little bit (Massey 2009). Therefore, the question that can be asked in education is, when taking all possible differences in account, do schools differ depending on *where* they are located and the social relations that are produced there? This issue is discussed in this book.

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Ina ter Avest and Cok Bakker

Theoretical and methodological aspects of the concepts of place and space

1.   Introduction

Many different words are used to refer to different aspects of 'place'. For the physical description the words 'area', 'site' and 'location' are used; in education we talk about the classroom as a 'safe space'. Apart from the visible phenomena, we use these spatial concepts in a metaphorical way, for example we give 'room' to a different point of view when we are confronted with the points of view of others. Furthermore, for the mind, a spatial metaphor is used in the description of the mind as a 'space' where different memories position themselves more or less prominently. The word 'space' is the only word that includes in itself not only a spatial aspect, but also refers to an interval of time. For example, when we give someone space to think about something, we allow for a certain period of time to reflect before arriving at a conclusion. But also in the expression that women these days space having children, the word 'space' refers to the time that is in between the birth of different children.

Below we work out in more detail what we might mean by these concepts, inspired by different scholars in the field, in order to make clear what we are talking about in this publication in relation to Religious Education in Context. First we present the paradigm shift from 'time' to 'space'. Then we elaborate on the line of thought in Marc Augé's work, on the distinction between non-place and place. The architectural interpretation of the core concepts regarding space are the subject of the third section. We conclude with a psychological line of thought, elaborating on the reference to place and space in the notion of 'society of mind'.

2.   From 'time' to 'place'

Since a long time in the Western world 'time' has been conceived as a linear concept. However, Aristotle emphasized eternity as the core aspect of time (Hermsen, 2009, p. 200). Time for Aristotle is to be understood as an aspect of change; time in that conception is a sequence of changes; the actual moment, the 'now' for the Greek philosophers was just a point of reference to refer to regarding 'before' or 'later'. The actual 'now' breaks away from the endeavour to grasp this moment – it's part of the past before you know it. Time is seen as passing by – the person himself is looking at what passes by, i.e. the actual moment, and he also sees what just happened, the recent past, but cannot see what has to come: the future is literally behind it and consequently out of sight (Hermsen, 2009, p. 203).

These days in the western world time is represented as a straight line, pointing to a far away horizon. This is the time measured with our watches and clocks: from seconds to minutes, to hours, to … Time goes along, and so it does: the present turns into the past and the future becomes the present before you know it. This conception is known as a chronocentric approach to time. Opposed to this concept of time we can distinguish a cyclic approach to time: the time of the change of the seasons. This concept of time is related to the rhythm of nature. However, there is yet another way of experiencing time, a subjective way, for which the concept of 'kairos' is used (Hermsen, 2009, p. 15 ff.). We all know about moments or periods in life that we have the feeling that 'time is at a standstill', for example the moment of your lover's first kiss, the hour that your child is born, or the day that a beloved person passed away. At such a moment we are amazed that in daily life 'the show goes on', while in our experience the time is at a standstill. 'Every day experiences may disrupt the iron logic of clock time and destroy the order of the iron logic of clock time and accordingly unmask the uniqueness of time and its understanding as an unquestion-able fact. The specificity of everyday experiences puts into perspective the standard of the rhythm of clock time' (De Haardt, 2013, p. 23). Amazement, surprise, and hope – these experiences change our evaluation of time; they force us to reflect upon what happens and to see the world in another way, and to interpret and appreciate experiences differently. Ordinary things appear to be extraordinary; extraordinary things show up in ordinary life.

The different experiences with time described above do not fit in one model of time only (*either* chronocentric *or* cyclic) but appear to come together in the concept of 'place'. The experience of surprise, amazement, turmoil or astonishment puts (clock) time to a standstill *for me*, thus challenging or even forcing me initially to reframe an ordinary daily phenomenon as an extra-ordinary experience. As a picture in the mind, the context is shown up: the house, garden or street where you were, whether it was a rainy or a sunny day, which persons were part of the scene, and the surprising words that were spoken or the decisive action that was performed. Some people remember the sound or the smell that was prominent at the place where it all happened, and the complexity of feelings through which they went. Not in a specific and single role (just a passenger at an airport, or just a professional in an office), but as a multi-faceted individual you are touched: a person with a unique biography, a unique identity. Such a moment is positioned – has a place – in the structure of the memory as an image, like a token picture. That makes for the shift of focus from 'time' to 'place', and the question since has been raised: what is it that evokes feelings of wonder, what is it that makes me feel emotionally attached and subsequently changes an area, a location or a mere space into a meaningful place?

3.   From 'non-place' to 'place'

In his review article 'Non-Places: Space in the Age of Supermodernity' Buchanan (1999) elaborates on the aspect of familiarity with places which is also accompanied by an experience of strangeness. In his search for an answer to this paradox, Buchanan refers to the work of Marc Augé.

In the exploration of the meaning of different locations and spaces, Marc Augé introduces the distinction between 'non-place' and 'place'. For Augé a characteristic of postmodernity is the felt need to give meaning to spaces, whereas in earlier times – generally speaking – such a meaning was given beforehand. According to Augé we are 'now placed in the invidious position of promulgating the individual as source and guarantor of all meaning production' (Augé, cited by Buchanan, 1999, p. 396). Some spaces feel familiar, and Augé gives the example of airports and malls, at the same time triggering a longing for being at home; according to Augé this points to the characteristic distinction between a non-place and a place. Augé states that the difference between a non-place and a place is of being observed in a role (passenger at the airport, customer in the mall) or being approached as a person subsequently resulting in a personal relationship with that specific place – which then by consequence becomes a meaningful place. 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity will be a non-place' (Augė, cited by Buchanan, 1999, p. 395). Space appears to be the overarching term encompassing both non-place and place. Following Augé's line of thought, 'non-places help to create, and daily reinforce, individualism by offering a kind of anonymous space that cannot be owned, that cannot be invested in emotionally' (Augė, cited by Buchanan, p. 396). Augé states that 'a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver. Perhaps he is still weighed down by the previous day's worries, the next day's concerns; but he is distanced from them temporarily by the environment of the moment' (Augé, 1995, p. 103). A non-place offers 'the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing' (Augé, 1995, p. 103). Like a person being a passenger who 'through non-places retrieves his identity only at customs, at the tollbooth, at the check-out counter'. It is Augé's conviction that 'the space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude' (Augé, 1995, 103). 'Frequentation on non-places today provides an experience of solitary individuality' that is not experienced in full and not reflected upon since it offers, according to Augé, a substitute for human interaction. Space in itself does not create relationship and community; it is 'the inauguration of spaces [that] comprises one of the more crucial acts of collective existence' (Buchanan, 1995, p. 395). Place and non-place almost seem to be rigid opposites, rather like opposed polarities, but Augé states that the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed: they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten (Augé, 1995, p. 79).

Two questions still remain unresolved in Buchanan's conclusion, having reviewed Augé's work. The first is 'To what extent is the experience of a space tied directly to the objective conditions of that space?' And related to that question he wonders to what extent the objective conditions of a space can be separated from the subjective experience of that space (Buchanan 1999, p. 397). A preliminary answer comes from our research with primary school pupils (see pp. 101–111 in this book).

4.   The architecture of 'place'

Ideas about relations between inhabitants of new districts led the architectural design of new districts in metropolitan areas during the second half of the last century. The architectural concept that in those days was favoured by many architects, was that of a 'functional city'. It was this concept that in the Netherlands meant that the Bijlmer district in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam was branded the capital of the Netherlands. In the developmental phase of this district, the concept of a 'functional city' dominated, understood as a metropolitan environment separating traffic from housing, working and leisure activities. Because the architects[1] aimed at a living context dominated by clear light, fresh air and open spaces, the architectural design of the Bijlmer was characterized by high apartment buildings separated from each other by wide avenues with cycling tracks and parks for leisure activities (Tillo, 1998, p. 14). However, many adjustments in the *construction* phase had to be made to the initial architectural concepts of the *developmental* phase, resulting in the poor visual appearance of the Bijlmer district. The combination of this visual appearance with social issues like unemployment and poverty resulted, during the 1990s, in the need to demolish the original apartment buildings and for a radical renovation of the whole district (Tillo, 1998, p. 15).

Material aspects of place

The process of the transformation of space into a meaningful place is termed 'a mode of behavior attributable to a type of space' (Buchanan, 1995, p. 395). Following Buchanan's line of thought, this 'mode of behaviour' is recognizable in habitual or ritual behavior perceived as an invitation to become part of and relate to that space, such as transforming the space into a remembered and positively valued place – a place to feel at home, that is to feel safe. A precondition is the competence to 'read' a place as a 'text', that is to connect the place/text to existing memory structures of the mind, at the conceptual, episodic and action level (Boekaerts, 1987, pp. 21–23). We follow Buchanan in the question he formulates: 'To what extent is the experience

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1   Among the architects were international celebrated architects like Le Corbusier and
     Rietveld (see Tillo, 1998, p. 14).