

Spatial Analysis

I would like you to engage first with the primary material, namely the architectural or spatial characteristics of a site, and to consider how this space/place was incorporated within the ceremonial/ritual or religious world of your chosen society/case study. Your analysis should incorporate visual exploration and description, which will inevitably be helped by site maps, plans and photos. Moreover, you also need to demonstrate detailed analytical and critical thought as to how people moved within these spaces, how they used them, what are the key types of activities you can envisage. It is your analysis that I am interested in, but this needs to be situated within an understanding of current research of this space/place.

Starting points:

1. You need to locate your site (or part of your site): you might provide map references or a broader geographical description. A map indicating the location of your site is an obvious aid. Other useful details to include are who excavated your site, when and where it is published. What is the date of the site (if it has a long occupation which period(s) are you focusing upon)?
2. Think about why you have chosen this site and how it fits into your overall research portfolio.
3. Also, think about space and place (returning to Casey and Ingold in the first session). Are you looking at the whole site or a specific part of this (and why have you chosen to do so)?

Empirical observation:

This should be the basis of any analysis. You should present the site clearly, identifying and briefly describing its key characteristics (orientation, dimensions, natural landscape or location within built environment, key architectural features). Support this with illustrations: plans and photos where possible.

Contextualisation:

You should also research how this site has been analysed by previous scholars and place your own work within a wider framework of literature. Is your site one that is not written about, and if so why?

Analysis

The point of this exercise is to explore how your space is ritually embedded, how it was used and what was its overall significance. You should be thinking above all about how and why a space becomes ritually significant (are you referencing specific natural features or is it political - where it is located within the urban environment perhaps?).

Your first port of call is the physicality of space/place. Think about how place is created, both physically and conceptually. Also, how can we think about people's movement within a space: is this defined architecturally and is it physically controlled? How is your space/place distinguished from normal, domestic settlement? The following might be pointers:

- Spaces of inclusion/exclusion?
- Hidden spaces and spaces where knowledge is revealed?
- Is movement channelled, controlled or restricted?
- Sensory engagement with space: light/dark; heat/cool; colour; smell; tactile senses
- Are there places for gathering?
- What about attention focusing devices and repeated symbolism?
- Above all, what about the finds discovered and used in this space/place - do these tell us about specific types of activity/ritual?
- Is there any iconographic evidence you might draw upon to interpret your space/place?

The key to this analysis is to think about how your chosen site was used and experienced in antiquity; what sort of cult/ritual or ceremonial practices took place within this? How might you determine this?

1. Think about the nexus between practice, experience and belief: actions, sensory engagement and symbolism;
2. Practices: feasting (commensality), libations, fire and sacrifice, dance and/or song, processions, gathering, revealing knowledge, offerings to the deities;
3. Useful concepts you might want to explore are: community effervescence, communitas, liminality, heterotopia, rites of passage, axis mundi;
4. Other theoretical concepts which might help you think about what people did and where they did this are: Bourdieu's theory of practice, Connerton's incorporated knowledges, memory, inalienability, sensory archaeology, structuralism (for meaning), etc.