Spatial contestation? – The theological foundations of Carl Schmitt's spatial thought

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ABSTRACT

Carl Schmitt's work on the political is extensively used as an intellectual point of departure in contemporary academic debates about political contestation. More precisely, Carl Schmitt's friend *versus* enemy-distinction is invoked as an essential figuration of political contestation. At the same time, the past few years have seen the attention paid to the spatial thought of Carl Schmitt increase. However, references to the work of Carl Schmitt fail to take the embeddedness of his theories in a complex theological–political–spatial triangle into account. This article aims at joining these readings of Schmitt with regard to the current debate about contestation and space by analyzing the idiosyncratic connection between Carl Schmitt's Catholic faith, especially in the figure of the *katechon*, his theory of the political and his conceptualization(s) of space. The underlying logic of his worldview becomes explicit by reviewing his concepts of (a) the *nomos*, (b) land and sea, (c) the *Großraumordnung*, as well as (d) the Partisan, which form the benchmarks of his work between the 1930s and the 1960s. Against this background we analyze the value of Schmitt's work for the ongoing debate about contestation and space. Our core argument is that his understanding of the spatial–political nexus and his metaphysical worldview stand in contrast to contemporary conceptualizations of spatial–political relationships.

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'... There are neither political ideas without space,
nor – vice versa – spaces or spatial principles without ideas.'
(Schmitt, 1991a, p. 29)

1. Introduction

How can political contestation be conceived in spatial terms? Recent discussions (see Barnett, 2004; Massey, 2005) of this question draw on debates about contestation in general political terms. In this debate the oeuvre of Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) is often understood as the guiding spirit. His friend *versus* enemy-distinction is seen at the heart of political contestation. Besides his political thinking, Schmitt's spatial thought has also received growing attention. Earlier attempts aimed to construe either Schmitt's idea of spatial contestation in analogy to the post-foundationalist positions concerning his friend *versus* enemy-distinction (Mouffe, 2007) or analyzed his spatial thought from a 'geopolitical' or 'political-ideological' point of view with special attention to Schmitt's involvement with the National Socialists (Elden, 2010).

We shall argue that both approaches fall short of analyzing in detail the idiosyncratic relationship between theology, the political, and space in Carl Schmitt's thought. This is why this article suggests that it may be of special interest to review Schmitt's works with an explicit spatial orientation with regard to their value for current debates about spatial contestation.

2. Carl schmitt, contestation and space

Discussions of the concept of political contestation often take Carl Schmitt's friend *versus* enemy-distinction as their starting point. The most prominent voice of the debate on political contestation, Chantal Mouffe (1993, 2000, 2005), draws extensively on Schmitt's understanding of the political, for which the friend *versus* enemy-distinction is the central assumption,[1] as it serves as the basis of her conception of radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987, 2001). But on the whole Mouffe's understanding of Schmitt's work is at least ambivalent, as she thinks 'with Schmitt against Schmitt' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 14). On the one hand she draws on his concept

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[1] For discussions of the intellectual shortcomings and inconsistencies of borrowing Carl Schmitt's concept of the political for contemporary debates about the 'repoliticisation' of politics see Latour (2004) and Chandler (2008). On the relationship between Mouffe and Schmitt, see Desai (2001). Whether Chantal Mouffe is a proponent of so called left-Schmittianism has been subject of another debate: for pro, see e.g. McCormick (1997, p. 170), for contra, see e.g. Krause (2008, p. 158).

of the political and the friend *versus* enemy-distinction, stating that '… Schmitt's emphasis on the ever present possibility of the friend *versus* enemy distinction and the conflictual nature of politics constitutes the necessary starting point for envisaging the aims of democratic politics' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 13–14). Mouffe's emphasis of the constitutive character of irresolvable antagonisms for the establishment of societal order thus follows Schmitt as does her criticism of liberal universalism and of rational models of consensus-building.[2]

On the other hand, she turns against Schmitt by rejecting his focus on an homogeneous national *demos*. Contrary to Schmitt, who '… saw an insurmountable contradiction between liberal pluralism and democracy' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 14), Mouffe claims that a plurality of antagonisms is also to be found within democratic societies, whereas Schmitt restricts the political to relations between states.[3] For her, intrastate pluralism is the basis of 'the permanence of conflict and antagonism' (Mouffe, 2000, p. 33), and a constitutive characteristic of democratic societies. Against Carl Schmitt, Mouffe tries to establish a pluralist, radical-democratic model of politics, which is inspired by Schmitt's friend *versus* enemy-distinction.

The reception of Mouffe's understanding of the political as '… space of power, conflict and antagonism' (2005a,b, p. 9) has recently inspired an extension of the contestation-debate to the spatial aspects of contestation. Barnett (2004), in particular, takes critical recourse to Mouffe's Schmitt-inspired concept of the political. The main argument is that Chantal Mouffe's vocabulary of 'closure' and 'exclusion' does not only tend to a spatialization, but also to a territorialization of political practices (Barnett, 2004, p. 506). This, following Barnett, makes her approach vulnerable to the persistence of binary and stable distinctions, which she claims to have overcome by sidelining Schmitt's theological framework. Thus Mouffe – notwithstanding her emphasis on the procedural character of social formations – is criticized for developing a too restrictive and one-dimensional picture of how spaces are 'produced' and for neglecting the plurality of generative and dynamic spatial practices (Featherstone, 2008, p. 50–55) as well as the [vagueness of] quotidian 'productions' of spaces (Massey, 2005, p. 154).

The attention paid to the spatial aspects of Carl Schmitt's work, which had long been neglected, has recently increased (Ronge, 2008; Hooker, 2009; Legg, 2011). When authors address the spatial–political nexus in the work of Carl Schmitt, they usually identify him as a 'classical' geopolitical thinker (see van Laak, 2000; Osterhammel, 2000; Chandler, 2008). While it should not be denied that Carl Schmitt was familiar with the writings of Halford Mackinder (see Schmitt, 2003, p. 37), Karl Haushofer or Friedrich Ratzel, in our view Schmitt does not fit into the camp of geopolitical authors. Schmitt, living in the heyday of geopolitical discourses, avoided the term 'geopolitics' in his writings which, moreover, do not provide conclusive evidence for the geo-determinism typical of the 'classical' geopolitics of his time. If one followed a broader understanding of geopolitics Schmitt's spatial writings could arguably be subsumed under this label, however, his highly original and idiosyncratic understanding of the relation-

ship between space and politics deserves a more differentiated investigation which this articles hopes to provide. Thus Schmitt does not look at this relationship from a merely strategic or power-oriented point of view, because this is precluded by his assertions about the relationship between theology, the political and space. In stark contrast to many geopolitical thinkers, such as Kjellen or Haushofer, Schmitt's thoughts are not guided by the geopolitical belief that the mastery of space is necessary to reach certain political goals – as some authors and politicians (see the discussion in Linder (2008)) imputed to him when he formulated his *Großraum* theory; Schmitt did not even follow the idea that politics revolves around the competition for space.[4] Except for his differentiation between 'land' and 'sea', which has to be understood from his theological point of view (see below), Schmitt has very rarely discussed the direct influence of concrete spatial references on policy and diplomacy.[5]

While we do not consider Schmitt as a 'classical' geopolitical thinker, nor, like Stuart Elden (2010, p. 24), read the spatial aspects of his work through the lens of Schmitt's political views, we claim that Carl Schmitt's main trajectory throughout his work is his belief in the interrelationship between space and the political. This features his own politicization of space, in which the friend *versus* enemy-distinction is spatialized by connecting the respective antagonists to the qualities of certain spaces.[6] Against this background this article aims to contribute to the current debate about contestation and space by analyzing the idiosyncratic connection between Carl Schmitt's Catholic faith, his theory of the political and his conceptualization(s) of space.

Our hypothesis is that the reference to Carl Schmitt as the guiding spirit of the concept of spatial contestation is highly problematic in at least three different respects: First, the theological basis of the political and the conception of space as its corollary are often ignored. In our reading the spatial–political nexus, which is crucial for Schmitt's writings, has to be seen in the light of his '… implicit theology of the political' (Assmann, 2002, p. 16).[7] Second, the friend *versus* enemy-distinction is mostly discussed without taking its positioning within Schmitt's entire worldview into account. This does not only foreclose a more thorough discussion of his work, but also shapes the way the friend *versus* enemy-distinction is employed in the contestation debate: isolated from its conceptual context and thus devoid of considerable portions of its meaning. Third, Schmitt's understanding of space does not go beyond a 'methodological territorialism' (Jessop et al., 2008, p. 391) and does not take into account that political contestation can take place in multiple forms of spatialities. Therefore the intention of this paper is to restructure the discussion of Carl Schmitt's influence on the contestation and space debate by paying attention to the theological–political–spatial triangle at the heart of Schmitt's thought. The conceptual fundament for this idiosyncratic connection was laid in his essays *Politische Theologie*

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[2] Mouffe rejects political theories which either understand political decisions as results of deliberative negotiations (Habermas, 1992, 1996) or propose a 'third way' beyond the antagonism of left and right (Giddens, 1994, 1998). From Mouffe's point of view, both approaches negate the political, because they focus on rationally modeled consensus instead of the friend versus enemy-distinction.

[3] It may be noted that Schmitt did in fact not limit the political to interstate relations. In the 1932-edition of 'Der Begriff des Politischen' (Schmitt, 2007) he hanged the scope of the political in comparison to the 1927-edition (Schmitt, 1927). In the latter he saw the political as a subject matter of its own, whereas in the former he regarded it as 'no subject matter of its own, but only [as describing] the level of intensity of association or dissociation of people, whose motives are religious, national (in the ethnic or cultural sense), economic […].' (Schmitt, 1996, p. 38) This shift of meaning relates the political to domestic politics and also covers civil war (Meier, 1998, p. 31).

[4] The concept of 'Großraum' was criticized by many national socialist authors including the SS-officers Werner Best and Reinhard Höhn. Their criticism focused mainly on the lack of his 'biological', 'racial' and 'völkische' orientation (cf. Blindow, 1999, p. 91–106; Mehring, 2009, p. 396).

[5] Stuart Elden has recently (2010) elaborated on the problems with 'reading Schmitt geopolitically'. Elden suggests that Schmitt does not have much to add to debates about geopolitics, and that he needs to be read against the background of his political engagement with and his intellectual corroboration of the Nazi-regime before he can be even considered as a geopolitical thinker. We claim that for the debate about space and contestation Schmitt's thought is determined by his theological, not by his political views, which have – in contrast to the political background of his spatial thought – seldom been discussed.

[6] This move could be regarded as part of the above mentioned broadly understood geopolitics (see Agnew, 2010 for the portrayal of the 'struggle for souls' of the Catholic Church as an example of such broadly understood, unconventional geopolitics).

[7] See also Meier (1994, 1998). For a rather critical review, see McCormick (1997), who states, that Meier '…too heavily emphasizes Schmitt's faith.' See also Noack (1996), Pesch (1999), Maurer (2002), Ojakangas (2007), and Dean (2007).

(Schmitt, 2004 [1922]) and in *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1996, 2007 [1932]) and, with regard to its spatial aspects, expressed in *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung* (1991 [1941]), *Land und Meer* (2008, 2001 [1942]), *Der Nomos der Erde* (Schmitt, 1997, 2003 [1950]), and *Theorie des Partisanen* (2006 [1963]) which we will discuss in turn.

3. The theological–political–spatial nexus

Carl Schmitt's self-understanding as a jurist, which makes him approach space from a perspective of order and juridification, and his theological approach are his starting points for making space a central axiom of his understanding of the political. Schmitt (2003, p. 37–39) separated the juridical mode of thought from the geographical one. In this way the spatial references, which can be detected in his publications, have to be seen from the juridical point of view and are not to be read as pronounced geopolitical statements, but include a politicization of space. In stark contrast to geopolitical contextualization and geo-coding, the references to space in the oeuvre of Carl Schmitt have to be placed in direct connection with the basic notion of the political, which Schmitt defined as the 'distinction [...] between friend and enemy' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 26).

Schmitt's writings drafted a 'grand theory' from the viewpoint of a pious Catholic, unfolding a historical meta-narrative of the changes of global order. Spatial references are always religiously grounded and mirror his understanding of the political. Here, Schmitt's particular interest is to oppose the dialectic of Karl Marx with another dialectic; while Marx underlines the primacy of the economy, Schmitt views the political as the proper motor of history and its unfolded dialectic, and sees it as being based on the friend *versus* enemy-distinction (see Böckenförde, 1988).[8] For Schmitt (1996, p. 14) it is essential, that each juridical concept is constituted by a necessary dialectical process with its negation, i.e. its negative counterpart. For his construction of certain spaces, moreover, it is important that the political is grounded in a theological worldview.

Thus, in Carl Schmitt's understanding, historical processes follow a specific theological–political dialectic. In this regard it is worth mentioning that his friend *versus* enemy-distinction opposes any universalistic approach. Following Schmitt there always have to be dichotomist spaces, in analogy, which are clearly separated from each other. The political can only unfold its factual power under these conditions – defined as the distinction between friend and enemy. This conviction strongly corresponds to his view that the world is a *pluriversum* in which a multitude of states or other space-bounded political units exist, which in accordance with the political are divided in camps of friends and camps of enemies (Schmitt, 2007).[9] Schmitt thus opposes any universalistic perception of the world as one entity, because this would mean that there is literally not enough space for the political and consequently for the possibility of war anymore:

> 'A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics.' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 35)

The universalism which could overcome the planetarian global *pluriversum* would finally lead to a world state, which Schmitt vigorously rejects. Schmitt perceives the world state as the attempt to '... build the paradise on earth' (Meier, 1998, p. 55),

which is – from his theological point of view – fatal and doomed to failure. For the political theologian 'paradise' refers to the kingdom to come, which must not be realized in this life.

Against this looming universalism Schmitt emplaces the *katechon* or the 'restrainer',[10] which is a motif taken from the New Testament. In the Second Letter of Paul to the believers in Thessalonica it says:

> 'Now you know what is restraining him, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness already works. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way' (2 Thess. 2: 6–7).

Embedded in the belief in the advent of the Last Judgment, this letter first refers to the apostasy of human beings from God and then to the appearance of the antichrist, who rebels against God. In this respect the *katechon*, either to be interpreted as the Christian faith or as the secular order of the Roman Empire, serves as the restrainer of the antichrist. Schmitt defines the *katechon* as '... the power which prevents the long-due apocalyptic end of the world to come' (1995d, p. 436). In this way the advent of the Last Judgment is understood as being postponed, and apostasy as prevented. This argument is essential for the personal worldview of Carl Schmitt:

> 'The belief that a restrainer holds back the end of the world provides the only bridge between the notion of an eschatological paralysis of all human events and a tremendous historical monolith like that of the Christian Empire of the Germanic kings.' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 60; see Schmitt, 2009)

For Schmitt universalism does not only mean an unrealistic and utopian project, but, moreover, provokes the advent of the antichrist. From the perspective of Schmitt, the political theologian, the assertion of universalism implies the dawning of the end of the world.

The role of *Großraum*, which he developed in the early 1940s, as well as the role of the partisan, to which he dedicated a book in the later stages of his work (2006 [1963]), should especially be seen in the light of this theological perspective. Hence *Großraum* as well as the partisan take on the adapted role of the *katechon*, who necessarily has to exist in order to resist the dominant global order. Carl Schmitt even doubts that '... any historical concept other than *katechon* would have been possible for the original Christian faith' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 60). Moreover, the importance of this motif for the worldview of Carl Schmitt is reflected in the following entry in his diary of December 19, 1947: 'I believe in the *katechon*: to me, he is the only way to understand history as a Christian and to regard it as meaningful' (Schmitt, 1991b, p. 63). For Christians a globally united ecumenism under the banner of universalism dispenses with any historical meaning. To put it bluntly universalism is, in the eyes of Carl Schmitt, an ahistorical, unpolitical and spatially empty thought. In the above-mentioned entry of his diaries Schmitt further claims: 'One needs to be able to name the *katechon* for each epoch of the past 1948 years. The position has never been vacant; otherwise we would not exist anymore' (Schmitt, 1991b, p. 63). In other words: In respect to every concrete historical situation a power must always have existed which took on the role of the *katechon*. Otherwise the course of history could not have taken place. This is the only way that the political-spatial nexus could continue to exist.

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[8] In the postscript to 'Land and Sea' (2008 [1942]) Schmitt explicitly refers to Hegel and Marx.

[9] Inspired by Schmitt, Chantal Mouffe (2005a, p. 115, 2005b, 2007) also suggests a multipolar world order (see below).

[10] See Grossheutschi (1996), Meuter (1994), Motschenbacher (2000), Palaver (2007) and Hell (2009).

4. Order and locating

Schmitt's intellectual understanding of space derives from his worldview. Thus he assigns certain qualities to space, which feed the dynamics of the political and explains the interrelationship between idea and space with the example of the difference between iconography and iconoclasm:

'The different views and conceptions of the world which originated from the different religions, traditions, historical backgrounds, and social organizations form narrow spaces. Memories of a historical past, sagas, myths, legends, symbols, and taboos, abbreviations and expressions of thought, feeling, and speech, all this, in sum, shapes the iconography of a certain space. By recognizing its geographical spatiality, this iconography appears to be located and historically concrete' (Schmitt, 1995e, p. 526).

The very fact that a certain iconography always exists, immediately includes its counter-possibility – namely, '. . . iconoclasm' (Schmitt, 1995e, p. 527). In other words, iconography without iconoclasm is unthinkable. A dialectic process evolves due to this mutual dependence which structures history and which determines the conditions of human fate. As iconography and iconoclasm are mutually exclusive, they remain in a genuinely political relationship with each other.

Carl Schmitt's spatial thought is always materialized. In this way he rejects the concept of an empty space, as it was pronounced in the transition from the theology of the 16th century to the metaphysics of the 17th century. This rejection of the *horror vacui* has to be seen in line with his strong Catholic faith. For him a non-material space was not only unthinkable but, much more, the expression of the void of death, of a nihilistic understanding of the world (see Schmitt, 2001, p. 34–35; also Schmitt, 1991a).[11] Thus, his understanding of space as a materialized container-space – with other words, as a territory – is rooted in his theological worldview.

In Schmitt's thought the coherence and analogy of space and politics is essential, as '. . . every basic order is a spatial order' (Schmitt, 2001, p. 37). Carl Schmitt's core assumption is that juridical perceptions must be traced back to a materialized space: 'Law is bound to the earth and related to the earth' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 42). He hereby stresses that societal order is always mirrored in a spatial locating, in a territory: '[T]he solid ground of the earth is delineated by fences, enclosures, boundaries, walls, houses, and other constructs. Then, the orders and orientations of human social life become apparent' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 42). This is why Carl Schmitt sees 'the great primeval acts of law' as 'terrestrial orientations' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 44); among these grand acts he counts the appropriation of land, the foundation of cities and the establishment of colonies (see Schmitt, 2003, p. 44). To bolster this close interrelationship of 'order and locating', Schmitt traces the term *nomos* back to a '. . . constitutive act of spatial ordering' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 70), or in other words:

'*Nomos* is the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated; it is also the form of political, social, and religious order determined by this process. Here, measure, order, and form constitute a spatially concrete unity.' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 70)

However, the emphasis of the spatial dimension has to be seen in the light of the political. Thus, the notion of the political remains pervasive in the thought of Carl Schmitt. This is why certain spatial arrangements which Schmitt developed in his work were time and

again adapted to his new thoughts on the political. If Schmitt connoted the political with the territorially organized nation state in his early work, the political-spatial nexus later culminated in his theory of *Großraum* and in the dichotomy of 'land' and 'sea'. In his final work he binds the political to the telluric character of the partisan. So the notion of the political is always spatially grounded in the oeuvre of Carl Schmitt. With his adaptations of the political he also changed the spatial references of the political. Hence, in his view the political always needs one specific spatial mirroring.

5. Land and sea

In the eyes of Carl Schmitt the earth-bond is essential for the development of a normative judgement of political dichotomies. Hence Schmitt differentiates fundamentally between 'Land and Sea' (2001). Hereby the *nomos* of the earth refers to the solid land, while the free sea remains '. . . outside any specific state spatial order' (Schmitt, 2003, p. 172):

'The *sea* knows no such apparent unity of space and law, of order and orientation. [. . .] On the sea, fields cannot be planted and firm lines cannot be engraved. Ships that sail across the sea leave no trace. On the waves there is nothing but waves.' (2003: 13)

Relying on this dichotomist differentiation of the surface of the earth, Carl Schmitt developed the bottom line for his order of international law, which sediments itself in different models of ruling. Herewith Schmitt provided a theologically inspired overarching theory which had been absent half a century earlier in debates on the advantages and disadvantages of sea powers and land powers, involving Halford Mackinder (1904) and Alfred Th. Mahan (1890).[12]

Schmitt's antagonism between 'land' and 'sea' is based on the notion of the political, in other words on the distinction between 'friend' and 'enemy' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 26; see also Koselleck, 2000, p. 258). If 'land' and 'sea' are to be understood as being based on the notion of the political, they will appear as antithetic powers which should not be reduced to their geographical characteristics. 'Land' and 'sea' rather represent antagonistic worldviews, which form historical processes in a dialectic manner. In this respect 'land' and 'sea' can also be read as a theologically grounded antagonism and, as powers, form a historical process which is based on a political-theological dialectic.

To demonstrate this dialectic thought on the example of 'land' and 'sea', Carl Schmitt (2003, p. 49) refers to a quotation of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel:

'Just as the earth, the firm and *solid ground*, is a precondition of the principle of family life, so is the *sea* the natural element of industry, whose relations with the external world it enlivens.'[13] (Hegel, 1991, p. 268)

The family is associated with the 'land', which is reflected in the solid elements of soil and land, while the industries are connoted with the 'sea' as an invigorating element. Starting from this Hegelian antithesis[14] of 'land' and 'sea', Carl Schmitt adds additional

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[11] In 'La Production de l'Espace' Henri Lefebvre reaches a similar conclusion, but from a Marxist perspective, when he writes that '. . . space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154).

[12] How strongly Carl Schmitt's essential spatial differentiation continues to stimulate philosophical discussions becomes obvious in the binary coding of the '... plain and the crenated spaces' as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari (1997): 'The sea is the smooth space of all, but in spite of this it is confronted with the challenge of a gradually intensifying, rigorous indentation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p. 664).

[13] On the relationship between Hegel and Schmitt see Ottmann (1995) and Mehring (1989).

[14] Schmitt is inspired by the following thought of Hegel: 'By exposing the pursuit of gain to danger, industry simultaneously rises above it; and for the ties of the soil and the limited circles of civic life with its pleasures and desires, it substitutes the element of fluidity, danger and destruction.' (Hegel, 1991, p. 268).

antitheses which round off his overall worldview: Civic life and its consolidation are opposed to profit-maximization, which he connotes with the element of the fluid, and to the consumption of enjoyments as well as cupidity in civic life, which he connotes with the perils of sinking emanating from the sea. The thesis of the clod of land is contrasted by the antithesis of fluidity.

The ideas of 'land' and 'sea' oppose each other. In other words, 'land' and 'sea' represent a spatialized 'friend' *versus* 'enemy' constellation, which is expressed in the *war* between land and sea. In the continuing confrontation between land powers and sea powers Schmitt clarifies the antithetic confrontation of space and counter-space as well as of idea and counter-idea: 'World history is the history of the wars waged by maritime powers against land or continental powers' (Schmitt, 2001, p. 5, see also Schmitt, 1995a, p. 395). In this way, a historical process is ignited by the dialectic of 'land' and 'sea'. The foundation of this historical process is the political; in the thought of Carl Schmitt neither history nor the political would exist without this dialectic. This is why Carl Schmitt views 'land' and 'sea' as global–historical as well as political powers.[15]

'Land' and 'sea' characterize two orders, which are situated in a political relationship with each other: On the one hand the liberal, universal lawless worldview of the sea power, the British Empire, which finds its expression in the borderless and fluctuating sea; on the other hand the ordered, safe, bordered and earth-bound worldview of continental Europe. They are differently spatialized. This container-like divide can be read as a metaphor of confrontation between the continent and the British Empire.

Schmitt draws a dichotomist global order in which economic, political and mental structures are represented by an overall pattern of spatial representation. In this respect Schmitt interprets the wars between Spain and England as the conflict between land and sea, which expresses the underlying conflict between the idea of global Catholicism and that of global Protestantism (Schmitt, 2001, p. 40–42; 1995a,b,c,d,e):

'Thus, the struggle for the ownership of the new Earth turned into a struggle between Reformation and Counter-Reformation, between the world Catholicism of the Spaniards, and the world Protestantism of the Huguenots, the Dutch and the English.' (Schmitt, 2001, p. 42)

Schmitt understands Catholicism as an idea bound to the land, which he translated into the iconography of the partisan in his later work; this idea opposes Protestantism as its antithesis defined in naval terms. In other words, the idea of the iconography of the 'land', Catholicism, is the counter-idea to the iconoclasm of the 'sea', with its idea of Protestantism. Catholicism and Protestantism constitute idea and counter-idea, which are assigned either to the space of the 'land' or to the space of the 'sea'. They are positioned in a dialectic relationship and hence constitute a political relationship: 'Land' and 'sea' represent two dichotomized spaces of ideas, which challenge each other; Schmitt localizes the political in them. Here the spatialization of Schmitt's most basic ideas becomes obvious. Only the deterministic relationship between spatialized ideas enables a political decision concerning 'friend' and 'enemy' and establishes the arena in which the political can unfold its virulence. It can be concluded that 'land' and 'sea' are supported by diverging orders in the eyes of Carl Schmitt. The order of the 'sea' negates that of the 'land': the freedom of the 'sea' is contrasted with the solid 'land'. Thus Schmitt identifies two orders within international law: the international law of the 'sea' and the international law

of the 'land' (Schmitt, 1958, p. 381–382). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Carl Schmitt did not reduce 'land' and 'sea' to their physical-geographical existence, but used this dichotomy much more as a metaphor of the dialectic of the respective ideas.[16]

6. From the nation state to *Großraum*

Viewing the state, Schmitt diagnoses that '… the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 19). From Schmitt's point of view the notion of the political is not even able to exist without the state; Schönberger writes about Carl Schmitt's approach: 'The political is not to be regarded through the prism of the state, the state must be grasped via the political' (Schönberger, 2003, p. 21). First on, Carl Schmitt sees the political and therefore the state in an international context; the friend *versus* enemy-distinction occurs in the interstate sphere. Only in his later work Carl Schmitt switched from an interstate to an intrastate focus in his discussion of the political, when he adapted the notion of the political to civil wars and the partisan – as we will elaborate below.

In *Nomos der Erde* Schmitt's main point of reference is the territory of the state. He argues – from an Eurocentric approach – that the establishment of order between the 16th and 19th century in Europe could only be achieved by providing a 'space of exception' outside Europe. Hereby Schmitt elaborates yet another dichotomist world order: the European domain, in which a political order, which finds its expression in the containment of war, was established, against the rest of the world, in which especially the sea powers could let off the steam of their 'boundless' aspirations, a world in which the colonial and imperial powers did not have to follow any rules or regulations.[17] Here again, the thoughts of Carl Schmitt were guided by his belief in a coherence of space and idea: The 'state of exception' has to be expressed in a 'space of exception'.[18]

In the course of the final stages of the exploration of the globe and the change of power relations, however, Schmitt was convinced that this spatial order had come to an end. Here he identifies the Monroe Doctrine (1823) as a critical change which terminated the era of the treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which – following Schmitt – had put the first political order outside Europe into place. This new order did not concentrate on the territory of one state anymore, but on the Western hemisphere altogether. In other words, the order of Europe, which had been dependent on a 'space of exception' outside Europe, could not be maintained anymore. Starting from this assumption Schmitt developed his *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde* Mächte (translating this title is difficult, Elden's (2010, p. 19) suggestion is very useful: *International Law of Großraum-Ordering with a Prohibition on Intervention for Extra-Regional Powers: A Contribution to the Concept of Reich in International Law*).[19] For Schmitt this spatial revision resulted from the crisis of the state, which more precisely meant the crisis of the political (which is located in the state-territorial nexus): 'That the outdated

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[15] Here it becomes obvious that Carl Schmitt conceptualized his treatise on 'land and sea' in accordance with Jacob Burckhardt's (1983) world-historical account in his 'Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen', which he already indicated in the subtitle of 'land and sea'. On the relationship of Schmitt and Burckhardt see Meier (1998, p. 67).

[16] In the same vein Schmitt paraphrases the French admiral Raoul Castex '… that the land expanded into the sea' (Schmitt, 1995c, p. 253).

[17] Of course, Schmitt is conveying a very simple picture of the world here: Neither can Europe be characterized as a state-organized continent of harmony and ordered wars during the 19th century, nor were rules and regulations absent outside of Europe.

[18] See here the discussion on how Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2000, 2005) refers to Carl Schmitt in his conceptualization of the 'state of exception' and the emergence of the homo sacer. Deviating from Schmitt Agamben understands topological space not as necessary condition, but only as potential materialization of the state of exception (see Belcher et al., 2008).

[19] The theory on Großraum is discussed in Schmoeckel (1994), Blindow (1999) and Voigt (2008).

concept of the state in international law does not correspond to truth or reality has long come to the fore' (Schmitt, 1991a, p. 55; see also Schmitt, 1996, p. 10). The crisis of the notion of the state reflects, moreover, the crisis of order. In the understanding of Schmitt the state-centred order of Europe had been undergoing a process of decline since the middle of the 19th century. As soon as a concrete order experiences changes, its grounding location has to be modified. The concrete order, which was previously a state order, does not allow for the perception of the state as a factor which orders history anymore; the spatial order consisting of state territories has become obsolete. Thus we can observe in his concept of *Großraumordnung* that politics determines space: The changing political order leads to a change in the political figuration (from 'state' to '*Reich*') and accordingly in its spatial expressions (from 'state territory' to '*Großraum*').[20] Schmitt's concept of *Großraum*, moreover, again reflects his theological approach, which defines his understanding of the political.[21] Thus the concept of *Großraum* is opposed to the assertion of a universal, liberal global order, which he ascribes to the 'sea' (and accordingly to the British Empire). Schmitt defines *Großraum* as the following:

> 'With regard to our *Großraum* it becomes obvious that the mathematically-neutral, empty concept of space has been overcome and replaced by a qualitative-dynamical parameter: *Großraum*, originating from a comprehensive, contemporary tendency of development, is a domain of human planning, organization and agency' (Schmitt, 1991a, p. 14, see also 76).

Schmitt hereby puts the functionality, the output of the *Großraum* in the centre of his definition, and not the belief in a cultural hegemony. While Schmitt assumes that a *hegemon* exists in each *Großraum*, his position remains blurred concerning the relationship between the *hegemon* and other political organizations and powers in this *Großraum*. However, after the end of the Cold War and the currently discussed decline of the American empire it is not surprising that Carl Schmitt's *pluriverse* world order, divided by a handful of functional *Großräume* – although the terminology is outdated – is being intensely discussed once again (see Habermas, 2004; Todorov, 2003; Khanna, 2008; Zakaria, 2008). In this line of thought also Chantal Mouffe's (2005a, p. 115, 2005b, 2007) concept of a 'multipolar' world order might be regarded as a rather uncritical reading of Schmitt's *Großraum*. Even though she does not use the term *Großraum* herself, her argument for a multipolar world order – an attempt to save the pluriverse character of the world – based on the deeply pluralist character of the world is inspired by 'Schmitt's vision of a multipolar world order' (Mouffe, 2005b) best expressed in his writings on *Großraum*.[22]

Carl Schmitt's dichotomist thought on the notion of the political is illustrated by a dichotomist spatial order: The 'land' *versus* 'sea' dichotomy, as well as the organization of states or *Großräume*

along clearly defined territories, bolster an argumentation along the line of a zero-sum-game understanding of politics. Space appears as a limited resource which is non-negotiable, but belongs to the 'friend' or the 'enemy'. Any hybrid status is unthinkable.

7. The partisan

In the concluding arguments of *Großraumordnung* Carl Schmitt already underlines that a shift in the mastery of space is under way. Here again, Schmitt's trend of thought starts from confrontation, or from war. His argument is that with the emergence of aerial warfare, the days of classical warfare and its spatially grounded strategies are over. Schmitt labels this change a 'revolution of space' (Schmitt, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, p. 28–29). The first 'revolution of space' occurred in the transition from the 16th to the 17th century as a result of the circumnavigation of the world and the establishment of a new worldview. Due to this 'planetary revolution' (Schmitt, 1995a, p. 398) a re-alignment and spatial redistribution of the planet took place, which caused the rise of the British Empire, in the course of which the British island underwent an important spatial re-orientation, because it '… divorced its marriage with the continent and got a new one with the ocean' (Schmitt, 1995a, p. 397). In the era of the mastery of airspace by new technologies, which according to Schmitt's diagnosis began with the Second World War, a new 'revolution of space' was under way which was much 'larger and deeper' (Schmitt, 1995a, p. 398) than the previous one. Besides land and sea, therefore, airspace now (un-) limits human agency. In this way the coherence or 'order and location' which formed the basis for the political in Carl Schmitt's thought is undergoing a dramatic change.

This drastic challenge is amplified by the mass production of nuclear weapons, because the confrontation between 'friend' and 'enemy' is undergoing a substantial shift. In other words, war can now happen anywhere and any time. The political order, rooted in binary codes and in a binary order of space, is gone. For Schmitt, the political has to be transformed at that moment in time due to the possibility of mutual destruction by the nuclear potential of the superpowers: while the political constitutes – via its friend *versus* enemy-distinction – a 'real enmity', nuclear weapons create the situation of an 'absolute enmity' (Schmitt, 2006). Strictly speaking, it is less the technical potential and hence the '… existence of the means of destruction' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 95) than the danger which follows from morally devaluing the victims (see Schmitt, 2006, p. 95): Before the new means of destruction can be used, the enemy has to be declared '… as wholly criminal and inhuman, […] as being completely worthless' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 95). The intention of the concept of 'absolute enmity' is tantamount to excluding the enemy from humankind. In other words, the premise of a nuclear war is the moralization of the war, which leads to the foundation of 'absolute enmity' and, finally, to total destruction.[23] In Schmitt's understanding such moral categories are, however, not relevant for the political, but they suspend the political. In the light of 'absolute enmity' emerging, Schmitt consequently challenges the notion of 'enemy' and 'enmity': 'Enmity will be so terrifying that one perhaps mustn't even speak any longer of the enemy or of enmity, and both words will have be outlawed and damned fully before the work of annihilation can begin' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 95). A moral condemnation leading to complete destruction is not suitable for the development of a 'friend *versus* enemy' relationship, which is not based on absolute, but on real enmity (Schmitt, 2006, p. 93). When one is not able to name one's 'real enemy' anymore, or even

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[20] Schmitt's interest in the Großraum as a new political order probably has to be seen against the background of the national-socialist policies in the 1930s and his active involvement in the NSDAP from 1933 to 1936 (see Elden, 2010).

[21] In his Großraumordnung the Deutsche Reich emerges as the new katechon; Schmitt states that '... the Deutsche Reich was situated in the middle of Europe, between the universalism of the liberal-democratic, assimilating peoples of the West and the bolshevist and world-revolutionary peoples of the East, and had to defend the holiness of a non-universalist, volkhaft, respecting other peoples [völkerachtenden] order of life.' (Schmitt, 1991a, p. 51)

[22] Her argument is directed against liberal cosmopolitanism, represented for example by Ulrich Beck (Beck, 1993, 2004, 2007; Beck and Grande, 2004), David Held and Daniele Archibugi (Held, 1995; Archibugi, 2008; Archibugi and Held, 1995), and against Jürgen Habermas's hypothesis of the juridification of international relations through the 'constitutionalization of international law' (Habermas, 2004; see also Walker, 2006). According to Mouffe the above mentioned views are erratic and need to be abandoned: 'The central problem with the diverse forms of cosmopolitanism is that they all postulate […] the availability of a form of consensual governance transcending the political, conflict and negativity.' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 106)

[23] This moralization of war is reflected in the ongoing discussion about 'just war', which accompanies the 'war on terror' as well as the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (see Walzer, 2006; Patterson, 2009).

when the enemy is completely destroyed, the historical process, which gains its 'dynamic' from the political, will have come to its final end.

In this very moment, in which any political order is at risk, Schmitt sees the partisan as the socio-spatial representation of the political. In his eyes, the partisan is the last man standing for the authentic life in a world, where the notion of the political coincides with a concrete space. Schmitt traces the partisan's ability to adopt this role back to his political character. Thus the partisan is the last man to have '… a real, but not an absolute enemy' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 93). The partisan does not act in accordance with moral measures, but in accordance with the criterion of the political. In this way the partisan defines a 'real enemy', and is ready to fight against him. This enemy is not characterized as somebody who '…has to be got out of the way for a [moral] reason and who has to be destroyed because of his worthlessness' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 87). It is much more the case that the 'real enemy' and the one who declares him to be the enemy determine each other. In this way the capability of 'real enmity' is required for gaining a sense of oneself, because '… the enemy stands on my own level. Therefore I have to deal with him fighting, in order to gain my own measure, my own boundaries, my own stature' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 87–88). Hence Schmitt elevates the relation of mutual recognition to the basis of the political. In other words, friend and enemy are engaged in an inter-subjective relationship. Consequently the conflict with the enemy is the basis for the emergence of one's own identity. This becomes essential for Schmitt's understanding of enmity. 'Absolute enmity' does not only destroy the enemy, but also the one who is responsible for committing this destruction.

This political character of the partisan, who is distinguished by his ability for 'real enmity', is mirrored in a spatial anchoring. Again Carl Schmitt refers to the contrast between 'land' and 'sea'. He hereby underlines the 'telluric character' of the Partisan, which:

'… connects him with the soil, with the autochthon population and the geographical characteristics of the country – mountain, forest, jungle, and desert – in an unabated way. The partisan remains distinguished from the pirate as well as from the corsair, as much as land and sea form different elementary spaces of human work as well as of wars of the nations' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 26–27).

The telluric character of the partisan appears to be necessary, '… to give evidence to the defence, this means to the limitation of enmity and to prevent [one party] from the absolute claim to abstract justice' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 26). Schmitt binds 'real enmity' to the soil, because the telluric represents the defence against the absolute claim to a moral universalism, which will finally lead to total destruction. Hence the telluric character of the partisan ensures the existence of 'real enmity' and the continuation of the world. Against this background '…the partisan always means a real piece of soil; he is one of the last posts on earth as a world-historical element which has not yet been completely destroyed' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 74–75). The partisan takes on a '… more defensive, telluric power of patriotic self-defence against an external conqueror' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 59). This expresses the political character of the partisan and provides him with the necessary legitimacy with respect to his irregular action.

Nevertheless, Schmitt perceives the role of the partisan as being under threat. Technological-industrial progress is contributing to the danger of a de-spatialization due to an increasing mobility. The partisan risks '… to lose his telluric character and to become a transportable and exchangeable means of the powerful centre of global politics, which uses him in open or hidden war and is able to deactivate him under certain circumstances' (Schmitt, 2006, p. 27–28; 78). He becomes part of global politics, which dissolves

his bond to the soil and which de-localizes him. In this way Schmitt states that the path of the partisan from 'real enmity' to 'absolute enmity' has already been paved. After aiming to detect the political order of the world for more than half a century, on the concluding pages of his essay on the *Theorie des Partisanen* Schmitt states that the world will inevitably end in a scenario of global war leading into total enmity and total destruction. In this scenario the strong relationship to the political and the limitation to the own soil will be dissolved.[24]

8. Contestation and space – locating Carl Schmitt in the current debate

Carl Schmitt's spatializations of the political as well as his theory of the political are both based on a metaphysical worldview. This worldview connects theology, the political and space (in an ahistorical way). It is based on the role of the *katechon*, the 'restrainer' of the anti-Christ, as a trajectory throughout history. For Schmitt the *katechon* makes meaningful history possible (for the Christian). Thus the *katechon* can be named for each era of Christian history. The *katechon* is the basis for his conceptualizations of the political and of space. When Schmitt adapted his conceptualizations of space (*nomos*, Großraum, soil), the changes were neither dynamic nor transformative, but analogizing in character: he merely shifted the pairs of opposition, the essence of his ideas remained stable. So, the dialectic between the *katechon* and the respective dominant order keeps history 'going', but it is trapped in the same orbit with changing actors (the state; the partisan etc.). This idea-driven determinism makes it difficult to imagine the relationship between the political and Schmitt's spatializations other than cogently derived.

Debates about contestation do not reflect upon these connections. Chantal Mouffe (2005) discusses particular elements of the theological-political-spatial triangle independently from each other and nearly exclusively concentrates on the friend *versus* enemy-distinction as its political part. She generalizes Schmitt's spatializations (and territorializations) as expressions of inclusion and exclusion without paying sufficient attention to concrete spatializations and their relationship to the theological basis, which she eclipses completely (e.g. Mouffe, 1999, p. 38–53). Mouffe's approach denies that, for Schmitt, concrete spatializations are vital for upholding his worldview, because they are directly derived from his core ideas. As much as she distances herself from Schmitt's theological background she allows his dichotomist spatializations indirectly back into her approach through the assumption of the stability of the division between inclusion and exclusion, even though her concept of antagonism is, in contrast to Schmitt's dichotomist structures, an open-ended process in which the contingency and precarious character of collective identity formations is stressed.

Nevertheless, Mouffe's indirect conceptualizations of space do not significantly go beyond Schmitt's. She does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of space in Schmitt's thought and its deterministic and analogous relationship to his conceptions of the political. Her own spatializations, most notably the multipolar world order (see Mouffe, 2005b, 2007), do not qualitatively differ from Schmitt's dichotomism.

The main difference between the ongoing debate on spatial contestation and Carl Schmitt's thoughts, however, is that in Schmitt's view political contestation takes always place between territorial-

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[24] Especially against the background of the 'new wars' as well as of the assumed threat of 'global terrorism', Schmitt's theory of the partisan has recently become attractive for theory-building; however, it should be mentioned that – due to his telluric character – the significance of Schmitt's understanding of the partisan for the explanation of 'terrorism' remains limited (see de Benoist, 2007; Ulmen, 2007).

ized and essentialised containers reflecting a certain political idea. As Schmitt's thought evolves from a uniform and reductionist core, hybrid, contradicting or paradox elements do not appear in his concepts. Against this background a contestation of space, as advanced in contemporary debates about spatial contestation, is unthinkable for Schmitt. He construes spaces as placeholders for his ideas about the grand lines of world history. For Schmitt, the respective materializations of his ideas always have their concrete spatialization and follow from his metaphysical worldview. The steadfast belief in the analogy of space and the political, strongly influenced by the framework of the nation-state, was dominant at the time of his childhood. Accordingly, Schmitt believes that every political idea finds its analogous expression in territorial arrangements (*nomos*). In contrast to Michel Foucault's (2009) explanation of the territorialization and the geo-coding of modern everyday life with the aim of 'governmentality', Schmitt's worldview is still rooted in thinking along the lines of territorialization as the *nomos* of any social order. Thus, for Schmitt, thinking in territorial containers is not only absolute, but characterizes the political throughout Western cultural history.

This stands in full contrast to the contemporary debate, which portrays 'space' as pluralist, fluid and dynamic (see Amin, 2002; Marston, 2000; Featherstone, 2008; Massey, 2005). While the grand narrative of Schmitt resembles a closed system, in which ideas, politics and materialized space reach coherence, current research underlines the heterodoxy and the contradictions of socio-spatial relations (e.g. Agnew, 2003). Thus Sheppard (2002), Leitner et al. (2008) and Jessop et al. (2008) argue that there is not a single dimension of socio-spatial relations – as Schmitt believes – but multiple ways to analyze how political contestation is interrelated with space. In contemporary debates, contestation has been most prominently theorized in the light of scale – as 'politics of scale' (Smith, 1993) or 'scalar politics' (MacKinnon, 2010). Other authors (Routledge, 1996, 2000; Escobar, 2001; Massey, 2005; Dikeç, 2007), however, have investigated the 'politics of place', while other strands of research focus on how spatial politics is connected to networks (see Featherstone, 2008; Routledge, 2003), to positionality (Sheppard, 2002) or to mobility (Sheller and Law, 2006). Against this discussion on multiple spatialities, Schmitt's belief in the one and only truth about the analogy of politics and territorialized space turns out as an anachronism of the heyday of a world ordered by nation-states. Thus Schmitt's approach, which argues that political contestation is always limited to fixed and stable spatial containers, can be viewed as a perfect example of 'methodological territorialism' (Jessop et al., 2008, p. 391). Thus the connection between space, the political and contestation in Schmitt's thought – for which he does not provide reasons other than the essentialisation of ideas in territories – has to be questioned. This is why Schmitt's thoughts can hardly contribute any intellectually stimulating impulse to the contemporary discussion on spatial contestations which is also the case for geopolitical debates (Elden, 2010).[25]

However, the current debate of spatial contestation shares the belief with Schmitt that space is a product of interrelations and is in this way 'always under construction' (Massey, 2005, p. 9). In particular, the localization of the political and, herewith, of the 'friend *versus* enemy' constellation depends on concrete ideas. In contrast to contemporary constructions of space Schmitt ideational basis is foundationalist, as it is derived from his theological approach. For Carl Schmitt locating the political in the territorialized *modi* of (a) the territorial nation state, (b) the *Großraum*, (c) the dichotomy of 'land' and 'sea' as well as (d) the telluric existence

of the partisan is only possible under the precondition that space is connected to a certain idea. In analogy to Schmitt's claim that every idea refers to a counter-idea, every space also refers to a particular counter-space. Thus, the argumentation of a friend *versus* enemy-distinction is made explicit in spatial terms. One could argue that Carl Schmitt – in full contrast to classical geopolitical authors of his time – follows a constructivist approach, in which his particular understanding of the world determines his production of concrete spaces and the politicization of space. Space does not contain a constant meaning *per se*, but ideas are forming our perceptions of space: 'There are neither political ideas without space, nor – vice versa – spaces or spatial principles without ideas' (Schmitt, 1991a, p. 29); in Schmitt's case it is the idea of the *katechon*. Thus Carl Schmitt's understanding of the relationship between space and the political comes close to Doreen Massey's statement '… that thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute for political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political' (Massey, 2005, p. 9).

9. Conclusion

Taking into account that the structure of Carl Schmitt's thought is at odds with the contemporary debate about spatial contestations, one reason for the attention currently paid to him – apart from the fact that Schmitt's work today is mostly discussed as an inspiring source against liberal mainstream political theory – is his belief in the analogy of 'ordering and locating'. Any political thinker still somehow longing for a clear order, for coherence of or at least for a correspondence of politics and space, is well advised to turn to Carl Schmitt. He was perhaps the last great proponent of such a view, typical of the era of the nation-state. This is where the spatial contestation-debate takes off and reading Schmitt helps to understand this intellectual point of departure. Even though many of Carl Schmitt's answers may by now have become obsolete, many of the questions he raised continue to matter and are yet to be solved (Maschke, 1995, p. XXVII). This points to the need for a new set of categories: in contrast to Schmitt's belief in the analogy of 'ordering and locating', 'hybrid' and 'overlapping' conceptualizations of the 'spatial-political nexus' have to be developed to give contestation a spatial expression. If one aim of the contestation and space debate is to bring about radical, qualitative change with regard to a more complex conceptualization of the relationship between politics and space, Carl Schmitt will not lead the way forward. Nevertheless, his writings are an important source in order to show where the path of the political-spatial nexus departed from.

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[25] Stuart Elden concludes that Schmitt's spatial thought, which falsely remains 'seductive', does not have much to add to current debates about geopolitics. He argues that '… [t]he seductiveness is that [Schmitt] seems to transcend his circumstances and political views, when remaining deeply rooted in them.' (Elden, 2010, p. 24)

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