

UNDERSTANDING ISLAND SPATIALITY THROUGH CO-VISIBILITY

The construction of islands as legible territories – a case study of the
Azores

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ABSTRACT: This article explores how the island territory of the Azores (Portugal) emerges and is spatially defined in two cultural texts: Raul Brandão's *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* (whose title translates as 'Unknown Islands') and Vitorino Nemésio's *Mau Tempo no Canal* (published in English language translation as *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale*) and uses them to identify interpretative elements of the island experience. By categorising key island spatialities and sensory inputs, I propose the relationship between the observer and island space and assert that these spatialities converge to form a territory composed of water and land, synthesised via the concept of *terraquée*, and confirm the existence of an aggregate Azorean island spatiality, which is rooted in co-visibility.

KEYWORDS: Azores, co-visibility, island spatiality, *terraquée*, territorial legibility

Introduction

This article explores the spatial definition of the Azores through an analysis of how island territory is interpreted and expressed in two literary works. I hereby identify the elements of a relational island spatiality that are key to the perception and experience of the natural and built island environment. Territorial legibility has been a matter of interest for a number of scholars. Influential research by Lynch (1960) explores the legibility of landscape and considered various guiding principles behind the creation of mental maps and the apprehension of urban landscapes. Pallasma (2007) regards the senses as tools for validating our apprehension of the world that surrounds us, reconfiguring the world's shape and composition. Kristeva (1982) argues that territory emerges from the relationship between the observer and the observed and that the perceived environment is itself formed by the constituent characteristics of space and the experience derived from them. Massey (2005) develops a method for examining the various components of spatialities, defending the inseparability of these components from space itself. Space is, from this perspective, a relational product in which humans and the environment shape one another.

Bakhtin (1981) develops an interpretative system for literary works, opening the scientific spectrum to literature as a potential source of new data. Within this system, he regards the novel as a document from which several recurrent elements can be gathered, allowing one to interpret space, especially elements connected to the relationship between the subject and the environment (Pocock, 1981). It is thus possible to interpret written works as a means of

identifying images that correspond to spatialities. This can be done through the interpretation of represented emotions, signs, and collective memory, as developed by Halbwachs (1980), thereby unveiling the elements that allow one to mentally construct territory. Given their selective representation of reality, literary narratives reconfigure space through the meaning of words. As a result, words promote a place identity.

Previously, I have drawn upon these theories to examine how building codes and construction regulations manage the occupation and organisation of the Azores (Vale, 2013). In the present article, I consider how the Azores' spatial significations bestow meaning upon this island territory. In so doing, I explore a process of co-visibility, of seeing and being seen (Didi-Huberman, 1992), and of the island as a *terraquée* space (Marrou, 2009), in order to demonstrate how land (*terra*) and water (*aquée*) intersect in a more-than-geographical manner. I associate these concepts of co-visibility and *terraquée* with a prototypical interpretative framework derived from Bakhtin and use them to identify characteristics of Azorean spatiality through analysis of a pair of narratives Raul Brandão's travel memoir *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* (originally published in 1926 and republished in a edited edition in 2009)¹ and Vitorino Nemésio's novel with elements of travel memoir *Mau Tempo no Canal* (originally published in 1944 subsequently in English language translation in 1998 as *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale*). This characterisation of the Azores' territorial identity informed by literary sources complements the studies of Pires (2013) on Azoreanity. The article is based on a field study of the Azores archipelago and a consideration of the manner in which its geographic character and constraints determine how it is inhabited and perceived. The current study also complements prior research into the rules governing the urban matrix and built structures in the Azores, an archipelago in which islands are characterised by a strong sea-hill relationship (Vale, 2013). By juxtaposing two narratives, I obtain spatial references through which I can develop a conceptual framework from a relational perspective. Such an interpretation punctuates the approach to the archipelago with the meanings, experiences, and senses of the two authors in question. I devote special attention to the authors' physical interactions and relationships with the archipelagic context surrounding them. From this sensory-narrative-polyphonic dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981), with its multiple voices and perspectives, I seek to construct a support structure for Azorean spatiality. This will validate the hypothesis that the Azores' island territory can be determined by sea/land, outside/inside, and island/island relationships. Such a hypothesis complements the archipelagic and relational approaches of scholars such as Stratford et al (2011), Pugh (2013, 2016), and Deloughery (2007).

I deploy a qualitative, interpretative, and inductive methodology for this study. This approach enables one to discern visual and spatial parameters as though one were taking a trip through the archipelago. This leads to the identification of recurrent sensory elements, which suggest geographic and spatial characteristics when considered alongside observation of the study area. Through this process, I am able to assemble a framework of physical and visual continuities, which has its genesis in a land and water system that conditions territorial morphology. Ultimately, the island territory emerges as a single platform on which land and sea merge, generating significant organisational features that construct the functions of mental mapping that are implicit in Azorean intangible culture.

This article is divided in five parts. The first part presents and contextualises the object of research in a theoretical manner, introduces the methodology, and lays out the approach

¹ All references in this article are to the 2009 version. I have translated all quotes from this book (and from its foreword by Pires) since no English translation has been published.

strategy. The second part expands upon the concepts explored in part one, contributing to the methodological formulation and serving as tools for the territorial legibility under study. It furthermore explains the methodological process and justifies its qualitative dimension. The third part provides a descriptive summary of the spatialities found in the two selected literary texts. On the basis of this summary, part four presents a table of recurrent features that characterise the island space. I draw parallels between recurrent features found in the texts and the physical dimension of the elements characterising the analytical field, and I advance an overview of island space that synthesises the concepts of *terraquée* and co-visibility. Part five justifies the view of the island territory as a platform that generates organisational traits of continuity.

I. Materials and Methodologies

Defining the study area

In this article I identify the components that make the island territory of the Azores legible. The territory comprises nine islands, numerous islets, and surrounding seas and is located at the centre of the North Atlantic Ocean, between parallels 36° and 40° N and meridians 25° and 32° W (see Figure 1). The minimum distance from the European continent, 1,380 km, and the minimum distance from the American continent, 2,300 km (Gomes, 2012: 56), illustrate the Azores' isolation and intercontinental nature.



Figure 1 - Location of Azores archipelago in Atlantic.

Vale: The Azores/Co-visibility

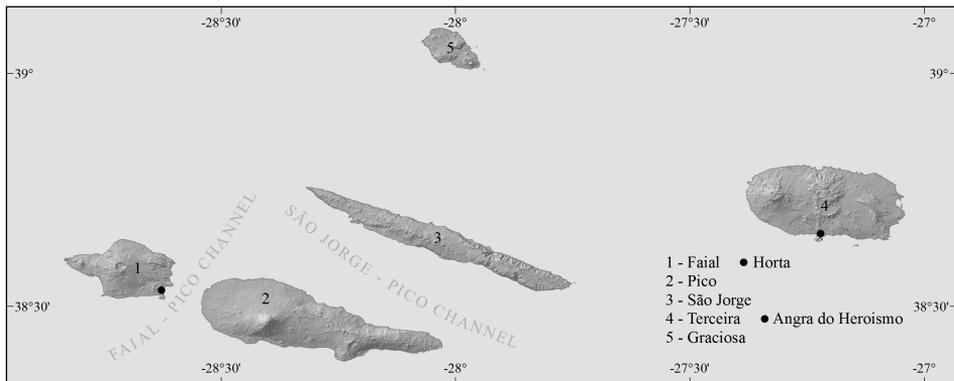


Figure 2 - Area of study (the central group of the Azores Islands).

I draw on two literary works to develop methods of spatial interpretation and to formulate a relational explanatory theory for the legibility of the island territory. This study focuses on the central part of the archipelago (see Figure 2), considered with particular regard to the islands of Faial (including the city of Horta), Pico, São Jorge and Terceira (including the city of Angra do Heroísmo).

The interpretive value of literary works

Literature depicts events in a distinctive manner and in a way that is deeply rooted in the transference of reality, giving literary works that might be considered as a kind of significance that is timeless or even eternal (Calvino, 2000). They provide a broad field of impressions, which are essential for interpreting space and are rarely found in scholarly and scientific writing. Literature transforms reported events into human/individual knowledge that projects a collective construction of memory and acquires meanings and experiences. These meanings and experiences integrate the determinations of cause and effect, which themselves reflect human activity undertaken in accordance with a collective identity (Pocock, 1981). Indeed, Pocock asserts that:

The stability of the physical – ‘the stable humaneness of nature’ – anchors the fleeting seconds of the successive presents as we are transported between past and future, suspended permanently between our memories and our hopes. At heart, our experience is personal, our memories and our pronouncements self-referential... Physical place is ‘re-placed’ through our sensibilities by an image of place, which is no less real, while the phenomenon of sense or spirit of place highlights the experiential nature of our engagement. (ibid: 16-17)

As Gillis (2007: 275) also notes, memory primarily produces an image of the island rather than the actual experience of the island.

By using literature to navigate a reconfigured version of the past while also possessing knowledge of the present, one can identify structural relationships that shape matrix concepts. The matrix (from the Latin for womb), according to dictionaries, can be understood as the environment in which something originates or develops and also as a mould used in the production of a relief surface. Moreover, it acts as the background landscape of the different

elements that creates a reality that is highly interconnected (White et al, 1992: 414). In this research, one should regard matrix as a set of components generating interconnected relationships that create the territory of the island. For the present research, I used two complementary literary works (Pires, 2009: 7-39; Pires, 1979: 79-90) that have an intimate “Azorean significance” (Pires, 2009: 8): *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* and *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale*.

In 1924, Brandão and Nemésio got to know one another during part of a boat trip that started and finished in Lisbon in mainland Portugal, with stops on Madeira Island as well as on all the islands of the Azores (Nemésio, 1931). Along the way, Brandão recorded his impressions in a travel diary that revealed the unique Azorean landscape. Brandão was 34 years older than Nemésio, and the age difference gave these two authors the roles of master and disciple in some respects. The authors greatly admired one another, as is evident from the letters they exchanged (Pires, 1987). In 1944, Nemésio was already a renowned author when he decided to use his memory to recreate life on the Azores in the late 1910s in his novel *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale*. This work appears as a narrative of Azorean identity set in the ‘Azorean Atlantic’. In contrast, Brandão’s *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* offers a mainland perspective on this Azorean identity.

Given their context, both works portray aspects of an archipelagic reality associated with territorial particularities, producing environments that result from the writers’ sensory relationships with their surroundings. The island space possesses experiential values that grant it character, order, continuity, and symbolic value. That is, the space is territorialised by expressions of human experience. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, territory is defined by:

the emergence of matters of expression (qualities)... It becomes expressive, on the other hand, when it acquires a temporal constancy and a spatial range that make it a territorial, or rather a territorialising, mark: a signature. (1987: 315)

It is through this process that space acquires contents and identity (Poche, 1983: 8).

The island territory emerges as a system of relationships capable of identification and characterisation. My interpretative methodology draws upon the concept of the chronotope developed by Bakhtin. The chronotope supports the understanding of phenomena in terms of the assembly of “new and more authentic matrices and links that correspond to ‘nature’,” shedding light upon the world’s temporal and spatial characteristics through “combinations of images” (Bakhtin, 1981: 205). In turn, a chronotopic study is the analysis of a chronotope as an “artistic and historical image” (ibid: 257), with the author’s worldview becoming a detached view of the world produced by the researcher. Using this model to analyse *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* and *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale* allows each environment to be identified as reflecting the combination of space/time and action.

Table 1 below presents three conceptions of how we apprehend the world and how these conceptions interact. The first conception reflects the process of perceiving reality; the second conception reflects the interpretative model proposed by Bakhtin; and the third conception, which I propose in this research, reflects the prototypical interpretative framework (inspired by Bakhtin) that will guide data collection from analysed works.

Vale: The Azores/Co-visibility

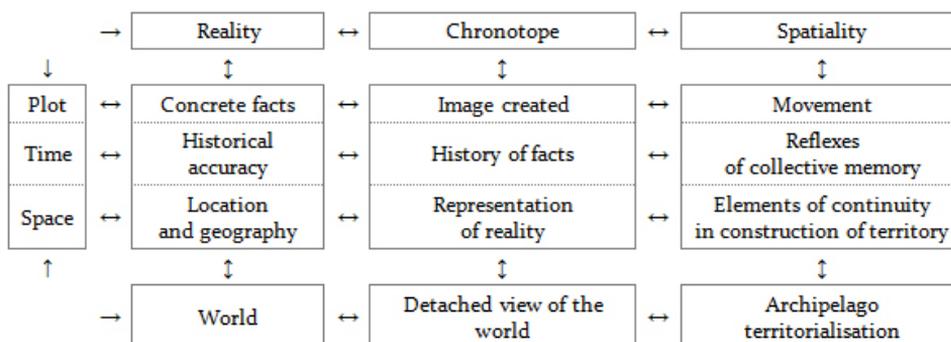


Table 1 - Summary of interpretative transpositions relative to various realities.

3. Delineating spatialities: data collection

My reading of *As Ilhas Desconhecidas* and *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale* explores several descriptive images that reflect similar settings within the island territory. Applying the interpretative framework described above, I have selected the characteristic data of each environment, interpreting it through five constituent spatialities of the island territory: seas, island, city, buildings and roadways.

Seas

The initial approach to the island is from the “[f]aded sea that was not made to be seen but rather to be breathed” (Brandão, 2009: 53), with the sky being “filled with humidity and lined with clouds” (ibid: 56). One’s first impressions are unmistakably atmospheric, heavy with water and shadow. As Rossi comments, “places are stronger than people, the fixed scene stronger than the transitory succession of events” (1981: 50). In this undefined atmosphere, the island emerges almost imperceptibly as an “indecisive blur wrapped in mist” (Brandão, 2009: 53-54). Between sea, land, and sky, an “incorporeal vapor appears, rubbing out the colors, immobilising the scenery, and turning the sea into the atmosphere” (ibid: 57). The palette of colors “extends from grey to blue, embodying all shades and changing at every moment” (ibid: 52), depending on the light. This impression is echoed by Nemésio, “[m]urky, cottony clouds hang heavily over the nine-island archipelago; haze and humidity distort the contours of land and sea” (1998: 404). In the first impression, the sea supplants all other elements, contributing to a saline and iodised perception (Brandão, 2009: 48), one in which space is understood as a humid whole. The sea converges, despite everything, with the island, and the island in turn converges with the sea – roles that alternate as “the sea becomes clear and the mountains transparent” (ibid: 52).



Figure 3 - Atmospheric permeation. ©António Araújo, Graciosa seen from the sea, 2013.



Figure 4 - Approach to the island: Ponta dos Coelhos and Ilhéu das Cabras. ©António Araújo, Terceira, 2015.

Island

Approaching the island from the sea intensifies impressions but it does not alter them. The island “unveils itself amidst the nebulae... all blue, surfacing from the blue” (ibid: 54). As the ship approaches, one’s perception of the island emerges from “caples that enter the sea” (ibid: 65). When approaching the coast, colour finally appears: “it is only when we are about to reach the town... that I understand: the island is a crackling-shaped black stone” (ibid: 54). From this point onwards, one can identify the bay and its headlands as the ship anchors “in a vast semicircle closed to the north by a hill... and on the other side [by an islet]” (ibid: 59), sheltering a port. Nemésio has a similar perception of arrival:

The bay of Angra stretched, gray and somnolent, from the shadows of Mount Brasil to the pier of Porto Pipas. Immobile, as if under the weight of lead, overflowed by an arrow-shaped flock of fat, pensive gulls, the bay prolonged the sluggish sunrise to the southeast as far as the two hillocks crowned with rock sapphire and sheep – the Islets of Cabras. (1998: 404)

City

Upon arrival, movement assumes the form of roaming, which serves as a means of apprehension (Panerai et al, 1999: 37), a process of discovery of that which lies inside. Inland, beyond the sea, a change in the observer’s positioning occurs: “I take my time looking at the city, where a yellow pyramid, a monument, bursts forth... Further away, some scalped hills [and the city] extending into the coastline with its convents, heavy streets and a fort at each end” (Brandão, 2009: 59-60). For Nemésio, the city of Horta becomes a spectator of the sea, as from “the seaward windows one also commanded a full view of the channel and of Pico” with the city as “a front-row theater box to that year-round stage” (1998: 19). The writer’s experience reflects his bodily apprehension-immersion (cf. Pallasmaa, 2007: 40), interpreting the enveloping atmosphere. In this case, his experience exposes the coast in connection with the hills that it singles out, as he contemplates the streets, which are completed by the coastal forts. Moreover, roaming is facilitated by the island’s scale, which permits easy access. In a stroll that traverses the built environment, one can grasp the legibility of the ruralising atmosphere of an agricultural plot:

I took a little road by chance, where monk’s cress and red valerians flourish, growing on walls... On the road I find shining bulls... I enter the backyard of a friend. I have always enjoyed immersing myself in farms and gardens in rustic farm settings. (Brandão, 2009: 60)

Similarly:

Since his arrival from Lisbon, João Garcia had gone for his customary afternoon stroll three times. He rode along the steep little alley down to Ocean Street; went by the Clarks’ Granary, now with its windows open; and ridding himself of Dr. Luís da Rosa after a few minutes of chatting at the door of Yankee House, he took the Pasteleiro roadway. After reaching Escoto’s grocery store, he began to see the Dulmo’s quinta in the distance: first, the araucarias and the cedars covering the roofs; then the windows of the house that the setting sun, in the direction of Flores, divided and tinged with an orange glow. (Nemésio, 1998: 96-97)

Vale: The Azores/Co-visibility

The islands' agricultural spaces allow one to observe the sea and the hills. Nature is understood as primordial, and it is through knowledge of this primacy that the action of man takes place. The topography of the hills – its solidity and verticality – is rendered oppressive by its contrast with the sea's fluid horizontality: on the horizon, the “character of the landscape is delicate and occult, although we can see the fields and the minuscule houses at the bottom of the enormous crater” (Brandão, 2009: 231). Likewise:

The morning was cool, but the dawn slowly began to reveal the curves of the mountains and the contours of the sea cliffs. Despite the choppy seas and a little veil of fog hovering over the mountain, the day looked promising. (Nemésio, 1998: 357)



Figure 5 - View of the city: Bay of Angra do Heroísmo. ©António Araújo, Terceira, 2013.

Bell towers appear as the elements that gather houses together, so that we find “the little Praia do Almojarife houses, nestled around the church” (ibid: 227). These towers mark out the urban space, with Nemésio listing Our Lady of Guia, Colégio, St. Gonçalo, Conceição, Santa Luzia and Angra Cathedral “with its pointed towers” (ibid: 405). These vertical elements stand out from the homogeneous mass of buildings, joining the houses and farms before reuniting, beyond the walls and forts, with the sea. Just like these elements, the hills rise as one climbs and offer a position that “commands a view of the entire city, encompassing, and even extending beyond, the woods and lands of the Cortes-Reais... the garden and palace” (ibid: 408).

Buildings

Azorean buildings reinforce the relationship between land and water and accentuate the bustling trade of their locales. Yesterday and today are simultaneously expressed in the construction of urban space. The past remains, throughout time, up to the present. Nemésio writes, “as if the Cantos Manor, which today houses an orphanage, were still the Purveyor’s Office of the India Fleet and as if Angra itself, its face turned to the North Atlantic, still felt in its body the nuptial thrill of Venice at the edge of the Adriatic” (1998: 405). Nemésio evokes experience of the past by using Cantos Manor as an object of active memory and as a starting point for this part of the narrative, focused on the activities of the old Purveyor’s Office. This passage demonstrates the relationship with the sea through juxtaposition of the past, with Nemésio bringing the maritime memory of the Purveyor’s Office to the present.



Figure 6 - Sea/land co-visibility: Ilhéu das Cabras and the pier of Porto das Pipas, reflecting in a window. © António Araújo, Terceira, 2014.
(Still from the Instagram video *Angra sunrise*.)

Vale: The Azores/Co-visibility

The maritime presence is equally reflected in the interior of the buildings, for instance in a wine cellar with “the appearance of a sailing ship that unexpectedly stops at a small port to install supplementary bunks” (ibid: 247). These atmospheres represent a cultural collective memory related to the sea. The interiors of buildings are counterpoised by a visual connection with the outside, materialised through spans opening out to other buildings, just as “[l]ocked in his room... João Garcia felt the solitude of Carmo Convent weighing down on the old windows and opening up the city [to] his thoughts” (ibid: 145). From the windows, one can see cultivated land, the orchard, the farm (*quinta*), the hill, the beach, and the sea (ibid). Windows become mediating elements between the inside and the outside, maintaining a relationship between the interior and the exterior, between land and sea:

on the veranda bench... From where she sat, she could see, beyond the bower, the rim of Caldeira do Inferno crater crowning Mount Guia. The cedar branches broken by the hurricane were twine for the rolls of pearly waves heading to Porto Pim to peter out. (ibid: 153)

As Figure 6 illustrates, windows incorporate and embody the symbolic convergence of visibilities.

Roadways

The physical relationship between built environment and territory emanates from a network of roadways, which act as guidelines, connecting coastal villages and resembling people embracing the island (ibid: 305). In *Ilhas Desconhecidas* and *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale*, roadways emerge as a means of circulating through and penetrating the island, enabling a relationship between coast and hill, guiding buildings and their associated spaces of agricultural cultivation:

All along the ravine ran a lonely, deep-rutted road. Starting there, the Old Road girded the island like a huge ring, as if someone had laid an ashen snare for catching seagulls. It was only broken by boulders, small chunks of fortification wall, an occasional coast guard post, the dock, and the city. Despite its being used almost solely by the Porto Pim fishermen out crabbing. (ibid: 11)

Roadways have an additional feature: they guide rainwater towards the sea as they are often built alongside streams. Besides providing a physical connection, they offer a visual link, which promotes figurative aspects perceived on land and in the sea: “Fayal, with only a road encircling the island, Pico lying before her” (ibid: 103), as well as “the lane leading to the launching ramp” (ibid: 275). Functionally speaking, despite all their attributes, roadways are not regarded as ideal for moving about and fostering relationships with one’s neighbours. Given the difficulties of traveling, there are neighbours who do not know each other and have “never laid eyes on each other, despite the fact that their properties abutted each other somewhere along Mount Hope” (ibid: 287):

he kept to Urzelina, except when he went shooting wild pigeons at Point Cabreira... and she kept busy churning butter in Norte Grande... a place that is a few hours up those gutted roads that cross the island between two rows of hydrangeas. (ibid: 287)

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The circumstantial difficulties of the topography, the shape of the terrain (linked to intensive agriculture) and the climate promote an emotional intensity that is felt in voyages along each of these paths. Inside the island, the barriers imposed to travelers lead them to continually reencounter the sea. Unlike the land, the sea constructs a fluid space of correspondences among coastal places, especially when weather conditions are favorable.



Figure 7 - Island/island co-visibility: Rosais of São Jorge and Pico. ©António Araújo, (Pico seen from São Jorge, 2013).

4. *Terraquéé* as the great projection surface: discussion of data

Characterisation of spatialities

A comparative reading of both Brandão and Nemésio highlights descriptive recurrences, allowing one to identify characteristic features of the physical environments. These are summarised in Table 2 below. Viewed horizontally, the table characterises spatialities in accordance with the following criteria: movement, reflection of collective memory, relational planes and, ultimately, the island territory's characteristic elements (as defined in Table 1). Interpreted vertically, the table lays out the complementarity between the indicators that were obtained, contributing to a perception of the territory as a whole (see Figure 8). The interpretative model, which juxtaposes the movement and expressions of collective memory, forms the set of characteristic elements of the spatialities that make up the island territory. These constituent elements exist on interrelated spatial planes: sea/land, outside/inside, and island/island. To think about them is to understand that each is generated by its counterpart. The sea/land set was employed to assign the elementary and natural quality contained in the archipelago. These two spaces are perceived and described to express fluidity and continuity. In contrast, the outside/inside pair is used to express a complementarity that transcends the notion of limits. The island/island relationship unveils a similar reality (another island) that remains continually present through observation, expressing the notions of separation and

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union, which are part of the concept of co-visibility. In each of these sets, it is possible to understand the territory as based on systemic relationships within an archipelagic content. However, when analysing the results from an outside/inside and island/island perspective, one realises that these are subject to the sea/land component. For this reason, the outside/inside and island/island approach are used only to justify the complementarity and continuity that exist within the archipelago.

Spatiality	Movement	Collective Memory	Relational Planes	Characteristic Elements
Seas	Permeation	Atmospheric impressions of salinity and iodine.	Sea/Land 	Humidity; Color: shades of blue and gray; Physical state: indistinct (merged sea, sky, mist, land).
Island	Arrival and departure	Unravels in mist; Crackling-shaped; Identified by bays and capes.	Sea/Land; Outside/Inside 	Indistinct matter; Space consisting of land and water, defined by capes and bays.
City	Discovery through roaming	Looks at character of the landscape; Perceives from sea to hill and from hill to sea.	Outside/Inside 	Extending along the shore, consisting of port, walls, forts, streets, houses, religious buildings, towers, farms, etc.; Orientation towards the highest points (visibility platforms); Setting itself apart through vertical elements.
Buildings	Evocation	Activation of memory linked to the sea; Recesses as visual mediators.	Outside/Inside; Sea/Land 	Reflects cultural memory; Reinforces co-visibility; Mediates between inside and outside, land and sea.
Roadways	Union and separation	Structural element.	Outside/Inside; Island/Island 	Supports design of the city and parcelled agricultural land in harmony with sea and coast.

Table 2 - Summary of the five components of the analysis: seas, island, city, buildings and roadways.

The island territory's characteristic elements (included in Table 2) emerge from a mixture of indistinct humid matter intrinsically connected with nature, in which built elements are materialised, conceived, and developed in accordance with a natural structure that runs from the sea to the hills. These elements' design emerges between the capes and headlands that give form to bays, serving to define and bound the built environment, into which bodies of water are integrated. Unique buildings stand out in this configuration and become reference points apprehended by one's gaze. If one possesses the appropriate guiding principles, one

can arrive, roam within, and discover an itinerary on land and sea. Means of transportation are part of this movement and are deeply connected with the surfaces upon they operate (Pugh, 2016). The structure showcased here – with its vertical components – is converted into a synthesis constructed from the sea/land relationship, forming a unified matrix of this territory and its structuring elements.

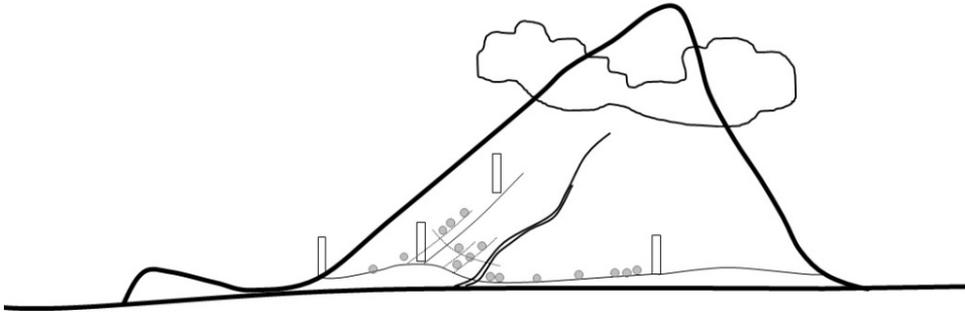


Figure 8 - Synthesis of structural elements involved in the legibility of the island territory.

The works of literature analysed in this article characterise the island territory through the co-presence of sea and land, which construct space through continual interaction. The sea and land planes intersect and guide the whole imagery (cf. Baldacchino, 2005: 247-251), allowing one to create a single surface. This intersection gives rise to principle of *terraquée*, as developed by Marrou (2009). It is here that earthy and aqueous bodies not only mix but also merge to become a single form, within which people can only apprehend that which is particularly conspicuous.

Constitution of the terraquée plane

In the words of Brandão, the “whole land is drenched with humidity” (2009: 86). From the recurrent features of the literary works, we can recognise the contribution of the sea to the island space. It is in this context that we can reinterpret the *terraquée* space as a concept where land and sea come together to form a unique state and single body. Hayward (2012) defines this single body as an *aquapelago*, taking inspiration from Hau’ofa (1993), who characterises Oceania as a “sea of islands”. Yet although the land and sea elements are inseparable from one another within the *terraquée*, they are not indistinguishable. Instead, they communicate with one another through hierarchies and subordination.

In 1932, Nemésio portrayed Azorean insularity as a product of amniotic fluid (the sea), and from this he built the concept of “Azoreanity”, which highlights that which is typically Azorean from a sensory perspective. Complementing this line of thought, Pires (1979: 79-90), having studied *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale* and other works by Nemésio, explains how the omnipresence of the sea defines a geo-human approach to history in the Azores. Nemésio’s and Pires’ works confirm that the Azores incorporate the semiotics of the term ‘archipelago’, in which *pelago* (meaning ‘open sea’) is transformed into a maritime extraterritoriality where the sea is the relational principle defined by the prefix *archi-*. As an integrator of water, land, and sky, the sea is an agent of indistinct matter, which determines the visual apprehension of the islands. It is in the sea and from the sea that the surface – upon which all compositional

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signs of the island landscape are synthesised – is formed, outlining “sights along the coast of the approaching island... the successive summits of the Peaks Sibado, Lança, Cabras” (Nemésio, 1998: 393). The sea is the great projection plane of all the elements from which the island territory is constructed.

Insularity is born in the sea. The sea is the space in which the profile of each body of land is sketched out, with water serving as its surface of projection and permeation. These sensory markers are reflected in an aqueous atmosphere (clouds, *cherene*,² mist, fog, sea spray), which reinforces an identity of the island space “as the beginning of the world when water, light and the earth were not yet separated by the hand of God” (Brandão, 2009: 54). Instead, there is “[a]bstraction and dream... [o]nly abstraction and fear” (ibid: 58-59): “the world that I know ends here; here in this tremendous isolation, where artificial life is reduced to the minimum, only eternal things last” (ibid: 81).



Figure 9 -Territory consisting of water and land: Angra do Heroísmo and Monte Brasil. ©António Araújo, Terceira, 2016.

Mental mapping of space through visual references

What is alive in front of me is the history, is the past. (Brandão, 2009: 79)

land and sky lent an at once cartographic... aspect. (Nemésio, 1998: 404)

By expanding this research from the field of architecture to the field of literature, it is possible to discover impressions and memories of the Azores in the *persona* that apprehends these

² *Cherene* is an Azorean word for the morning transformation of air into water through its condensation on plants.

islands. Because this space holds a certain visual consistency, however, the results of this article are presented in the (spatialised) form of a memory that persists over time. This continuity shapes the island territory, with nature forming and fusing its constituent components with those built by man. Only the visual markers (eg the bell towers) emerge from this blend of nature and built environment. These markers allow one to appreciate how the verticality of elements – so crucial for guiding people (Lynch, 1960) – has been essential for determining where in the Azores people settled (Vale, 2010, 2012, 2013) and, consequently, has been essential for people's survival on the islands.

The literary works emphasise that images form *beyond* history and are created as part of the seeing/gazing process, in which the subject recurrently and continually receives impressions. That which can be read in the territory thus interferes with the user's apprehension of space, which – in a primordial manner – continually apprehends the environment through the sea/hill relationship: “[b]y nightfall the fields were covered with mist, and Pico rose dull and monumental out of the waters” (Nemésio, 1998: 101). For this reason, the time/space union becomes a referential, content-heavy marker.

The interpretation of both *Ilhas Desconhecidas* and *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale* provides meaning to island images, including elements involved in the construction of the island territory, such as the harmonious orientation of buildings relative to the coast and visual landmarks: “the church tower overlooking the rooftops... stood as fixed symbol of the wave-pounded land from the west-northeast all the way to Point Forcada” (ibid: 378). Equally, physical geography aligns with the built environment, guiding urban layout and navigation:

from Count da Praia da Vitória's manor house, now in ruins, to the church of Our Lady da Penha de França, nestled in Pico da Urze, to the towers of the Fishermen's Basilica in São Mateus, which point toward the oblong and hazy form that is the island of São Jorge, with the tip of Pico peering through lilac clouds behind it. (ibid: 408)

Despite changes in the positioning of the observer, one finds a constantly mutable relationship between land and sea. Motion is constant, not only in the act of walking or roaming but also in the act of navigating, with the gaze moving from one element to the next. Motion becomes a sensory experience of discovery when it is interpreted by the body and granted spatio-temporal associations. Conspicuous landmarks – whether natural (capes and hills) or architectural (unique buildings, such as churches and towers) – rise out of the landscape and the seascape and are essential for mental mapping of the island space.

The emotional impact of arrival and departure, imprinted in memory, harks back to a distant time. As Pires writes:

a journey by sea is a constant unveiling, a genesiac sense of rediscovery when the island gradually takes shape at the bow of our vessel. Brandão captured this feeling that Nemésio felt for the first time. (2009: 15)

These arrivals and departures are linked to contact with the island atmosphere (which continues to be marked by the indistinct co-presence of sea, land, and sky), and motion towards or away from the island incorporates landmarks that are necessary for the referential mental mapping, with “the progress of the ship, the islands move themselves, approaching or moving away from the cliffs. I say goodbye forever to Graciosa – a great plane between two round hills with a white village in the middle” (Brandão, 2009: 65).

Similarly:

some minor sights along the coast of the approaching island [were outlined by] the successive summits of the Peaks Sibado, Lança, Cabras... But Margarida... could only fix her eyes on the topmost portion of the stone carcass of the new church of Lajes. (Nemésio, 1998: 393-394)



Figure 10 - Elements of the genesis of island territory: Angra do Heroísmo and Ilhéu das Cabras. ©António Araújo, Terceira, 2013.

5. Conclusion

This article contributes to an understanding of some parameters (e.g. movement, collective memory, elements of continuity) that can define island spatiality. The analysis focused on three relationships: sea/land, outside/inside and island/island, discussing these with regard to two literary works that support the key relationships I have identified. By juxtaposing these references, I expanded the *terraquée* as a concept, operationalising it and demonstrating its relevance for characterisations of the archipelago as the plane that generates and activates matrix relationships in this territory. I applied the concept of co-visibility to the *terraquée* and linked it to island/island and outside/inside relationships, as a referential matrix supported in conspicuous places that act as spatial mediators. I argue that the concepts of *terraquée* and co-visibility combine in the physical and visual construction of the Azorean territory. The continued relevance of the two literary works considered here becomes clear, as they exhibit features that belong to an intangible heritage that reflects a collective memory. From this perspective, this article asserts a set of relationships that must be regarded as essential for research into island spaces. In conjunction with other insular studies; in particular the ones

referenced in Grydehøj et al (2015), this method of analysis and research could be useful in future studies addressing other insular and coastal contexts.

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