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Unravelling Spatialities in Research Writing (re)Production

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Abstract / Rezumat

Space matters in research writing (re)production. As evident from the very title of this collection, *global* and *dissemination* are inherently spatialised codes: one overtly scalar, another covertly trans-scalar, trans-territorial, cross-networked, and dis/em-placed. Language almost appears to take a backstage role, albeit integral to the social (re)production of writing, and ultimately, of knowledge. Centring on socio-spatial, material and ideological discourses around research writing (re)productive practices, my chapter argues for an explicit spatial turn in studies of Writing for Research and Publication Purposes (WRPP). It does so by unravelling and reframing the various spatialities at work in our practices and understandings of writing (re)production in contemporary transnational academia via combined theoretical insights from human geography and reflections on my own experiences as a researcher and research writing broker. The chapter closes with a set of mappings for a spatially conscious, dialectical model of research writing (re)production that can potentially lead to more solidary and transformative praxis against the normative pull of the Anglophone/Global North centre.

Spațiul contează în (re)producerea scrierii de cercetare. După cum reiese chiar din titlul acestui volum, cuvintele *global* și *diseminare* sunt în mod inerent coduri spațializate: primul are în mod vădit o dimensiune scalară, al doilea o dimensiune implicit trans-scalară, trans-teritorială, care traversează rețele/circuite și (de)localizează. Limbajul aproape că ajunge să ocupe un rol secundar, deși face parte integrantă din (re)producerea socială a scrierii și, în ultimă instanță, a cunoașterii. Centrat pe discursurile socio-spațiale, materiale și ideologice care privesc practicile (re)productive ale scrierii de cercetare, capitolul meu

propune argumentul unei turnuri spațiale explicite în studiile despre scrierea cu scop de cercetare și publicare. Lucrarea deslușește și reîncadrează variile spațialități activate în practice și în înțelegerile noastre privind (re)producerea scrierii academice din cadrul sistemului academic neoliberal contemporan, cu ajutorul unor perspective teoretice desprinse din geografia umană și a reflecțiilor asupra experiențelor mele de cercetătoare și de „mediatoare” a scrierii de cercetare. Capitolul conchide cu trasări ale unui model dialectic de conștientizare a spațiului și spațialității în (re)producerea scrierii de cercetare, care poate conduce la practici solidare și transformatoare, pentru a rezista forței normative a centrului Anglofon sau al Nordului Global.

Slight Urban Ethnography, or Introduction

On a late August day in 2023, I arrived in Santa Cruz de Tenerife excited and slightly nervous about the fifth edition of the PRISEAL conference that would take place at the University of La Laguna. Before the conference, I had a couple of days to be a witting *flâneuse* and walk the city streets with the confidence of an urban dweller, not just a passing tourist. I was mixing final thoughts for my keynote presentation on unravelling spatialities in research writing (re)production with a curious reading of the city’s map in search of places to explore. It was in reading the city’s map that I came across a tiny, narrow *calle* (Figure 3.1), not far from my hotel, parallel to the wide, generously tree-lined Rambla de Santa Cruz, yet with a persistent air of periphery, of marginality and exile, of uncertain design, of “surrounds” (Abdoumalig, 2022) where possibilities for discovery, creation and urban regeneration loomed large. The street was tucked away from the main Rambla thoroughfare, and I would have surely missed it only by walking around the place, without the preliminary map reading. Very much a long carpark for its six apartment buildings with entrances on the Rambla, the street was adjacent to the mostly empty rocky land of Montaña Fumero, a city outskirts estate bearing clear signs of urban expansion and development (Willis, 2023; Reverón, 2024). Most of the buildings on this street looked recently renovated except for an end of terrace, abandoned and dilapidated Edificio José Fumero that, I would later find out, had been subject to dispute between the heirs of the building some twelve years before, while some last remaining tenants had resisted eviction following the cutting of electricity supply to the building during the litigation process (Izquierdo, 2011).



Figure 3.1. Calle Alejandro Cioranescu (personal photo, August 2023)



Figure 3.2. Calle Alejandro Cioranescu sign on the delapidated Edificio José Fumero (personal photo, August 2023)

This street was *Calle Alejandro Cioranescu* (Figure 3.2) flanked on either side by *Calle Pedro Pérez Díaz*, carrying the name of a Spanish lawyer, key figure in the council-based administrative reorganisation of the Canaries at the turn of the twentieth century (Rodríguez-Lewis, 2012), and *Calle Esperanto*, incidentally evoking long-standing concerns of the PRISEAL/ Writing for Research and Publication Purposes (WRPP) community around the gains and perils of English as the lingua franca of global research communication. *Calle Cioranescu*, a name with half Spanish—half Romanian reverberations, about which, I must admit, I knew nothing, instantly intrigued me and made me feel at home in Santa Cruz. I later learned that Alexandre or Alejandro Cioranescu, Alexandru Ciorănescu by his original name, was a Romanian exiled, diasporic intellectual, researcher, archivist, professor, political diplomat, reputed historian of the Canaries and of Santa Cruz, famous comparativist of literary studies, especially Spanish. A “messenger of the book”, he believed that books, and knowledge, are valuable insofar as they can circulate unimpededly across borders (Motoranu, 2019, p. 202). Writing Cioranescu’s “In Memoriam” in *Estudios Canarios*, the Annals of the Canaries Studies Institute at the University of La Laguna, Sánchez Robayna (2000) invokes Cioranescu’s “new humanism” and his comparative method of investigation of European Romance literary and cultural traditions: Romanian, French, Italian, Spanish, as well as the ease with which he engaged with these plurilingual, geocultural histories and polyvalent, relational spatialities.

Llorada por igual en Rumania y en España, en Francia y en Italia que fueron los ámbitos culturales, las tradiciones literarias y las lenguas en las que Cioranescu se movió con absoluta naturalidad desde la década de 1940, y sobre los cuales giró su labor a lo largo de más medio siglo, su muerte significa, ciertamente, el fin de un estilo intelectual del que el autor de *Principios de literatura comparada* fue, sin duda, un eximio representante: el estilo de toda una ilustre generación de profesores e investigadores formados en la Europa de entreguerras que entregaron su vida al estudio de la tradición cultural europea y a la defensa de unos valores que no sería exagerado calificar como característicos de un nuevo humanismo. (Sánchez Robayna, 2000, p. 5)

My walking experience in Santa Cruz, briefly recounted here in quasi-ethnographic fashion, is a story of urban and transdisciplinary wandering, and a felicitous preview of the issues I unravel in this chapter. It evokes my

academic, cultural, ethnic and spatial positionality as a Romanian migrant, urban studies researcher, and self-made, on-the-job research writing practitioner and scholar. I work in a Centre for Academic Writing at a British university, have an active interest in spaces and ideologies of writing, in transnational knowledge production, and do research on gentrification, urban movements, and militant trans/multimedia cultural narratives.

Serendipitously, in Santa Cruz, all signs conjured up my cumulated personal and academic identities, and their spatialities. The most obvious were the visual signs inherent to urban restructuring processes: the visibility of the block's unfolding gentrification and the expanding urban development behind the street; the history of abandonment, dilapidation and tenant resistance in Edificio Fumero; the symbolic erasure of the Cioranescu street sign on the renovated buildings (Figure 3.3). These politically and symbolically laden codes further pointed to the historical, administrative, linguistic and symbolic geographies of Santa Cruz and the Canaries, of European migration routes and diasporic communities inscribed in the four street names. Ultimately, *Calle Cioranescu* encoded the history of Cioranescu's own journeys from Romania to Italy, France and Spain, with short visits to England, his migrant and politically exiled researcher identity, his fluid positionality, the profoundly relational dimensions of his comparativist work, his multilingualism and fairly Eurocentric approach.



Figure 3.3. *Calle Alejandro Cioranescu* missing sign on the gentrified hotel building (personal photo, August 2023)

The coincidences, associations and reflective prompts thus embedded in my cartographic discovery and my walking on *Calle Alejandro Cioranescu* illustrate the complex, often challenging and complicated spatialities at work in one's lived experience, academic identity, research or writing. I use spatiality (Soja, 1985; Merriman et al., 2012; Kobayashi, 2017), or the plural spatialities, to designate the spatial formations, structures, relations and consciousness at the heart of the social, material, political and historical realities in which research writing and knowledge get produced, reproduced, and circulated. I start from the unquestioned premise that material spaces and geographies as well as social and symbolic spaces matter in research writing production and its reproduction via policies, pedagogies and various development or so-called "support" practices.

One key principle will guide *and* emerge from my critiques and reflections in this paper, namely that space is not simply a physical container or material object; space is socially, relationally and dialectically produced in tight conjunction with time or history, with being, identity and ultimately consciousness (Soja, 1985). Originating in radical critical geography, this conception of space has shifted spatial thinking since Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space in the mid-1970s in France, in tandem with deeply transformative thinking coming out of Brazil and the Global South or from feminist geographers (see Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Santos, 1978/2021; Smith, 1984; Massey, 1994/2009; Schmidt, 2005/2022). On a painfully oversimplified note, Lefebvre's spatial dialectic contains three dimensions: material, sensory, physical spatial practices (or *l'espace perçu*); conceptions or representations of space (or *l'espace conçu*); lived, experienced and imagined spaces of representation/representational spaces (or *l'espace vécu*) (see Schmidt, 2005/2022 for a solid exploration). This tripartite conception of space is useful here because, as I will show later, it can change the way we put space and spatiality in research writing (re)production to good use in both theory and praxis-building. Furthermore, the social production theory of space aligns with existing schools of thought in literacies studies, such as New/Academic Literacies, that have reoriented the field of writing studies, and our practices, from textualist to social, ideological and generally context-bound understandings (see the work of Brian Street, Mary Scott, Theresa Lillis, Mary Lea, Roz Ivanič, David Barton et al. - for brief histories, read Stephens, 2000; Lillis, 2019).

Not only is geographical space socially, relationally and dialectically constructed but it is also unevenly produced by people *and* capital, or capitals (financial, social, linguistic, cultural). This complementary understanding of space as unevenly developed and produced in the image of circulating capital is also key here because it points to a political project of twinned spatial

equalisation and differentiation by capital and its spatial mobilities in search for profit (Smith, 1984, 1996; Santos, 1978/2021) or for symbolic capital of prestige and esteem. The equalising and differentiating mobility of capital as well as the competition and cooperation in the field of social reproduction (i.e., labour) along with their symbolic power, in turn, produce geographical scales. To cite Neil Smith, scale “produces and is produced by geographical structures of social interaction” and establishes the “contours of a spatialised politics” of control and contestation but also of cooperation (Smith, 1992, p. 62). In other words, the full nested configuration of geographical scales that includes the body, home, community, urban, region, nation and global, are not static, container-type spatial formations, nor mere stylistic tropes.

These dual tendencies are easily captured by academia’s constant pursuit of growth, competition and higher performance that further translates into such indicators as institutional and journal rankings, citation factors, individual h-indices, or differentiated funding allocation. Placing research writing (re)production at the heart of this scalar process of spatial differentiation and equalisation thus becomes in itself a critical political project. Such scalar differentiation means putting the body, the home, the community, or even the urban/metropolitan, at the core of knowledge and research writing (re) production. It helps disambiguate the widely used “local” by offering other, more discrete spatial configurations, such as *territory* (frontiered, cross-scalar spaces), *place* (locales, milieux, situated spaces, core-periphery, symbolic practices), and *networks* (transversal, horizontal, cross-border) (for polymorphous spatialities, see the STPN framework by Jessop et al., 2008). Moreover, these insights are significant to research writing and knowledge (re)production because, I argue, writing and knowledge-making are implicated in (not just shaped or contained by) the social production of geographical scales, places, territories and networks, via its actors and their socio-spatial, material, discursive, cultural and ideological practices.

But what do we, in the WRPP community, talk about when we talk, or don’t talk, about space? What are the codes, proxies and framings that we use for space and how do they help us understand and construct our and others’ positionalities in producing, circulating and supporting research writing both *intra* and *extra muros*, as it were? And more importantly, how can these framings and understandings shape our (collective) critical agendas for research writing? To what extent can they be used to (dis)empower, (de)peripheralise or (de)form solidarities around research writing, knowledge production and publishing?

I have arrived at these questions about space, spatiality, spatialisisation via my own time and space-bound processes and practices in academic research,

research literacies brokering and pedagogy, coupled with inter/transdisciplinary theoretical insights from across the fields of writing and spatial studies. In the following section, I discuss ways in which the critical propositions in the field of WRPP can further advance an explicitly spatialised agenda while grappling with two main insufficiencies in its spatial turn. I then ground these evaluations in a diachronic experiential account of my own researcher-broker spatialities that may resonate with readers' trajectories, experiences and positionalities. In the concluding section, I close the theoretical and reflective loop with a set of mappings, framed through Lefebvre's spatial tripartite explained above, in order to situate and raise awareness of the material, dialectical and potentially transformative space work of research writing (re)production.

My aim is neither to generalise nor to typify the structures of experience or the theories herein. There are surely limitations to both. My goal is to advocate for more nuanced, granular and dialectical spatial differentiations, both in praxis and in theory, that deconstruct single, macro or binary space-centric approaches (e.g., global/local, core-(semi)periphery; Jessop et al., 2008), and ground materially symbolic, linguistic or representational spaces. Ultimately, I seek to tease out alternative, potentially transformative spatialities for the (re)production of research writing in contemporary, transnational neoliberal academia. This dual endeavour rests on the argument that research writing (re)production and spatial formations are mutually constitutive, generative, and potentially reformative of our practices. Research writing does as much space work as knowledge and discourse work.

Before I probe these questions further, I would like to acknowledge that ideas in this paper stem from my design of two modules on the (former) MA in Academic Writing Development and Research (Blaj-Ward, 2020; Ganobcsik-Williams et al., 2022) run by the Centre for Academic Writing at Coventry University: Contextual Issues in Developing Research Communication, and Academic Writing and the Transnationalisation of Knowledge, retitled Academic Writing, Multilingualism and Knowledge Production. As most students were new to issues in research writing, teaching these modules meant introducing them to the burgeoning field of WRPP through the creation of knowledge maps, for instance. But it also meant co-producing ideas with them through pedagogies and assessments that helped further my own thinking around questions of space and spatiality which then developed from inchoate to more confident theorising, and the marrying of theory with reflections on experience and practice (for how concepts "travel" and originate in pedagogic practice, see Bal, 2002).

This paper has thus enjoyed its own multiple spatialities. Next to the MA classroom work, I have trialled and refined my ideas in other cultural,

institutional and linguistic settings, with audiences outside the Anglophone centre, via two invited keynote talks and follow-up discussions: the presentation titled ‘Transnational Spaces of Knowledge Production or the Construction of Geographical Scale Through Research Writing’ (Neculai, 2022) in the International Dialogues Seminar Series at my alma mater, the University of Galați (or Galatzi), Romania, and the plenary at the fifth edition of the PRISEAL conference at the University of La Laguna.

WRPP Critical Framings, or Advancing the Spatialised Agenda

Since Suresh Canagarajah’s 1996 path-breaking article on the “non-discursive” requirements of academic publishing by periphery scholars, research in the field of WRPP has progressively amplified the socio-spatial, material and political conditions for research writing, which has developed into an already established tradition of scholarly work (amongst many other key texts, books/volumes include: Canagarajah, 2002a; Lillis & Curry, 2010, Curry & Lillis, 2018; Benett, 2014; Rodriguez Medina, 2014; Corcoran et al., 2019; Soler & Kaufhold, 2025). There has been an explicit emphasis on the political, ideological, economic, social, cultural, historical and geographic contexts (not simply contextualisations - Blommaert, 2007) for the production of knowledge and research writing in the (trans)national academy. This emphasis has meant a vigorous shift from a simple focus on “output” (in neoliberal parlance) to the nexus between text production and the structural and systemic factors that enable or disable its making as well as its circulation and dissemination (Lillis & Curry, 2022).

The articulation of this nexus at various spatial scales, across often neglected geographies of research writing (re)production, introduces an explicitly political perspective intended to unmask power relations. For instance, two collective editorial projects, *Global academic publishing: Policies, perspectives and pedagogies* (Curry & Lillis, 2018) and *Pedagogies and policies for publishing research in English: Local initiatives supporting international scholars* (Corcoran et al., 2019) are notably ideological and spatialised. Grounded in polyvalent spatialities, *Global academic publishing* engages with the political economies of knowledge production and traverses national territories and institutional places in the Global South (e.g., Mexico, South Africa, Colombia), Global North (e.g., Iceland, Italy, Central/Southern Europe) and Global East (e.g., Taiwan, China, Kazakhstan), scholarly and publishing communities and networks, individual authorial spaces alongside digital collaborative spaces or publication indexing ones. In a similar vein, *Pedagogies and policies* maps out seven supranational regions: Latin America, Northern

Europe, Eastern and Southern Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Africa, the Persian Gulf, what the editors call “global regions outside traditional centers of knowledge production” (p. 1) or the more ambiguous and undefined “geolinguistic regions” (p. 5). This regional organisation is moulded on the well-known (Anglo) centre—(semi)periphery global spatial configuration which, the editorial acknowledges, “can be somewhat limiting given some scholars’ transnational fluidity” (p. 2). By focusing on national case studies rooted in the politics of their location across these regional divisions, the project brings centre stage blind spot geographies of research writing and knowledge production. There, plurilingual scholars engage with policies and tailored pedagogic practices that create and regulate the conditions for the production and reproduction of their research writing in English. Ultimately, the scholarly practices, political economies and regulatory policies presented in both volumes construct, and deconstruct, their own scalar, territorial, networked and place-bound geographies.

This WRPP tradition has also taken on a programmatic mission through the release of a collective *Statement on Equitable Access to the International Academy* (PRISEAL, 2008), following the 2007 first edition of the PRISEAL conference. The Tenerife Statement was meant to raise awareness of the material conditions, socio-spatial formations and processes that can lead to accessibility and equity in transnational research cultures that revolve around writing (re)production. By addressing “the international community of knowledge producers and consumers”, the Statement capitalises on the community as a key socio-spatial scale that tends otherwise to be ambiguously bounded and territorialised (Smith, 1992), unlike other scales like the body or the urban. This spatially fluid community is constituted of publishing houses, journals, editors, authors and peer reviewers, and interacts with regional and national governments of “supporting” nation states, research and development agencies, publishing corporations and university governing bodies. The Statement thus draws attention not just to territories, scales and places of research writing (re)production but also to their regulatory organisations, policies and allocated capital streams, unevenly distributed across various geographies of research. To serve its transformative mission, the Tenerife Statement calls for action, for infrastructural and systemic changes within historically precarious spaces such as, for example, the creation of “new regional editorial bodies [...] in each region of the non-centre world (i.e., Latin America, Africa and Asia) to promote the refereed publication of research in new formats and in languages that suit the needs of the region.” In other words, the development of research writing necessitates *spatialised* discursive, linguistic, material and agentive resources.

It has thus become imperative to think of research writing as always already ideological and material (Street, 1984) as well as profoundly situated and spatialised. Fundamentally, spatial paradigms and their various proxies—languages, discourses, politics, identities, mobilities, material conditions, social relations and power structures—matter both horizontally (via territories, places and networks) and vertically (via explicit top-down/bottom-up geographical scales), and so does the kind of language that we use to address these spatial matters and the insufficiencies inherent in the current theoretical framings and vocabularies.

On questions of space, I distil two such critical insufficiencies in the existing literature (also see above, Corcoran et al., 2019, p. 2) to which I respond. First, in order to valorise a centrifugal pull in English/plurilingual WRPP outside majority Anglophone spaces (e.g., Bennett, 2014; de Sousa Santos, 2014; Curry & Lillis, 2018; Englander & Corcoran, 2019), the field's long-standing debates tend to employ static, binary, monomorphic or undifferentiated spatial framings such as centre/core-(semi)periphery, global/local, Global North/Global South, regional/national/international. These binaries make arguments about the power relations at work in global knowledge production and research writing, most inspired by World Systems Analysis (Wallerstein et al., 2012). Of course, these arguments are extremely important as they mark a clear ideological move away from text/genres-only perspectives. They rightly consider marginalisation¹—marginal(ised) knowledge, marginal(ised) writing and marginal(ised) researchers—to address and redress inequities (Hyland, 2016; Politzer-Ahles et al., 2016; Cárdenas & Rainey, 2018; Hultgren, 2019; Habibie & Starfield, 2021; Soler, 2021).

Furthermore, these dominant spatial framings are certainly useful as they point to the unequal development and power structures in which research cultures interact at a global/transnational scale, especially for programmatic purposes like those of the Tenerife Statement. Yet, the binary, macro-framings can also conceal pluralities, internal divergences and convergences, historical shifts, tensions and solidarities, mobilities and fixities in internally demarcated scales, places, territories or networks of knowledge and writing production. After all, the centre can contain peripheries just like the periphery can contain centres (Canagarajah, 2002b; de Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2020), while for certain territorial, place-based research systems, a global (semi-)periphery may as well be a centre of knowledge production (see the

1 I use marginal/marginalisation/marginalised as an alternative to the periphery/peripheral debate that assumes a centre position or to use Walter Mignolo's term, an epistemologically denotative perspective (2000, p. 26) that takes the Anglophone/Global North centre as a given point of reference.

case of Spain for Argentinian political scientists in Rodriguez Medina, 2014). To put it differently, what takes place in sub-national regions, in metropolitan knowledge centres (Rodriguez Medina, 2014) or at individual scales of collaborative authorship, editorial or peer reviewing cooperation needs a more spatially nuanced and differentiated perspective to avoid the ambiguities and homogenisation that can arise from higher scale or place-centric approaches, or from the disconnect between macro and micro spatialities.

To visualise these nuanced spatialisations inherent in writing and knowledge (re)production, I am introducing three ingenious creative Lego Play designs by my former MA students on the module, Academic Writing and the Transnationalisation of Knowledge (later, Academic Writing, Multilingualism and Knowledge Production), shared and fully credited here with their permission. All three designs pivot around core-(semi)periphery power structures, on a spectrum from spatially compact to fragmented. Baldwin's design in Figure 3.4 represents tightly interconnected, hierarchical, close-packed, institutionalised structures (Rodriguez Medina, 2014) that appear to be relying on a stable regulatory centre as well as allowing for mobility and expansion, for routes of influence outside that centre. In Figure 3.5, Daniels maintains the same hierarchical vision but with a more explicit visualisation of the hegemonic relation, and distancing, between the core and the various peripheries. The global power geometry at play is clearly marked through a dual aesthetic of expansion or homogenisation (the centre) and shrinking or fragmentation (the peripheries). Lastly, in Figure 3.6, Brain's design pushes the limits of spatial fragmentation. Her vision is much more atomised and granular; there is more differentiation both in the centre and the peripheries. Brain maintains the same framework of distance and separation between the core and the peripheries but articulates a more horizontal geography whereby gate keeping seems to morph into cooperation through mobility.

These are my own readings of the designs at the time of writing this paper, rather than my students' own explanations and the classroom discussions back in 2019. Six months before the official start of the pandemic lockdown in the UK, in late March 2020, recording and researching the actual class discussions was not on our radars but thankfully, the visual memory remains. As I move towards my second point of critique of the current spatial framings in the WRPP literature, I invite readers to create their own interpretations of the Lego Play designs and keep them in mind as they read through the second half of the chapter.

The visualisations in the Lego designs are also helpful because they connote the rifts between metaphorical and material spaces. How much of our understanding of space in the field of WRPP relies on symbolic spaces,

or tropes, and how much on actual material, political economic ones? The language/discourse orientations in current research tend to either forefront linguistic or metaphorical spaces, without making explicit connections with material/geographical spaces, or to assimilate the two, whereby the metaphorical/linguistic becomes an unquestioned proxy for the material.



Figure 3.4. Visualising scalar power structures in knowledge/ research writing production. Lego Play Design by Laurence Baldwin (personal photo, October 2019)

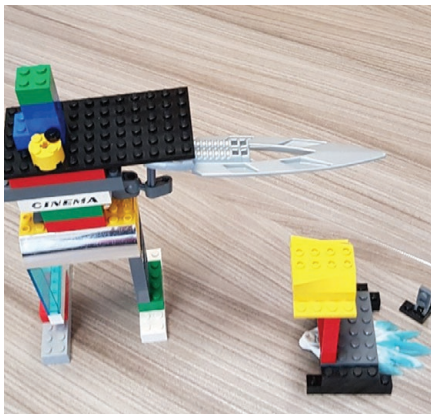


Figure 3.5. Visualising scalar power structures in knowledge/ research writing production. Lego Play Design by Ian Daniels (personal photo, October 2019)

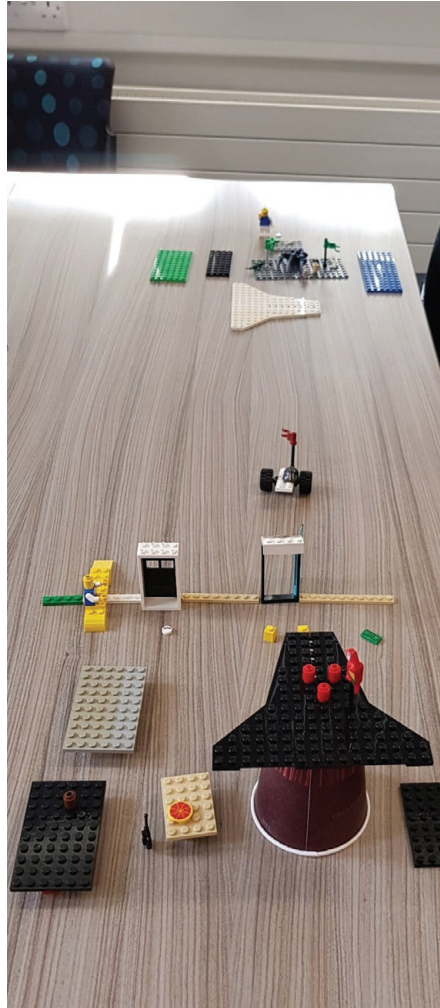


Figure 3.6. Visualising scalar power structures in knowledge/ research writing production. Lego Play Design by Charissa Brain (personal photo, October 2019)

Either move usually happens by diluting or neglecting power asymmetries that exist between various geographies of writing or by overpowering certain spatial scales like the global. For instance, Englander (2011) unpacks D/discourse in multilingual research writing by building on the conceptual development of socio-linguistic scales, an increasingly “imaginative concept” in Blommaert’s own theoretical exposés (2007, 2021; Blommaert et al., 2015). Both the separation and the interchangeable use of linguistic and material spaces, at the detriment of an “interconnected” approach, leads, I believe, to a critical loss that can, indeed, have real political consequences (see Hultgren, 2019; Smith & Katz, 1993; Smith, 1992). The main consequence is a disregard of inequities in research writing (re)production or a contestation of the importance of the politics of recognition (Young, 1990), and therefore, a contestation of the spatial disadvantage (Hyland, 2016) of academic and publishing actors from marginal(ised) geographies.

Without dismissing the field’s existing spatial framings briefly presented above, I argue that by recognising the more nuanced, polymorphous, differentiated complexities of spatiality at the heart of our individual and collective practices, we can also transform peripheral action, access and participation in knowledge and research writing (re)production from powerless or merely legitimate (Englander, 2011; Flowerdew, 2000) to empowered, resistant and solidary (Canagarajah, 2002b; Gregson et al., 2003). By the same token, we can break down the centripetal, equalising and hegemonic power of Anglophone/Global North centres of knowledge and writing production by regarding them as relative not absolute spaces (Smith, 1984; Smith & Katz, 1993, p. 75). In other words, it becomes necessary, useful and transformative to see the scales, territories, places and networks of writing and knowledge (re)production as internally uneven, heterotopic, inequitable, shifting and subject to ongoing contestation and disruption (Appadurai, 1990; Gregson et al., 2003; de Sousa Santos, 2009; Canagarajah, 2022; van Heur, 2023). I will circle back to this transformative dimension in the conclusion, where I put forward some spatially minded tactics.

Slight Autoethnography, or My Researcher-Broker Spatialities

The crux of the points raised above is not just about theory teasing, though my inclination towards theorising has in itself a historical geographical dimension. This unravelling is also about making sense of my own personal trajectories, my own situated experiences that, like others’, may not be neatly captured by the macro spatial narratives. Rather, such experiences appear to

require more “enactive” (Mignolo, 2000, pp. 25-26) epistemological and ontological spatialities that can account, more accurately, for changes, ruptures, learning and unlearning, struggles and privileges. My own personal history as a “skilled migrant” (Erel, 2003) as well as my research writing brokering work then become reflective, and reflexive, scaffolds. I employ them autoethnographically to show how, on the material ground of our evolving experiences as researchers, WRPP brokers, developers or pedagogues, spatial consciousness can become an instrument of individual and collective identity (trans)formation, of un/homing, of attunement, recognition and solidarity.

As a migrant academic, the shifting physical, material, symbolic (disciplinary, cultural, linguistic) and institutional spaces have been key to my growth as a researcher. About ten years into post-socialist Romania, in 2001, I became the recipient of an Open Society Foundation Scholarship for Eastern Europe and emigrated from Romania to the United Kingdom to study for an interdisciplinary MA in Gender, Literature and Modernity at the University of Warwick in order to add knowledge, networks and bibliographies to the doctoral research I had already been pursuing at the University of Bucharest. At the time, I was also holding an Assistant Lecturer position at the Lower Danube University of Galați, in Romania, and a temporary, part-time hourly paid lectureship at the University of Bucharest, sometimes standing in for academics away on international scholarships.

My affiliation to multiple urban centres of knowledge (Rodriguez Medina, 2014) entailed, first and foremost, the physical movement from one place to another. I had already had a history of long commutes between Galați and Bucharest, ironically eased in the end by the emigration to the UK. My internal and external mobilities were motivated by the desire to overcome research precarity, poverty of resources or poverty of meaningful networks. Most of the books that I was reading in the field of Anglo-American cultural/literary studies (my research field of origin) relied on the fluctuating generosity of my professors and supervisors. They were mainly critical theory texts photocopied by them at the various British, North American or Australian universities they had visited. These texts were space connectors, reducing the degrees of separation between myself and the Anglophone centres of knowledge. Then, unlike Galați, which was considered a kind of internal periphery at the time, particularly in my area of research, Bucharest was much more resourceful though still rather modest by Western or Anglophone standards. Romania itself was slowly turning from its periphery status prior to 1989 to semi-periphery (see Mureșan & Nicolaie, 2015) while within its territorial borders, places were themselves distinctly uneven across urban centres of research in Anglophone studies, with their known asymmetrical “power geometries”

(Gregson et al., 2003), since being an academic or studying at some of these non-centre or non-research institutions, such as Galați, carried, at the time, some limitation and stigma.

The move to the University of Warwick in the UK was practically a move out of these ebbing and flowing place-bound disciplinary power structures to an unimaginably abundant Anglophone centre for which the university was certainly a proxy. Warwick boasted one of the largest journal databases in the country (and I had no prior knowledge of journal databases), was amongst the country's leading institutions in the university rankings while my professors were authors of the books and articles that I could only access back home via copyright breaches, if at all. Both the knowledge and the networks had alien coordinates; the material conditions, too. The fellowship I received to then pursue my doctorate in urban literary geography (renouncing the one in Bucharest) or the British Association for American Studies travel grant to conduct archive research at the New York Public Library and visit the Centre for Place, Culture and Politics at the City University of New York, pushed my work and my networks to a different level of engagement and responsibility. And all that engagement was deeply connected to my own uneven and mixed geographies of knowledge and research writing, best captured by an informal conversation that I had years ago with a notable Marxist urban geographer when they asked me: why is a Romanian doing research on New York City at a British university? By the same token, one can wonder, why is a Romanian academic teaching and brokering research writing in English at a British university? Both questions represent a lasting conundrum, and tension, at the heart of my spatial positionality; both actively disrupt static notions of centre and periphery, of territory and scale, of institutional place-making in knowledge and research writing (re)production.

Obtaining my first full-time academic position as a Lecturer in the Centre for Academic Writing at Coventry University in 2009 spun its own tales of space and spatiality, of the uneven conditions and levels of knowledge production *within* an otherwise reputable and incontestable Anglophone centre. At the time, known more as a former polytechnic and post-1992, widening participation teaching university, Coventry was only timidly producing and investing in research (its journal database was fairly scarce, its place in the university competition rankings in the lower range). Its position was (no longer is) rather one of marginality while my own move from a research-intensive to a teaching-intensive university felt then like a move back home to where my whole journey had started (incidentally, Galați and Coventry are also twin cities, and their urban universities both former polytechnics). I found myself again in a rather peripheral academic space, a periphery which, for my own

research and researcher identity, has kept reproducing itself to the present day. Institutional strategies and priorities, mainly dictated by evaluation policies and the so-called higher education market pressures, have kept my research work in an on-and-off state of marginality, outside a viable “centre” location. Yet, there has been a difference to these new conditions of marginality. My cumulated spatialities have had *embodied* and transformative consequences (Knoblauch, 2012; Roberts, 2013; Lillis & Curry, 2018; Canagarajah, 2022; Dantzer & Peron, 2023) on my individual and institutional work: my projects and publications, my evolving research networks and collaborations, my research writing brokering labour, catalysing colleagues’ research (and) writing, or my internal research centre affiliations.

Through these materially and spatially grounded processes and practices, I have also developed a heightened sense of discursive and methodological diversity and ethical awareness. I have been unlearning and relearning my writerly identity and voice via the trials and tribulations of an inter/trans-disciplinary style, structuring and models of argumentation (my writing in this paper stands as a deliberate example of this hybridity). My doctoral journey was after all a journey driven by an obsessive and new “so what?!” which my supervisor constantly raised in our discussions. All this time, I have been seeking to control my drive towards theory, and the rhetorical complications thereof, a drive arising also from my post-socialist, Romanian/Eastern European historical geographies of resource-scarce Anglo-American research. Of course, understanding my own researcher structural positionality has meant creating and inhabiting research spaces as social and material relational spaces, incessantly querying my own writing practices and their spatial politics. Which voices do I follow and cite, and why? Where are these voices located? (see Mott & Cockayne, 2017) How do I de-marginalise my own voice and mobilise discursively a “home” or embodied non-Anglophone, “Latin pride”? With what kinds of individuals, networks and communities do I work? How do I relate to them and co-produce their own spatialities? I take such questions into my research writing brokering that strives to be consciously transformational through explicit space and ideological work.

My labour as a research writing “broker” (Lillis & Curry, 2006) has always existed on an ideological continuum from the recognition of other researchers’ own situated and spatialised work to manifest solidarity with their challenges and pressures, to influence and change in their writing, writing processes, practices and writerly identities. In our daily practice, we in the Centre for Academic Writing routinely use the term “developer” because it has higher currency and more denotative meanings relatable to university colleagues more widely. In this paper, however, I prefer Lillis and Curry’s

consecrated term, “broker”, precisely because of its ideological, structural and power connotations. In this brokering capacity, I have worked extensively with researchers in various kinds of collaborative initiatives that presuppose degrees of socialisation and the building of “communities of research practice” around texts and text production (Murray, 2012, 2015): one to one meetings alongside full manuscript reviewing of staple research genres (e.g., articles, books, book and grant proposals, project reports), writing retreats, writing for publication workshops, organising writers’ groups around writing and reviewing processes, short or long writing for publication courses that usually are a combination of all of the above (Geller et al., 2013; Murray & Newton, 2009; Morss & Murray, 2001). Within this multifaceted brokering framework, not only do researchers occupy disciplinary or epistemological positions but also spatial or material ones.

The spatial diversity has been most apparent at the national scale, while not restricted to it, through international brokering opportunities that have led me to work with scholars from countries outside the UK, such as Indonesia, Romania, Iraq, Oman, Kuwait, Turkey, Germany, South Africa, Russia or China. However, I do not need to travel far and wide to encounter complex and diverse macro, Global South/Global North/Global East, Anglophone and non-Anglophone, transnational, racialised, ethnic or minority researcher spatialities. These also very much exist within the Anglophone/Global North centre where I hold my academic position. Just like the global scale, the centre also holds together these uneven spatialities at various supra- and sub-national geographical scales, un/homed and dis/embodied through varieties of academic English discourses, multi/plurilingual researcher identities, diverse knowledge making and research writing practices and histories.

That is why, for me, being a research writing broker means going through repeated processes of fine attunement of my own spatialities to these other multiple spatialities with which I come into contact. It is also a meta-process of understanding the articulation between the ideological elements, the social, cultural forces producing these spatialities and the research discourses formed therein, and under certain historical conditions (Grossberg, 1996, p. 141 - interview with Stuart Hall). To illustrate, working with a group of plurilingual researchers from an Indonesian university consortium on a writing for publication short course, organised locally at my university, presupposed a nuanced exploration and understanding of their institutional, national and regional research agendas and policies (e.g., the islamisation agenda²), their

2 I found out about the “islamisation agenda” at Indonesian universities from one of the participants in the workshop in discussions of their research article (on academic reform at Islamic universities in Indonesia, see also, Suyadi et al., 2022). Interestingly, this faith-based

non-academic structures of experience such as the faith and religious system of ritual (which also influenced the daily rhythms of our work together), the socio-spatial, cultural, educational and economic systems within which their universities exist (e.g., the boarding school system or *pesantren*, the endowment of fixed assets or *waqf*), the significance of faith-based academic discourses (in contrast to secular ones) as well as the material conditions for their research. All these had shaped their research priorities as well as their academic discourses in English, their academic and mentorship networks, their personal academic histories, and also had an impact on the actual organisation of the writing for publication course. Finding commonalities between our non-Anglophone research and cultural spatialities within an Anglophone space formed modes of solidarity around writing for research and publication in English for local and trans-local audiences. This process of attunement has long featured in my brokering praxis overall, a process through which I have counteracted the quick and quantifying, skills-based demands of neoliberal research environments while turning brokering into a non-hierarchical, two-way knowledge-building process between myself and the researchers with whom I work.

In my nearly seventeen-year long practice, I have thus learnt that research writing brokering is as much a response to texts, or an intervention in their make-up, histories or trajectories (Lillis & Curry, 2006, 2010, 2022), as it is an ideologically laden process, a premise on which critical-pragmatic approaches to research writing pedagogies have been developed (Corcoran & Englander, 2016). By the same token, research writing brokering is always already spatialised because it mediates identity and community creation, which brings in contact and negotiation different, explicit or implicit, macro and micro spatialities. Brokering is thus forever caught up in a double bind and does boundary work (Rodriguez Medina, 2014) between: reinforcing “epistemic monocultures” (Bennett, 2015) and enabling plurality and growth; increasing pragmatism and performativity (the pragmatic know how of rhetorical manipulation and “just getting published”) and stimulating authenticity, depth and slowness (e.g., the rhythms of research writing, how slow or how fast researchers should be and who or what determines these rhythms); channelling a hegemonic Anglo-research culture (unwittingly or wittingly) and enabling authentically articulated voices and identities, opening discursive spaces for home or embodied differences in liberatory research writing cultures (see Dantzler & Peron, 2023 for embodiment as a political project).

agenda mirrors and intersects with similar institutional agendas in the Global North, well-known internationalising, globalising or decolonising Higher Education reforms.

The Radical and Dialectical Space Work of Research Writing, or Conclusion

In closing this journey of unravelling, I bring together the diverse spatialities examined so far by mapping familiar transnational research writing and publishing practices onto Lefebvre's three-dimensional production of space (1974/1991), material and physical spaces, conceptions or representations of space and spaces of representation, in order to show how these practices and their spatialities ultimately interconnect and function dialectically, in conjunction, sometimes in tension, and always in historical or conjunctural evolution. It is rather difficult, for instance, to separate neatly material conditions of writing and publishing labour, as physical spaces, from evaluation systems as spaces of representation, and disciplinary and cultural differences, as imagined or lived spaces; it is equally difficult, if not impossible, to see these as static and unchanging. Furthermore, only by understanding this dialectical evolving relation can we activate the potentially transformative/resistant spatial work of research writing (re)production and, in turn, offset marginalisation, and perform equalisation with care on the global/transnational writing and publishing stage.

While driven by seemingly unequivocal principles (in italics below), these mappings are cautious, incomplete and fluid, open to revision; readers can rethink and re-arrange them. Yet, they remain significant starting points for researchers, editors, peer reviewers, research writing brokers, publishers, research administrators and policy makers to render their own practices spatially conscious, and thus to enable differences in writing for research and publication to safely emerge, be recognised, supported and fully legitimated.

Writing and publishing practices are inherently material/physical spatial practices (these are the material conditions and political economies for knowledge-making, research writing and publishing practices). For example:

- The uneven distribution of financial and material resources both in the centre and the periphery, across different places (institutional sites or university urban knowledge centres) or territories (state funding vs. corporate funding)
- Infrastructural practices: access to academic resources (libraries, electronic journal subscriptions), financial resources (conference funding, research grants), equipment (IT, labs) and other infrastructures (developed campuses, accommodation, research [writing] support)
- Research labour conditions (contract types, research time allocation, divisions of labour and labour roles from writer to brokers of various kinds)

- Geographical/physical mobility access (e.g., visa regimes, politics of migration, exile or apartheid conditions)
- For-profit publishing industries vs. not-for-profit, cooperative models of publishing

Evaluation and management regimes function as representations of writing and publishing spaces (these modify, condition and result from practices and understandings of various spaces of research writing (re)production across scales, places and territories). For example:

- institutional/national rankings and competition
- local pay and reward systems, performance reviews, publication bonuses, point systems and career progression
- strategies and regulatory/evaluative policies and politics; national research evaluation systems (e.g., Research Excellence Framework, Excellence in Research for Australia) and their impact on research writing (for instance, how the REF in the UK leads to genre hierarchies, and therefore to individual and institutional strategic choices)
- altmetrics (Hyland, 2015) for enhanced societal impact and branding
- bibliometrics, journal impact factors, indices, rankings (e.g., h-index, Scopus)

Proxies for space stand for lived as well as imagined spaces of writing and publishing (these are imaginaries that emerge from actual enactments of research [and] writing). For example:

- research ontologies and epistemologies (including platform/AI-driven/algorithmic onto-epistemologies of research, authorship and readership—see Ciorogar & Shapiro, 2025), and their combined historical evolutions and dominance with direct impact on writing
- disciplinary and cultural differences combining with research tactics for so-called original or “fresh” insights (e.g., Indigenous knowledge-making)
- the consequences of English as the dominant language of globalised research communication, linguistic capital, linguistic “attrition”, multi/plurilingualism
- discursive and rhetorical conventions of writing in English (e.g., structures, authority, identity in writing) as codes for international and high-quality core or centre research; translanguaging as embodied resistance in writing for publication

Writing and publishing practices are produced through the dialectical spatial

work of research writing (re)production across all spatial domains. For example:

- Scholarly work as “boundary objects” (Rodriguez Medina, 2014, p. 36)
 - Travel across boundaries (or are prevented from travelling)
 - Are regulated by discursive conventions and gatekeeping practices
 - Are negotiated, critically evaluated amongst community members in different places or territories and at different scales
- Research writing as “networked activity” (Lillis & Curry, 2010)
 - Network routes and nodes, network ties (their durability and strength)
 - Network formation to make up for the lack of “institutionalised” infrastructures (Rodriguez Medina, 2014)
- Knowledge/writing work as spatial erasure, differentiation and equalisation
 - Extractive knowledge-making practices and “epistemicide” (Bennett, 2007; de Sousa Santos, 2014) or scholasticide
 - Localities: unmarked (centre/anglophone)/marked (non-centre/anglophone)—who does the (un)marking?
 - Parochialism/localism—“exoticising” (Lillis & Curry, 2010)
 - Academic mobilities (retraining); channels of collaboration but also competition and influence (e.g., British academy international writing workshops)
 - Platformisation of knowledge and writing (re)production

The transformative and resistant spatial work of research writing (re)production can take on the following spatially minded tactics. For example:

- *Challenge spatial gatekeeping*—challenge inherent biases in the practices of editors, reviewers, writing developers, policy makers shaped by spaces of representation, in particular.
- *Disrupt and reinforce spaces*—make embodied/home knowledges, languages/discourses voices/styles matter; be mindful of the homogenising and hegemonising work of research writing brokering masked as equalising levels of, and conditions for, research writing production.
- *Connect spaces*—engage in spatially diverse collective practices such as collaborative writing, open research, publishing or brokerage (see the Consortium for Democratizing Academic Publishing and Knowledge).
- *Fold scales*—consider how low-level scales, like the body and the home, condition, resist or integrate into higher-level scales [e.g., the body and the home as scales of social reproduction and care in gendered

research productivity (Nygaard et al., 2022) or in translanguaging through embodiment (Canagarajah, 2022)].

These mappings and their corollary transformative tactics could also shape existing or emergent researcher and practitioner infrastructures in the field of WRPP (e.g., the PRISEAL conference circuit or AILA's *Global Academic Publishing and Presenting in a Global Context* research network), by emplacing, territorialising, scaling and decentring the networks' geographies. Unravelling the networks' spatialities may involve mapping hotspots for research and practice while checking for blind spots, welcoming to the network outsiders to the field who use a spatially and ideologically sensitive lens to examine knowledge production, such as urban geographers, Indigenous studies researchers, sociologists of decoloniality or critical race studies. These deliberate gestures can extend the reach of the field and lead to authentic changes and solidarities at the grassroots level.

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