Placement

Anastássios Perdicoúlis
Assistant Professor, ECT, UTAD (http://www.tasso.utad.pt)
Senior Researcher, CITTA, FEUP (http://www.fe.up.pt/~tasso)
Visiting Researcher, Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development, OBU, UK

António Belélm Lima
Architect, Belém Lima Arquitectos, Vila Real, Portugal (http://www.bellemlima.com)

Abstract
Abstraction and specification about the act of placement reveal key ideas in the realm of physical space, objects of particular importance, as well as reasoning and argumentation.

1 Dichotomy

Placing or 'putting something somewhere' is broadly identified by τίθημι (Table 1), and the details of the placement are important for shaping further concepts as well as the associated terminology. Hence, stemming from the common act of placement, two main options arise: an object is either (a) posited\(^1\) somewhere, and that ‘somewhere’ is termed θέσις (§ 3), or (b) it is inserted in a specially prepared space, such as a receptacle (δοχείον), which is then termed θήκη (§ 4) — Figure 1.

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Source} & \textbf{Meaning} & \textbf{Derivatives} \\
\hline
τίθημι [Gk] & to place, to position (v.) & θέσις [Gk], position; θήκη [Gk], case, storage \\
θέσις [Gk] & position, place (n.) & thesis (statement, dissertation) \\
θήκη [Gk] & case, storage (n.) & bibliothèque [F], discothèque [F] \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

\(^1\)From ponere [L], to place.
2 The physical thesis (πλα/pla)

Placement conveys a sense of organisation, significance or importance. In a physical sense, a thesis constitutes a place [En, F] — a term that stems from plateia through its transliteration platea [L]. Related terms from the same root include piazza [It], praça [Pt], and plaza [Es] — Figure 2 and Table 2.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 2** Physical positions are marked by their dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Derivatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>πλάτος [Gk]</td>
<td>width, breadth, flat</td>
<td>πλατεία [Gk], Plato&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πλάτη [Gk]</td>
<td>flat or broad surface</td>
<td>ωμοπλάτη [Gk], omoplata [Pt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πλατεία [Gk]</td>
<td>wide open space, public square</td>
<td>piazza [It], praça [Pt], plaza [Es]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place [En, F]</td>
<td>τόπος [Gk], locus [L], lieu [F], endroit [F]</td>
<td>placement, placeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τόπος [Gk]</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>topography, toponym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situs [L]</td>
<td>position</td>
<td>situation, situare [L] (v.), to place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locus [L]</td>
<td>place, position&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spatium [L]</td>
<td>area, gap, interval, length/width</td>
<td>space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The famous philosopher Plato was initially named Aristocles, after his grandfather, but allegedly acquired the name Plato after the remarkable breadth of his chest (Smith, 1853), his forehead, or perhaps his knowledge.

<sup>b</sup>The term indicates various scales, ranging from an aim point to territory, to neighbourhood, to region (Aversa and Whitaker, 2008).

<sup>c</sup>Also duration, time, extent, distance, period (Aversa and Whitaker, 2008).

Table 2 About place

Not any space or topos (Table 2) qualifies as a place — it must have special characteristics or marks that give it an identity, such as definition of bounds, actual or potential use, and a physical or emotional relationship with the users. This becomes evident with the more specific ‘piazza’, ‘plaza’, or ‘plateia’ and their evolution in urbanism through the 19th C. and 20th C. — Figure 3.

The ‘place’ is prominent in pre-modern urban spaces, with public squares being quite important for
community life — Figure 3(a). In modern urbanism, on the contrary, empty space around buildings (Figure 3(b)) or the *non-lieux* ‘spaces of transience’ such as overpasses or motorways (Augé, 1995) are not significant enough to constitute places.

![Contrasting urban spaces](image)

**Figure 3** Contrasting urban spaces; reprinted courtesy of The MIT Press, from Rowe and Koetter (1981)

In contrast to the *non-lieux* experience, movement can also create place. Le Corbusier’s *promenade architecturale* (Janson and Tigges, 2014), for instance, occurs in a typically ‘immobile’ and ‘static’ built space albeit at *lower speeds* — e.g. a stroll in the city centre, or moving from one room to another — with an intent of lingering that gives importance to the space itself.
3 The abstract thesis (θ'/th)

Placing an object away, at some distance but still within view, invites to literal ‘theory’ — i.e. the object is seen, watched, or observed from the viewer’s point de vue, in the resulting perspective. For those who are highly visual (Perdicoúlis, 2013), this physical situation together with the underlying procedure serve as mental models for noetic operations after due abstraction.

![Figure 4 Abstract positions](image)

Besides a location for ‘theorising’, a θέσεις is intended abstractly as a thoughtful statement of judgement or opinion — e.g. an academic thesis (Figure 4). Furthermore, a θέμα is set as a challenge to prove, and an idea that is not proven yet is a mere hypothesis (υπόθεσις [Gk], supposition or assumption), in which the prefix υπο- indicates a status of inferiority, literally or metaphorically (Table 3).

<table>
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<tr>
<td>επι- [Gk]</td>
<td>above, upon (also: in addition, on top of)</td>
<td>epigraph (inscription)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>υπο- [Gk]</td>
<td>below, under (also: slightly, below expectations)</td>
<td>hypodermic (under the skin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The positional superiority of a θέσεις is compelling. The term επίθεσις literally indicates overlap, and by the force of motion it indicates onrush, and thus aggression, assault, or attack. However, the derivative epithet indicates the qualities of an object in an Aristotelian sense (Perdicoúlis, 2014) — i.e. one or more permanent states that characterise an entity — and is authoritative enough to specify, determine, or categorise substantive nouns.

3From θεωρείν [Gk], to see, speculate; also in θεωρός [Gk], spectator, and θέατρον [Gk], theatre. NB: The ‘θ’ in this case is not related to that of θέσεις.

4The equivalent procedure of moving the observer instead of the object may be more handy at times. This is known as ‘zooming out’, and originates in the optical technology — i.e. (of a still or video camera) to change smoothly from a given focal length (‘normal’ view) to a shorter one (wider view).

5Relating to mental activity or the intellect — from νούς [Gk], mind, intelligence.

6Literally a proposition, such as the subject of a discussion or investigation. Also known as a ‘topic’ — generally from τόπος [Gk], place; specifically from τά τοπικά [Gk], ‘matters concerning commonplaces’ (the title of a treatise by Aristotle).

7Literally όνομα επίθετον [Gk], an add-on name. The latin-based version adjective is somewhat more forceful: instead of being ‘added-on’, the attribute is ‘thrown at’ — from ad- [L], towards + jacere [L], to throw.
4 The particular case of storage (θ/th)

In the other branch of the dichotomy (§1), placement is given a specification associated with a need to save valuable commodities, or to put away dangerous objects (e.g. swords, poisons) in order to prevent harm (Figure 5). Hence, a number of receptacles or containers (θήκες) come into prominence.

![Diagram of storage spaces with progressive specialisation]

**Figure 5** Prominent storage spaces with progressive specialisation

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>αποθήκη [Gk]</td>
<td>storehouse, warehouse</td>
<td>botica [ByzGk], Apotheke [D], drugstore, chemist’s shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maṣṣaḥ [Ar]</td>
<td>storehouse</td>
<td>magasin [F], armazém [Pt], almacen [Es]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The need for stowage⁸ gives rise to the somewhat general αποθήκη [Gk] as a storehouse or warehouse, which is subsequently specified as storage of chemicals such as medicine (Apotheke [D]) or wine (bodega [Pt, Es], adega [Pt]), or valuable dry goods (boutique [F]) — Figure 5. Nevertheless, there is another considerable ‘chain’ of stores, of Arabic origin (Table 4), which gives rise to the magasin [F], armazém [Pt], and almacen [Es].

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⁸To pack or store (something) carefully and neatly in a particular place — from stow [OEn], to place.
Documentation


*Dictionnaire Le Littré* (2008) — GPL


*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* (1913) — public domain

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Luís Gama for his technical assistance with image processing and communications.