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# instantaneity/depthlessness

We live, some say, in spatial times. There is an imagination of globalisation which pictures it as a totally integrated world. From a world structured and preoccupied by history we have landed ourselves in a depthless horizontality of immediate connections. A world, it is said, which is purely spatial. (With a delicious irony, Grossberg argues that even this assertion of the reprioritisation of space is still in thrall to temporality. This 'strategy chronologises space: for example, reprivileging history as the agency which has replaced history with geography. This is the strategy of most so-called "post-modernisms"' (1996, p. 177). Even more ironically, one might add that this is a formulation which deals in a singular history.)

In its most extreme form this view of the current state of things is an imagination of instantaneity – of a single global present. It figures in a multitude of ways: in global media events – the death of Princess Diana, the Olympic Games or the event of Tien-an-Men Square; it figures in talk of the global village, and perhaps in the propositions of an easy multiculturalism-across-the-continents in a host of advertising strategies. The extreme of instantaneity recalls, once again and in new guise, space as the seamless coherence of a structuralist structure, the essential section of a slice through time. In this formulation temporality becomes impossible – how to pass between a series of self-contained presents? History becomes unthinkable. Hence the apprehension of depthlessness. This, however, is to posit two mutually exclusive alternatives – an appreciation of the temporal and a consciousness of the instantaneous connectivity of space. They are taken, not simply as empirically mutually exclusive, but as definitionally counterposed. Instantaneity is spatial, and therefore cannot be temporal (we have come across this leap before). Once again, this is to fail to imagine the interconnectivity of the spatial as not between static things but between movements, between a plurality of trajectories. That 'the new depthlessness' poses problems for thinking historically is without doubt. But it also poses problems for thinking spatially. Just as time cannot adequately be conceptualised without a recognition of the (spatial) multiplicities through which it is generated so space cannot adequately be imagined as the stasis of a



depthless, totally interconnected, instantaneity. Any assumption of a closed instantaneity not only denies space this essential character of itself constantly becoming, it also denies time its own possibility of complexity/multiplicity. To read interconnectivity as the instantaneity of a closed surface (the prison house of synchrony) is precisely to ignore the possibility of a multiplicity of trajectories/temporalities. If this is the imagination which is to replace modernism's temporal alignment of regions then it is a move straight through from a billiard-ball world of essentialised places to a claustrophobic holism in which everything everywhere is already connected to everywhere else. And once again it leaves no opening for an active politics.

There is, of course, no single integrated global moment. McKenzie Wark's (1994) analysis of global media events demonstrates the complex, uneven and spatially differentiated nature of their construction (and the emphasis on construction is important). The heterogeneous nature of the world's articulation into these temporary time-space constellations serves to highlight, rather than to indicate the elimination of, the significance of multiplicity. Indeed, the construction of these media events *as* global is precisely an outcome of the intersections within such a multiplicity. They are constructed 'places' of virtual geographies:

An urban site redolent with symbolic meaning; a panoptic political regime struggling to contain its own power in the face of a modernity it both ardently desires and resolutely opposes; the presence of the Western media with their global information vectors: Tiananmen Square in April, May, and June of 1989 was a metaphorical crossroads for the intersection of diverse forces, following different trajectories at different speeds. In Lenin's terms it formed a conjuncture; in Althusser's, a point of overdetermination. (p. 127)

And anyway, the understanding of globalisation as an achieved instantaneity is ambiguous from the off. On the one hand it is often, at least implicitly, claimed to be already with us. On the other hand it is the very promise of a future-to-come which globalisation is said to hold out. It is this latter proposition which allows those who are not 'yet' integrated into this single globality to be figured as backward, as still temporally 'behind'. In this double formulation the singular temporality which is the assumption of the convening of spatial difference into temporal sequence will find its consummation in the single temporality of a unified global present.

It is precisely this shift, from vertical to horizontal if you like, which is argued by Fredric Jameson (1991) to characterise the movement from the modern to the postmodern. While during the modern period the very survival of 'nature', of 'the traditional countryside and of traditional agriculture' (p. 311), that is, of 'uneven development' itself (p. 366), provided the conditions for an idea of historicity, of the new and indeed of the notion of 'eras' at all, with the advent of the 'late capitalism' which Jameson sees as the economic foundation of the postmodern:

modernization triumphs and wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished along with the traditional countryside and traditional agriculture; even the surviving historical monuments, now all cleaned up, become glittering simulacra of the past, and not its survival. Now everything is new; but by the same token, the very category of the new then loses its meaning ... (p. 311)

Regardless of the empirical basis of this claim it is important to note its conceptual foundation. Under Jameson's reading of the modern, actually existing differences, such as uneven development, are characterised temporally: they are residues, they lend 'us' a notion of history (of where we are coming from) and, correlatively, of the new and of the future. There is only one trajectory here. Under his reading of *postmodernity*, because the laggards have now caught up or been obliterated or simulacralised we are all in a single time, which is the present, a condition which in turn makes it impossible for us to have a sense of temporality, of history, at all:

the postmodern must be characterized as a situation in which the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic, has finally been swept away without a trace. In the postmodern, then, the past itself has disappeared (along with the well-known 'sense of the past' or historicity and collective memory). ... Ours is a more homogeneously modernized condition; we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities. Everything has reached the same hour on the great clock of development or rationalization (at least from the perspective of the 'West'). (pp. 309-10)

While I would not want to quarrel with Jameson's diagnosis of postmodern (or modern) political cosmologies, it is important to pull out what is going here. This a-temporal single time is called by Jameson 'space': 'So, even if everything is spatial, this postmodern reality here is somehow more spatial than everything else' (p. 365). This is space as stasis, as equated with depthlessness.

Jameson also counterposes space as a closed synchrony (the postmodern) to space as convened into a single temporal linearity (the modern). In my view neither of them is an adequate formulation of space or of time. Jameson's response to a depthless world, as he sees it, is to replace it with one where depth takes the form of a single history, which organises spatial difference. We do, certainly, need a new imagination but a return to that regionalising, temporally convening, one of modernity does not provide a politically adequate alternative. The shift in viewpoint, so common in comparisons of modernity and postmodernity, from *one* history to *no* histories, from a single (progressive) story to a synchronic depthlessness, in both eras though in radically different ways, denies the real challenge of the spatial.

But Jameson's reasons for this manoeuvre, his desire to return to a single ordering history, are also important to note. For him, multiplicity can provoke terror. For Jameson, if we do not understand the world in terms of some cultural dominant 'then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer

heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable' (p. 6) (hang on: why does heterogeneity have to be sheer, or difference random, or the lack of a single dominating force render everything undecidable?); it leaves us with 'the messiness of a dispersed existence' (p. 117) and – that other aspect of a shift away from modern spatiality – 'the strange new feeling of an absence of inside and outside' (p. 117) '... the security of the Newtonian earth withdrawn' (p. 116).

However, while the terms of his response may be disputed, what Jameson is here certainly alive to is aspects of the challenge of a full recognition of the spatial. And indeed, one especially fascinating element of his analysis is the link he makes between the new consciousness of this massive heterogeneity and what he calls 'the demographics of the postmodern' (p. 356). In some wonderful passages he writes that 'The West ... has the impression that without much warning and unexpectedly it now confronts a range of genuine individual and collective subjects who were not there before' (p. 356) and of 'some new visibility of the "others" themselves, who occupy their own stage – a kind of centre in its own right – and compel attention by virtue of their voice and of the act of speaking itself' (p. 357). Here are brought together: international migration (from a specifically Western point of view), the end of modernity, and the assertion of coevalness.<sup>9</sup> For Jameson, who recognises the ethnocentricity and racism within all this, it is these huge movements which ground the shift in perspective on the part of those who get to tell the stories of 'our times'.

He cites Sartre trying to come to grips, in the very moment of his own thinking, with the fact of Communists and Nazis fighting in Berlin, unemployed workers marching in New York, 'boats on the open sea that are echoing with music', and lights 'going on in all the cities of Europe' (Sartre, 1981, p. 67, cited in Jameson, 1991, pp. 361-2). Jameson rates this passage of Sartre as 'pseudoexperience', 'as a failure to achieve representation', as 'voluntaristic, an assault of the will on what is "by definition" structurally impossible of achievement rather than something pragmatic and practical that seeks to augment my information about the here and now' (all p. 362). 'It seems at the same time to be a relatively aimless and exploratory fantasy as well, as though the subject were afraid of forgetting something but could not quite imagine the consequences: Will I be punished if I forget all the others busy living simultaneously with me?' (p. 362). Now, at one level it is clear what Jameson means: the passage from Sartre is evocative (though for me productively evocative) and not analytical. But it is meant to be. Jameson's complaint at the 'failure to achieve representation' seems to refer to the inevitable incompleteness of content (what has been left out?). Is this an implicit claim by Jameson that (complete) representation *was* possible when we didn't have to deal with all this confusing coevalness? (When we could pull everything into shape under the tutelage of the one narrative of the period in dominance? When convening space into temporal sequence enabled its representation?) It is this kind of 'representation' which denies the multiplicity of the spatial.

Jameson, though, does have a real point. The difficulty of representing the spatial ('a simultaneity of distinct streams of elements which the senses grasp altogether', p. 86) is something he returns to again and again. It is a reading opposite to that of Laclau. For Laclau space was, precisely, the closure of representation. For Jameson the reality of the spatial is its very unrepresentability.<sup>10</sup> To associate this only with postmodernism, however, would be to acquiesce in that reading of modernity in which contemporaneous heterogeneity is representable (and thereby its challenge, both to representation and politically, obliterated) through its reduction to temporal sequence: as we have seen, to recognise the spatiality of modernity would make that 'era' a challenge to representation in that sense too. But the underlying point catches at something significant: that far from standing for the stability of representation, real space (space-time) is indeed impossible to pin down.

But anyway, the argument should not really be about content (some patently vain attempt, in an evocation of a simultaneity of stories-so-far, to enumerate each and every one of those trajectories). Rather, it is a question of the angle of vision, a recognition of the *fact* (not all of the content) of other realities, equally 'present' though with their own histories. Of course we cannot recount them all, or be constantly aware of each and every one of 'the others busy living simultaneously with me'. Perhaps what is needed first is a leap into space. Then there will be a prioritisation, a selection, perhaps reflecting actual practices of relationality. Perhaps it is apposite here to recall Grosz's arguments about subjectivity. Perhaps what is required is the inculcation of a (notion of) subjectivity which is not exclusively temporal; not the projection of an interior – conceptual, introspective (see *Part Two*), but rather a subjectivity which is spatial too, outwardlooking in its perspectives and in the awareness of its own relational constitution.



## 8 aspatial globalisation

'Globalisation' is currently one of the most frequently used and most powerful terms in our geographical and social imaginations. At its extreme (and though extreme this version is none the less highly popular) what it calls up is a vision of total unfettered mobility; of free unbounded space. In spite of searching and provocative interventions from the likes of Anthony King, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Michael Peter Smith, Arjun Appadurai and many others, this vision persists. In academic work, it perhaps finds its most characteristic presence as a summary of economic globalisation in the opening paragraphs to a treatise on something 'more cultural'. But it is an understanding which also thoroughly permeates popular, political and journalistic discourse. At its worst, it has become a mantra. Characteristic words and phrases make an obligatory appearance: instantaneous; Internet; 24-hour financial trading; the margins invading the centre; the collapse of spatial barriers; the annihilation of space by time. In these texts, the emerging world economy will be captured by an iconic economics: reference to CNN, McDonald's, Sony is frequently considered enough to convey it. And judicious alliterations will strive to convey the mazi-ness of it all: Beijing – Bombay – Bamako – Burnley. What are at issue in all of this are our geographical imaginations. (And in this regard the alliterations are of particular interest: how often they reveal, in their expectations of the effects they will produce, an imaginative geography which still knows which is 'the exotic' and which 'the banal' and when it is bringing them into unexpected (though in fact now so common a trope) juxtaposition.) It is a mantra which evokes a powerful vision of an immense, unstructured, free unbounded space and of a glorious, complex mixity.<sup>11</sup>

It is also, undoubtedly, an imagination of the world's geography (a political cosmology in Fabian's terms) which contrasts radically with the modernist one. In place of an imagination of a world of bounded places we are now presented with a world of flows. Instead of isolated identities, an understanding of the spatial as relational through connections. The very word 'globalisation' implies a recognition of spatiality. It is a vision which in some sense glorifies (as so much current writing does) in the triumph of the spatial (while at the same time

speaking of its annihilation). Yet if the picture of global space which 'globalisation' evokes is in contrast to the dominant imaginary under modernity, the structuring characteristics of the conceptualisation of space are disarmingly similar.

Most obviously, just as in the old story of modernity, this is a tale of inevitability; and this in turn is enabled by an unspoken concept of space. Clinton's analogy with the force of gravity only highlights in a particularly striking way what is routinely taken for granted. Whether through an unthinking technological determinism or through a submission to the inevitability of market expansion, this version of globalisation comes to have almost the ineluctability of a grand narrative. Globalisation, here, is as inevitable as modernity's story of progress, and the implications, again, are enormous. Yet again, and just as in modernity's discourse, spatial differences are convened under the sign of temporal sequence. Mali and Chad are not 'yet' drawn into the global community of instantaneous communication? Don't worry; they soon will be. Soon they will, in this regard, be like 'us'.

This is an *aspatial* view of globalisation. The potential differences of Mali's and Chad's trajectories are occluded. (The essential multiplicities of the spatial are denied.) Such countries are assumed to be following the same ('our') path of development. (The openness of the future which is in part a consequence of the multiplicities of the spatial is reined in. This is a tale with a single trajectory.) The effects are political. Because space has been marshalled under the sign of time, these countries have no space – precisely – to tell different stories, to follow another path. They are dragooned into line behind those who designed the queue. Moreover, not only is their future thus supposedly foretold but even this is not true, for precisely their entanglement within the unequal relations of capitalist globalisation ensures that they do not 'follow'. The future which is held out as inevitable is unlikely to be reached. This convening of contemporaneous geographical differences into temporal sequence, this turning it into a story of 'catching up', occludes present-day relations and practices and their relentless *production*, within *current* rounds of capitalist globalisation, of increasing inequality. It occludes the power-geometries within the contemporaneity of *today's* form of globalisation. Even within the West, European governments following the US model appeal to the 'future' in justification, thereby closing down a politics in which a European approach might challenge that of the USA. As Bruno Latour has written, 'Just at the moment when there is much talk on the topic of globalisation, it is just the time *not* to believe that the future and the past of the United States are the future and the past of Europe. A left party should produce a new difference' (1999a, p. 14).

It is, further, significant that such tales of inevitability require dynamics which are beyond intervention. They need an external agent, a *deus ex machina*. The unquestioned motors of 'globalisation's' historicising of the world's geographical inequalities are, in various mixtures, the economy and technology. By this means, a further political result is achieved: the removal of the economic and the

technological from political consideration. The only political questions become ones concerning our subsequent adaptation to their inevitability. Latour (1999a) has written powerfully of this widespread move to protect 'the economic' – that is, the capitalist market – from political questioning (he writes also of an equivalent move in relation to Science). All this has as a necessary grounding the conversion of space into time: the consequent occlusion of the contemporaneous multiplicity of the spatial occludes also the nature of the relations in play.

Further, the particular form of globalisation which we are experiencing at the moment (neoliberal capitalist, led by multinationals, etc. etc.) is taken to be the one and only form. Objections to this particular globalisation are persistently met with the derisive riposte that 'the world will inevitably become more interconnected'. Capitalist globalisation is equated with globalisation *tout court*, a discursive manoeuvre which at a stroke obscures the possibility of seeing alternative forms. It is globalisation *in this particular form* which is thereby taken as being inevitable. The 'achievement' here is to make into the political stake an abstract spatial scale ('the global'), and incidentally to stimulate a response which defends 'the local'. It is, rather, the relations which mutually construct them both which need to be the object of dispute.

Finally, that way of seeing globalisation as inevitable, of placing economics/technology beyond the reach of political debate, also renders globalisation as the One story. 'Globalisation', just as the term 'Capitalism' was before it (and for which, as did modernity in its own day, it frequently stands in as an obfuscating euphemism), is the one (self-referential) Identity in relation to which all else is defined (see Gibson-Graham, 1996). That, again, is to fail to recognise the multiplicities of the spatial. Globalisation is not a single all-embracing movement (nor should it be imagined as some outward spread from the West and other centres of economic power across a passive surface of 'space'). It is a making of space(s), an active reconfiguration and meeting-up through practices and relations of a multitude of trajectories, and it is there that lies the politics.

The imagination of globalisation in terms of unbounded free space, that powerful rhetoric of neoliberalism around 'free trade', just as was modernity's view of space, is a pivotal element in an overweening political discourse. It is a discourse which is dominantly produced in the countries of the world's North (though acquiesced in by many a government in the South). It has its institutions and its professionals. It is normative; and it has effects.

In the South it is this understanding of the space of the future (as unbounded global trading space) which enables the imposition of programmes of structural adjustment, and their successors. It is this understanding of the unavailability of this form of globalisation which legitimises the enforcement

of export orientation on the economy of country after country; the prioritisation of exports over production for local consumption. It is this discourse of, this particular form of, globalisation in other words which is an important component in the continuing legitimisation of the view that there is one particular model of 'development', one path to one form of 'modernisation'.

In the North, too, this geographical imagination has effects: the constant talking about it, the endless describing it in a particular form, is part of the active project of its production. It becomes the basis for decisions precisely to implement it. On the one hand globalisation is represented as ineluctable – a force in the face of which we must adapt or be cast into oblivion. On the other hand some of the most powerful agencies in the world are utterly intent on its production. The duplicity of the powerful in this is deep, and has been characterised by Morris (1992b) in terms of eroticism (see also, for an alternatively ribald account, Lapham, 1998). World economic leaders gather (in Washington, Paris or Davos) to congratulate themselves upon, and to flaunt and reinforce, their powerfulness, a powerfulness which consists in insisting on *powerlessness* – in the face of globalising market forces there is absolutely nothing that can be done. Except, of course, to push the process further. It is a heroic impotence, which serves to disguise the fact that this is really a *project*.

This vision of global space, then, is not so much a description of how the world is, as an image in which the world is being made. Just as in the case of modernity, here we have a powerful imaginative geography. It is a very different imagination: instead of space divided-up and bounded here is a vision of space as barrier-less and open. But both of them function as images in which the world is made. Both of them are imaginative geographies which *legitimise* their own production.

Clearly, the world is not totally globalised (whatever that might mean); the very fact that some are striving so hard to make it so is evidence of the project's incompleteness. But this is more than a question of incompleteness – more than a question of waiting for the laggards to catch up. There are multiple trajectories/temporalities here. Once again, as in the case of modernity, this is a geographical imagination which ignores the structured divides, the necessary ruptures and inequalities, the exclusions, on which the successful prosecution of the project itself depends. A further effect of the temporal convening of spatial difference here again becomes evident. So long as inequality is read in terms of stages of advance and backwardness not only are alternative stories disallowed but also the fact of the *production* of poverty and polarisation within and through 'globalisation' itself can be erased from view. This is – again – a geographical imagination which ignores its own real spatiality.

Forget, for a moment, Sony and CNN. An alternative iconic economics will tell a tale of the *production* of inequality, division and exclusion. Like the old story of modernity, the new hegemonic tale of globalisation is told as a universal story, but the process is one which is not (and on current terms cannot be) universalised.

The debate about globalisation is often asserted to be about how new it is and how far it has progressed, and there clearly *is* argument about this. There are 'hyperglobalisers' such as Ohmae (1994). And there are sceptics. Hirst and Thompson (1996a, 1996b), for instance, argue that the major world national economies are no more open in terms of trade or capital flows than they were in the period of the Gold Standard. They point out that over the medium term (say the last century), there has been no monotonic linear direction of change. Instead, the degrees of openness have fluctuated over time with the nature of economic development. Their argument is well taken. However, to restrict the argument to this matter of the *degree* of globalisation is gravely to impoverish it. What should be at issue is also the *form* of globalisation: the social form of the relationality which structures it. There may be disagreements over the changes in the degree of openness of national economies over the period studied by Hirst and Thompson (and much squabbling over the details of which measures are the most appropriate), but what surely cannot be in doubt is that the world geography of those relations has been transformed. Global space, as space more generally, is a product of material practices of power. What is at issue is not just openness and closure or the 'length' of the connections through which we, or finance capital, or whatever ... go about our business. What are at issue are the constantly-being-produced new geometries of power, the shifting geographies of power-relations. The *meaning* of economic openness to, say, the UK at the start of the twentieth century, with the country still clinging on to its imperial pomp and this the high point of the Gold Standard, is quite different from its meaning now, with the country's dependence on foreign inward investment and, after the ravages of the 1980s on its production of the means of production, its need to bring in from elsewhere so many of the tools of its trade. In the earlier period 'openness' spoke of dominance; the openness of today is far more ambiguous. The reluctance to address the changing form of globalisation over time is on a par with, and reinforces, the blindness to the possibility that it could take different forms *now*. Space – here global space – is about contemporaneity (rather than temporal convening), it is about openness (rather than inevitability) and it is also about relations, fractures, discontinuities, practices of engagement. And this intrinsic relationality of the spatial is not just a matter of lines on a map; it is a cartography of power.

All of which raises a final source of concern about this formulation of globalisation. It returns us again to the discursive strategies of free market (so-called) globalisation. The dominant institutions and governments which clamour most strongly in favour of globalisation argue for it in terms of free trade. And they argue for 'free trade' in terms which in turn suggest that there is some self-evident right

to global mobility. The very term 'free' immediately implies something good, something to be aimed at. It is self-evidently right that space should be unbounded. Yet, come a debate on immigration, and they immediately have recourse to another geographical imagination altogether, another vision of global space which is equally powerful, equally – apparently – incontrovertible. This second imagination is the imagination of defensible places, of the rights of 'local people' to their own 'local places', of a world divided by difference and the smack of firm boundaries, a geographical imagination of nationalisms. In one breath such spokespeople assume that 'free trade' is akin to some moral virtue; in the next they pour out venom against asylum-seekers (widely assumed to be bogus) and 'economic migrants' ('economics', it seems, is not a good enough reason to want to migrate – *what* was that they were saying about capital?).

Hélène Pellerin (1999) has analysed the shift from embedded liberalism to neoliberalism, and the different spatial settlements involved in each. As she points out, neoliberalism in practice is *not* simply about mobility: it too requires some spatial fixes. And of singular importance among them is the spatial organisation of labour. (And just as the imposition of free trade is contested so too is the attempt to engineer a new geography of labour – in particular she points to illegal migration flows and to aboriginal alliances.)

So here we have two apparently self-evident truths, a geography of borderlessness and mobility, and a geography of border discipline; two completely antinomic geographical imaginations of global space, which are called upon in turn. No matter that they contradict each other; because it works. And it 'works' for a whole set of reasons. First, because each self-evident truth is presented separately. But second, because while neither imagination in its pure form is possible (neither a space hermetically closed into territories nor a space composed solely of flows) what is really needed politically is for this tension to be negotiated explicitly and in each specific situation. This parallels the structure of Derrida's (2001) argument on hospitality. Each 'pure' imagination on its own tames the spatial. It is their *negotiation* which brings the question (rights of movement/rights of containment) into politics. The appeal to an imagination of pure boundedness or pure flow as self-evident foundation is neither possible in principle nor open to political debate.

And so in this era of 'globalisation' we have sniffer dogs to detect people hiding in the holds of boats, people dying in the attempt to cross frontiers, people precisely trying to 'seek out the best opportunities'. That double imaginary, *in the very fact of its doubleness*, of the freedom of space on the one hand and the 'right to one's own place' on the other, works in favour of the already-powerful. Capital, the rich, the skilled ... can move easily about the world, as investment, or trade, as sought-after labour or as tourists; and at the same time, whether it be in the immigration-controlled countries of the West, or the gated communities of the rich in any major metropolis anywhere, or in the elite enclosures of knowledge production and high technology, they can protect their fortress

homes. Meanwhile the poor and the unskilled from the so-called margins of this world are both instructed to open up their borders and welcome the West's invasion in whatever form it comes, and told to stay where they are.

Once again there are echoes here of how the story of modernity was told. Just as was Toussaint l'Ouverture's claim to participate in the principles of modernity's legitimating discourse, so too today the claim to free mobility (the discourse of globalisation) by the world's poor is rejected out of hand. (Though – as with the Haitian slaves – the proclamation of 'free trade' has made the challenge possible.) The current world order of capital's (anyway highly unequal) globalisation is as predicated upon holding (some kinds of) labour in place as was early modernity upon slavery. Pellerin's account of the bullying disdain with which the US government treated the issue of Mexican migration during the negotiation of NAFTA reminds one of nothing so much as C.L.R. James' account of the Parisian reply to the claims of Toussaint l'Ouverture. If, in Bhabha's words, the discourse of modernity fuelled 'the archaic racial factor in the society of slavery' (1994, p. 244) (although of course it was anything but archaic), then, too, the discourse of globalisation as free movement about the world is fuelling the 'archaic' (but not) sentiments of parochialism, nationalism and the exclusion of those who are different.

Today's hegemonic story of globalisation, then, relates a globalisation of a very particular form. And integral to its achievement is the mobilisation of powerful (inconsistent, falsely self-evident, never universalisable – but powerful) imaginations of space.

How easy it is to slip into ways of thinking that repress the challenge of space; and how politically significant spatial imaginaries can be. 'Globalisation', told in this way, is like the old story of modernity. Once again it convenes spatial difference into temporal sequence, and thereby denies the possibility of multiple trajectories; the future is not held open. This rendering of globalisation provides the framing inevitability for the construction of politics such as the 'Third Way' with its abolition of Left and Right and its political closure around a discourse which doesn't allow for dislocation – what Chantal Mouffe has called 'a politics without adversaries' (1998). It installs an understanding of space, the 'space of flows', which, just like the space of places of modernity, is deployed (when needed) as a legitimation for its own production and which pretends to a universality which anyway in practice it systematically denies. For, in fact, in the context of and as part of this 'globalisation' new enclosures are right now being erected.

And, just like the old story of modernity too, this imagination of globalisation is resolutely unaware of its own speaking position: neoliberal to be sure, but also

more generally Western in its locatedness. This point has been well made in relation to the geographies of current analyses, and celebrations, of hybridity (Spivak, 1990; King, 1995). It applies also to some of the arguments about openness. As was pointed out above, the sudden consciousness of globalisation in the West cannot be as a result of a new 'openness' in general. What has more likely brought about the flurry of concern is the changing terms, and geography, of that openness. *Western* regions become dominated by foreign capital. The old mythical coherence of place is challenged by capital and labour from outside (not exactly a new experience, nor specific to this form of globalisation, in the majority world). It is now the West which is subject to inward investment. It is Western cities which have, in the medium term, been experiencing the arrival of people from other parts of the world. As has often been remarked, much of the work on hybridity has been stimulated by the famous 'arrival of the margins at the centre'. (This was one provocation to re-tell the history of modernity.) In that sense it is already acknowledged to be a story told from 'the first world'.

Except that, this is more of a Western story even than that account indicates. For the margins have *not* arrived at the centre. This is the view of those who were already 'in the centre' and of those from the periphery who have managed over the years to get in. Most of 'the margins' – even should they wish to migrate – have been very strictly excluded.

This is a story of globalisation which has been (as was the story of modernity) largely provoked by what is happening to the West, by the experiences of that West; it is in some measure (just as was colonial discourse) founded upon a Western anxiety. Moreover, just as in the case of modernity, this discourse of globalisation provides a legitimisation of things; an imaginative geography which justifies the actions of those who promulgate it, including – and to come full circle – a particular attitude towards space and place.

My argument is that this narrative of globalisation is not spatialised. By this I do not mean simply that the picture is more geographically complex than is usually claimed: that there is significant spatial variability, or that 'the local' consistently in one way or another reasserts itself. These things are true, but they are not the argument I am making here. Indeed, Low and Barnett (2000) have accused geographers of focusing too much on this aspect of their potential contribution to the debate over globalisation. It is a focus, they argue, which reduces the discipline of geography to a concern with the local, the empirical and the a-theoretical. (I agree with the general burden of this critique. Spatialising social theory is categorically *not* reducible merely to insisting on local variation. But I remain extremely wary of any assumption of a necessary association between the terms local/empirical/a-theoretical; see Massey, 1991b.) So local variability is not what is at issue in this chapter. Rather the argument is that really 'spatialising globalisation' means recognising crucial characteristics of the spatial: its multiplicity, its openness, the fact that it is not reducible to 'a surface', its integral relation with temporality. The a-spatial view of globalisation,

like the old story of modernity, obliterates the spatial into the temporal and in that very move also impoverishes the temporal (there is only one story to tell). The multiplicity of the spatial is a precondition for the temporal: and the multiplicities of the two together can be a condition for the openness of the future. Low and Barnett (2000) argue that geographers' focus on asserting 'more complex or sophisticated conceptions of space' (p. 54) (by which they mean in practice greater spatial variability) is mistaken in that we should criticise instead the *historicism* of the standard story of globalisation. My argument is that criticising the historicism of that version of the story of globalisation (its unilinearity, its teleology, etc.) precisely also entails reframing its spatiality. The reconceptualisation could (should) be of temporality and spatiality together.

But this is still one view. If space is genuinely the sphere of multiplicity, if it is a realm of multiple trajectories, then there will be multiplicities too of imaginations, theorisations, understandings, meanings. Any 'simultaneity' of stories-so-far will be a distinct simultaneity from a particular vantage point. If the repression of the spatial under modernity was bound up with the establishment of foundational universals, so the recognition of the multiplicities of the spatial both challenges that and understands universals as spatio-temporally specific positions. An adequate recognition of coevalness demands acceptance that one is being observed/theorised/evaluated in return and potentially in different terms (see, for instance, Appadurai, 2001; Slater, 1999, 2000). Recognition of radical contemporaneity has to include recognition of the existence of those limits too.

Just as the postcolonial reworking of the former story of modernity productively disrupted so much about it, so too would a genuine spatialisation of how we think about globalisation enable a very different analysis (or very different analyses) (a genuinely spatial narrative). Perhaps above all it would involve challenging that 'all-pervading denial of coevalness'. Fabian has written that it 'takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West (and to anthropology) if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of the Other' (1983, p. 35). The same is true of so many of the ways we currently picture globalisation.





## 9 (contrary to popular opinion) space cannot be annihilated by time

The confusions that exist within current imaginations of the time-spaces of globalisation are, perhaps, at their most acute (and, ironically, least noticed) in the easy coexistence of the view that this is the age of the spatial with the contradictory, but equally accepted, notion that this is the age in which space will finally, in fulfilment of Marx's old prophecy, be annihilated by time.

Although clearly in conflict, these two propositions are none the less related. On the one hand, more and more 'spatial' connections, and over longer distances, are involved in the construction and understanding and impact of any place or economy or culture and of everyday life and actions. There is more 'space' in our lives, and it takes less time. On the other hand, this very speed with which 'we' can now cross space (by air, on screen, through cultural flows) would seem to imply that space doesn't matter any more; that speed-up has conquered distance. Precisely the same phenomena seem to be leading to the conclusion both that space has now won out to the detriment of any ability to appreciate temporality (the complaint of depthlessness) and that time has annihilated space.<sup>12</sup> Neither view is tenable as it stands.

Take, to begin with, the question of annihilation, provoked by the speed-up of global interconnections and the instantaneity of the screen. There is no doubt that recent changes on both these fronts have been enormous. Low and Barnett (2000) tell a tale of coming across, during travels in north London, a British Telecom hoarding announcing to the world that 'Geography is History'. We smile in recognition; we know what BT is getting at. (Although, and to keep the theme of ambiguity running, I have a mouse-pad which proclaims, with equal self-assurance and equal ability to seem self-evident, that 'Geography matters to all of us'. In the midst of all this contradictory confidence, it's important to keep one's nerve.) It is certainly the case that 'time' (for which read an increase in the speed of transport and communications) reduces, and indeed on occasions even annihilates, some of the effects of distance. This is what Marx was getting at. It is worth noting the irony that what is actually being reduced here

is time, and what is being expanded (in the sense of the formation of social relations/interactions, including those of transport and communication) is space (as distance). This is one curiosity of the formulation. But more importantly, space is not anyway reducible to distance. Distance is a condition of multiplicity; but equally it itself would not be thinkable without multiplicity. And we might note that while cyberspace is a different kind of space (Kitchin, 1998; Dodge and Kitchin, 2001) it is most definitely internally multiple (Bingham, 1996) (and, ironically, often rendered in a language of spatial metaphor which is resolutely Cartesian). Multiplicity is fundamental. No one is proposing (I assume) that screens, or instantaneous financial transactions, or even cyberspace, are abolishing multiplicity. That would be like saying that, because a telephone call is instantaneous, the participants in it are merged into one entity. And if multiplicity is not being annihilated (which would render the whole business of transport and communication anyway entirely redundant) then neither is space. The very concept of multiplicity entails spatiality. And anyway, to complete the spectre of everything disappearing into a black hole, *how could* time annihilate space when the two are mutually implicated (see Part Two). So: as long as there is multiplicity there will be space.

Zygmunt Bauman has produced an elaborated version of instantaneity in his differentiation between heavy modernity (territorialising and preoccupied with size) and light: 'It all changed ... with the advent of software capitalism and light modernity' (2000, p. 176). Capturing the ambiguity in the usual phrasing, he writes that 'The change in question is the new irrelevance of space, masquerading as annihilation of time. ... space counts little, or does not count at all' (p. 177). 'Counting' here depends upon a notion of cost – drawing on Simmel it is proposed that things are valued to the extent of the cost of their acquisition. *Ergo*: 'If you know that you can visit a place at any time you wish', 'since all parts of space can be reached in the same time-span (that is, "no-time"), no part of space is privileged, none has special value' (p. 177). This is space as pure extension, a matter of *xy* coordinates. If space is more than (or even not) coordinates, but a product of relations, then 'visiting' is a practice of engagement, an encounter. It is in that process of establishing a relation that the 'cost' can rather be measured. (And space is made, as well as crossed, in this encounter.)

Space is more than distance. It is the sphere of openended configurations within multiplicities. Given that, the really serious question which is raised by speed-up, by 'the communications revolution' and by cyberspace, is not whether space will be annihilated but what kinds of multiplicities (patterning of uniqueness) and relations will be co-constructed with these new kinds of spatial configurations.



One aspect of this radical reordering of the co-constitution of space and difference is already much discussed. Among the many other currently popular aphorisms about space and time are the propositions (i) that there is no longer any distinguishing between near and far and (ii) that the margins have invaded the centre.

There is, as has been seen, a way of understanding the rise and fall of modernity in terms of a founding moment in which difference from 'the rest of the world' was established by the West either through temporal converging or through territorialisation. The collapse of (or challenge to) that sensibility was provoked by the impossibility of maintaining the story in the face of the breakdown of the geography it purported to describe: the margins arrived at the centre, those who had been far away were now very evidently near (in both space and time).

There is much to be said for this interpretation: it has run as a thread through much of Part *Three*. Indeed, I would interpret it as modernity's way of taming the disruptiveness of the spatial, and subsequently its inability to maintain that feeling of control over things (the failure of its political cosmology) when 'real geographical space' (which had always in fact failed to conform) now failed to conform to such an extent that the ordering framework could no longer hold.

This is, then, a good way of capturing some important aspects of the constitution of modernity and whatever it is that we are experiencing now. It must, however, be treated carefully. To begin with, who is this 'we'? Countries on the end of colonialism, invasion, the long history of European multinational economic exploitation, are not now for the first time experiencing the arrival of the previously distant. The collapse of near and far has long been a fact for places *outside* the West – indeed it is intrinsic to the establishment, through 'discovery', imperialism and colonialism, of modernity itself. Moctezuma would attest to that. Once again the Western roots of the dominant sensibility are evident. The tale of the arrival of the margins at the centre needs similar interrogation. Here, not only is the shift in sensibility, the breakdown of the old ordering mechanisms, quite explicitly located in the West, but the empirical basis is itself questionable. The margins have not arrived in the centre.

Among the more complex versions of this story one strategy has been to develop an argument concerning the relation between distance and otherness. Rob Shields (1992), while more healthily sceptical than many about the passage from one 'space-time regime' to another, argues that we are witness to a significant shift in one aspect of social spatialisation. His argument is that, through the institution of its particular global geography, there developed within modernity a strong association between presence/absence on the one hand and inclusion/exclusion on the other. This has now been upset through changes in which 'the interpenetration of cultures and the increased presence of distant "others" in everyday life in the developed countries of the West are perhaps the key driving forces' (p. 193). A 'postmodern spatialisation' comes on to the agenda.

Now Shields is absolutely scrupulous in his insistence on the recognition of the spatio-temporal specificity both of the socio-economic changes and of the shifts in dominant sensibilities. Indeed, he strongly criticises others for not being so: 'Giddens (in what is by now a tradition of ethnocentric error amongst Western social scientists) installs historically specific, modernist forms and self-interpretations as universals' (p. 192; the reference is to Giddens, 1984). His own argument, however, raises questions of another sort. His argument is that, under modernity, and integral to its very establishment/nature, 'inclusion and exclusion are meshed with the terms of proximity and remoteness, presence and absence' (p. 192) and that with postmodern spatialisation 'The distances that once separated all the categories of "otherness" from the local sphere of "our" everyday life appear to have collapsed or are at least undergoing important changes' (p. 194).<sup>13</sup> But not all the 'others' whose existence and difference were so vital to the establishment of the modern sensibility were located in distant regions of the planet. There were also 'others' within: not least, though also not only, 'women' and 'nature'. McClintock (1995) has explored the interweaving of race, gender and class in the establishment of British imperialism. Haraway (1991) has pointed to the significance of the excluded figures of the feminine, the animal and the mechanical. Even within modernity there were many modes of establishing otherness (exclusion), not all of them dependent on distance.

The argument here is simply that what is, or should be, at issue in accounts of modernity and of globalisation (and indeed in the construction/conceptualisation of space in general) is not a kind of denuded spatial form in itself (distance; the degree of openness; the numbers of interconnections; proximity, etc. etc.), but the relational content of that spatial form and in particular the nature of the embedded power-relations. There is no mechanical correlation between distance and difference. Both the othering of the rest of the world and the othering of femininity within the establishment of the classic figure of modernity employed the manipulation of spatiality as a powerful tool, but the kinds of power which were involved, and the ways in which these were enforced through the configuration of the spatial, were in each case quite different (see Massey, 1996a). Spatiality was important in both cases; but space is more than distance. Location, confinement, symbolism ... played their roles too. What is at issue is the articulation of forms of power within spatial configurations.

Indeed, it may be through the establishment of new power-invested spatial configurations, rather than simply through the conquering of distance by speed-up, that the challenging of certain characteristics of spatiality is potentially on the agenda. One of the things which 'cyberspace' most famously allows is instantaneous contact at a distance. This is, moreover, both networked

and selective. The connections can be multiple and you can choose with whom you are in contact (the latter is, of course, not entirely the case, a fact which ironically – see below – may be a saving grace). Communities, in the sense of networks of communication of common interest, of similarity along selected dimensions, can easily be established at a distance; non-contiguous time-spaces of commonality. But there are forebodings too. Kevin Robins (1997) has written persuasively of some of these. While the protagonists of what he calls 'the new politics of optimism' – Bill Gates (1995), Nicholas Negroponte (1995), William Mitchell (1995) – talk of the possibility of electronically overcoming social division, Robins is more cautious. What this politics of optimism involves is an assumption, not only of space as merely distance, but also of it as always *a burden*. It is persistently characterised, in these discourses, as a constraint. (The constraint of distance, rather than, perhaps, the pleasure of movement or travel.) Says Negroponte, 'the post-information age will remove the limitations of geography' (1995, p. 165, cited in Robins, 1997, p. 197). As Robins puts it:

The politics of optimism wants to be rid of the burden of geography (and along with it the baggage of history), for it considers geographical determination and situation to have been fundamental sources of frustration and limitation in human and social life. (p. 198)

There has, posits Robins, been 'a longstanding desire for transcendence' of this earthboundness; of the 'constraints of space and place' (p. 198), and he argues for caution in terms of the notions of communication and community (and the idealised versions, both frictionless and nostalgic, imagined by the digital optimists) and in terms also of the significance of materiality (as opposed to virtuality).

One aspect of this argument is that as our long-distance communications increase so the significance may decrease of those who live next door. ('We will socialise in digital neighbourhoods in which physical space will be irrelevant' – Negroponte, 1995, p. 7, cited in Robins, p. 197.) And that precisely would be to undermine one of the truly productive characteristics of material spatiality – its potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking round a corner and bumping into alterity, of having (somehow, and well or badly) to get on with neighbours who have got 'here' (this block of flats, this neighbourhood, this country – this meeting-up) by different routes from you; your being here together is, in that sense, quite uncoordinated. This is an aspect of the productiveness of spatiality which may enable 'something new' to happen. It also poses questions in the sphere of the social. It is against this uninvited juxtaposition that the battles for 'the purification of space' are waged, whether through the employment of security guards around the gated communities of the privileged, through controls over international migration or – for these battles are not always about the powerful excluding the weak – through attempts to preserve some space of their own by groups which are socially marginalised. We may support one side or the other – the

issue is one of spatialised power not of abstract form – but what is important is that contact is involved and some form of social negotiation. What cyberspace, on some readings, could potentially enable is a kind of disembedding into non-contiguous communities of people-like-us which evade all those challenges thrown up by what material spatiality always presents you with – the accidental, unchosen (different) neighbour. Viewing space as a matter only of distance, and then in that guise only negatively as a constraint, lies behind what may be a tendency to try to escape one of its most productive/disruptive elements – one's different neighbour. Staple (1993) has written of a 'new tribalism'. 'Conquering' distance in no way annihilates space, but it does raise new issues around the configuration of multiplicity and difference.

This is absolutely not a sentimental plea for the joys of mixed localities, or for the simple locatedness of place. (Indeed an alternative approach to place is proposed in the next chapter. And these arguments about closeness across physical distance also have the significant political potential, from a geographical point of view, of disrupting that old assumption that one's priorities in terms both of affect and of responsibility begin close in – your family, your neighbourhood – and then, with decreasing resonance, spread outwards in concentric circles.) Rather, what is being signalled here is a concern about a potential new dimension of gatedness. If the previously far really is getting too near for your comfort, if in your view the margins really are too much invading the centre, then in addition to wielding the mechanisms of market forces and discrimination in reorganising your location and choosing your neighbours you can now extricate yourself even more, by living at least some of your life in another purified space, on the Net.

Except ... Except that 'space' won't allow you to do it. Space can never be definitively purified. If space is the sphere of multiplicity, the product of social relations, and those relations are real material practices, and always ongoing, then space can never be closed, there will always be loose ends, always relations with the beyond, always potential elements of chance. Indeed, again, this set of characterisations of the current era is rivalled by its opposite – tales of hybridity, mixity, of hackers, invasions, viruses and flux. All of them utterly ambiguous, of course; but that is the point – neither hermetic closure nor a world composed only of flow (no stabilisations, no boundaries of any sort) is possible. While the end of cities through technology-led dispersal is confidently predicted by cyberfuturists, cities are growing as never before (Graham, 1998). Mobility and fixity, flow and settledness; they presuppose each other. As Saskia Sassen (2001) points out, the global city itself, with its enormous capacity for generating and controlling flows, is built upon vast emplaced resources. The impetus to motion and mobility, for a space of flows, can only be achieved through the construction of (temporary, provisional) stabilisations. There is only ever, always, a negotiation (and a responsibility to negotiate) between conflicting tendencies. A restructuring of the geography of that simultaneity of

stories-so-far. This is not the annihilation of space; but it is a radical reorganisation of the challenges that spatiality poses.

And anyway the tales of cyberspace are belied by its own, very material, necessities. The devaluation of space and place which runs through this literature is one aspect of a general shift by which 'information' has been conceptualised as disembodied from materiality, one implication of which has been 'a systematic devaluation of materiality and embodiment' (Hayles, 1999, p. 48). For all that so many of the tales of the effects of cyberspace revolve around its ability to render space insignificant, in the context of its own material production and operation (on the ground, as it were) space is of fundamental importance. The producers of cyberspace actually know very well that space is more than distance, and that it matters crucially. The science parks and similar enclosures of high-technology production are knowingly created enclaves: set apart from the messy world, devoted to a single activity (the production/elaboration, and glorification of high technology), purified quite rigorously although never entirely successfully of 'non-conforming' uses (those which would interfere, not just with process, but with image), acutely aware of location, and often quite elaborately guarded. And not only are they regulated in a physical sense, they are also very deliberately about meaning: the interaction between the status of the scientists and the locational cachet of the place upholds the authority of social status, of the place and of the science itself (Massey, 1995b; Massey et al., 1992). This is space as multiplicity and hence of heterogeneity and uniqueness. The contrast between the supposed effect of cyberspace and the dynamics of its own production – between, that is, the overcoming of space on the one hand and a supremely nuanced use and making of it on the other – precisely highlights the difference between space understood only as distance and space in a richer meaning. Whatever is happening to the former the latter is very far from being annihilated. And this fact that the virtuality of cyberspace has its roots very firmly in the ground highlights something else as well: that the world of physical space and the world of electronically mediated connection do not exist as somehow two separate layers, one (in what is I suspect a common mind's eye imagination) floating ethereally somewhere above the materiality of the other. As Rob Kitchin (1998) has argued: 'cyberspatial connections and bandwidth ... are unequally distributed [spatially]'; 'information is only as useful as the locale within which the body resides'; and 'cyberspace depends on real-world spatial fixity – the points of access, the physicality and materiality of wires' (p. 387). Or again, for Stephen Graham 'power to function economically and link socially increasingly relies on constructed, place-based, material spaces intimately woven into complex telematics infrastructures linking them to other places and spaces' (1998, p. 174; see also Pratt, 2000). Just as the groundedness of virtuality ties it to a specificity of location so too spaces and places are altered in their physicality and in their meaning through their embeddedness in networks of communication. The 'virtual' world depends on

and further configures the multiplicities of physical space. This has ever been so; the new media in that sense are not new, but they do refigure (or have the potential to refigure) how those networks will operate.

Graham (1998) has usefully distinguished between three modes of conceptualising the relationship between information technology, space and place. First, there is the mode, which we have considered above, that he characterises as 'substitution and transcendence: technological determinism, generalized interactivity and the end of geography', and which he roundly criticises for its naive technological determinism. Second is the mode of 'co-evolution: the parallel social production of geographical space and electronic space' which, rejecting technological determinism, argues that electronic and territorial spaces are necessarily produced together. Third, there is the mode of 'recombination' which involves the mutual constitution of technology and the social sphere (see, for instance, Callon, 1986; Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993; Pratt, 2000). It is within this third mode of mutual constitution, he argues, that we can most aptly understand the continual remaking of space.

Moreover, and as the authors of the 'recombination' approach have long argued, 'mutual constitution' is not between the human and the technological alone, but with (what we choose to call) 'nature' too. If the mantras around new technology have evoked an infinite instantaneity of dematerialised mobility those around nature have proposed the opposite. As Clark (2002) points out, while we recognise the mobility in culture and society there is a tendency to be unnerved by the mobility of nonhuman life. Cheah (1998) makes a related point about 'hybridity theorists' (p. 308). We worry about the 'unnatural' mixings we are producing in the 'natural' world: 'Social and cultural theorists are taking global ecological despoliation as evidence of a general de-naturalization that now encompasses the biophysical world in its entirety' (Clark, 2002, p. 103). While this recognises co-constitution it works also with a background assumption that the 'natural' world if left to itself would somehow, still, really, be organised through that modernist territorial spatiality, settled into its coherent regions in rooted indigeneity.

But why is it exactly, we might wonder, that there is so much political purchase to be had from the idea of nature's undoing at the hands of culture, and so little currency in considering the things life achieves on its own account? ... And why is it that after all the vexing of the nature/culture binary, we are still so much more comfortable tracking the impact of globalization *on* the biophysical world than we are with any consideration of a biological or geological contribution *to* the global contours we now confront? (2002, p. 104; my emphases)

And 'though it may be true that the ecologically aware, while acting locally have tried to "think globally", this gesture has tended to involve a planet-scale projection of qualities of homeliness and rootedness' (p. 105). Clark diagnoses this as a perspective from the cities of Europe and the USA: 'both its constitutive

strands – the environmentalist belief in a nature which “stays put” and the cosmopolitan celebration of culture free of groundedness and material responsibilities – can be seen as derivatives of the same metropolitan detachment from the daily dynamics of bio-materiality’ (p. 117). (He offers the experience of the colonial periphery as one alternative.)

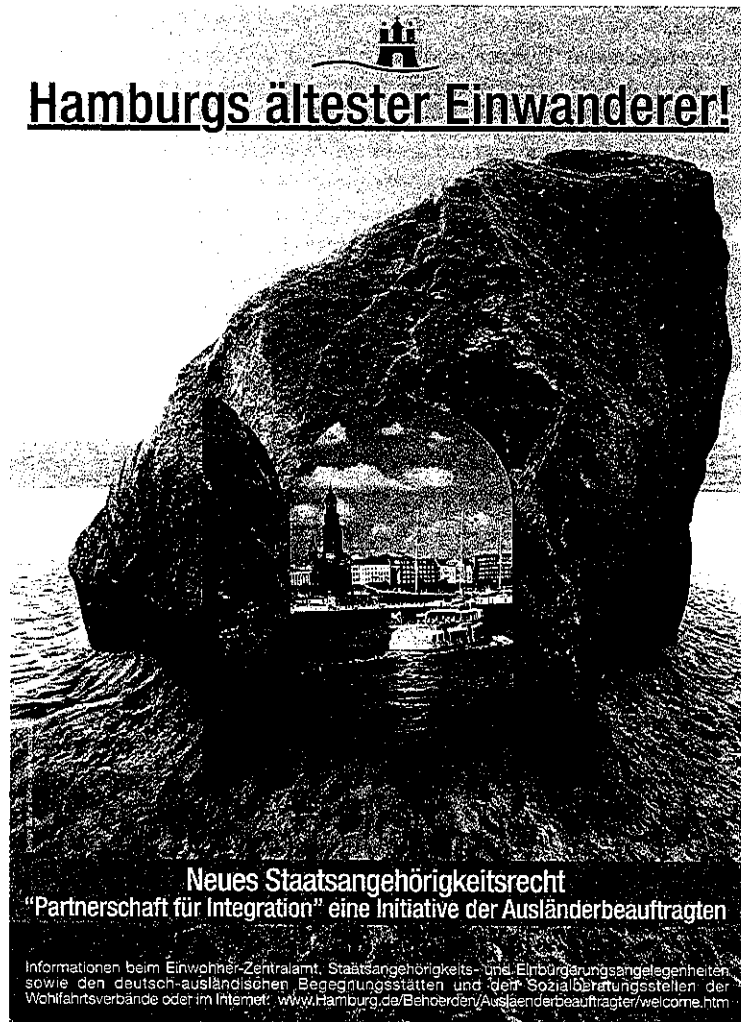
Understanding nature as essentially ‘staying put’ is a manoeuvre that hints at a desire for a foundation; a stable bottom to it all; a firm ground on which the global mobilities of technology and culture can play. The global flows of the planet, organic and inorganic, prohibit any ultimate refuge of this kind. Clark takes ‘the now routine insistence on the porosity of the nature/culture binary at its word’ and proposes that ‘the notion of “globalization from below” might have new connotations if it can be shown that there is no final cut-off point to this “below”, no guard-rail to keep us to the realm of the already humanized’ (p. 105). And once that has been taken into account, somehow all the excitement about so-called instantaneity and speed-up dies away and they are reduced to their more proper position within a planet that has ever been a global mobility.



## 10 elements for alternatives

Whether or not it is the case that these are peculiarly spatial times, the conceptualisation of space itself is, crucially but usually implicitly, a stake in emerging confrontations. Richard Peet (2001), in his thoughtful review of MacEwan’s *Neoliberalism or democracy?* (1999), has argued that it is necessary to deepen still further the critique of neoliberalism and the political project in which it is embedded. The argument here is that attention to the implicit play of contesting understandings of space could be integral to this project. It could be central to his suggestion that we need ‘to reveal neoliberalism as a discourse structured, eventually, by multinational corporations ... and to read neoliberal hegemony geographically’ (p. 340). Neoliberal globalisation as material practice and as hegemonic discourse is yet another in a long line of attempts to tame the spatial. Nor is this only a matter of critique. Attention to implicit conceptualisations of space is crucial also in practices of resistance and of building alternatives.

It has been argued here that many current discourses around globalisation evade the full challenge of space. Convening spatial heterogeneity into temporal sequence deflects the challenge of radical contemporaneity and dulls the appreciation of difference. Equating space with depthless instantaneity deprives it of any dynamic. Envisioning space as always-already territorialised, just as much as envisioning it as purely a sphere of flows, misunderstands the ever-changing ways in which flows and territories are conditions of each other. It is the practices and relations which construct them both that demand address. In contrast, and building on the arguments of *Part Two*, what have been stressed here are other characteristics. First, space as the sphere of heterogeneity. Position, location, is the minimum order of differentiation of elements in the multiplicity that is co-formed with space. It is thereby also the condition for a more radical heterogeneity. Grossberg has written of the need for space to become a philosophical project and argued that, within such a project, ‘spatializing the real’ would mean conceptualising ‘the real as the production of the singularity of the other’ (1996, p. 179). Second, space as the sphere of relations, negotiations, practices of engagement, power in all its forms (Allen, 2003). In this context, space is the dimension which poses the question of the social, and thus of the political (while ‘actual’ spaces are produced *through* the social and the political). And third, space as the sphere of coevalness, of radical contemporaneity.



## Part Five

# A relational politics of the spatial

In Bruno Latour's political proposal for 'A (philosophical) platform for a left (European) party' (1999a), the third of his ten planks begins 'I have the feeling that we are slowly shifting from an obsession with time to an obsession with space' (p. 14), and a little further on he reflects that 'If, as philosophers argue, time is defined as the "series of succession" and space as the "series of simultaneity", or what coexists together at one instant, we might be leaving the time of time – successions and revolutions – and entering a very different time/space, that of coexistence' (p. 15). I have reservations about this formulation. It itself, somewhat contradictorily, has the flavour of linear temporality and singular movement; its account of the emergence of the spatial relies on the temporal in precisely the way that Grossberg criticises (see Part *Two*); and I am not sure whether, in fact, such a shift is occurring. Certainly, too, I would not want to argue for an obsession with space, nor the replacement of time by space; nor am I simply dismissive of all previous politics of the left.

*And yet* I do want to argue, in tune with Latour's vision, for a politics, perhaps better an angle of vision *on* politics, which can open itself up in this way to an appreciation of the spatial and the engagements it challenges us to. That is to say, less a politics dominated by a framing imagination of linear progression (and certainly not singular linear progression), and more a politics of the negotiation of relations, configurations; one which lays an emphasis on those elements addressed in Chapter 10: practices of relationality, a recognition of implication, and a modesty of judgement in the face of the inevitability of specificity.

Latour writes of 'the new obligations of coexistence (that is the production of space), of heterogeneous entities no-one can either simplify or eliminate for good' (p. 15). Again, the term coexistence is perhaps inadequate: stress needs to be laid also on coformation, and on the inevitability of conflict. What is at issue is the constant and conflictual process of the constitution of the social, both human and nonhuman. Such a view does not eliminate an impetus to forward movement, but

it does enrich it with a recognition that that movement be itself produced *through* attention to configurations; it is out of them that new heterogeneities, and new configurations, will be conjured. This is a temporality which is not linear, nor singular, nor pre-given, but it is integral to the spatial. It is a politics which pays attention to the fact that entities and identities (be they places, or political constituencies, or mountains) are collectively produced through practices which form relations; and it is on those practices and relations that politics must be focused. But this also means insisting on space *as* the sphere of relations, of contemporaneous multiplicity, and as always under construction. It means not falling back into those strategies of evasion which fail to face up full on to the challenge of space.

This is a change in the angle of vision away from a modernist version (one temporality, no space) but not towards a postmodern one (all space, no time) (see Chapter 7); rather towards the entanglements and configurations of multiple trajectories, multiple histories. Moreover, what this means in turn is that the politics itself might require a different geography: one which reflects the geography of those relations. This Part attends to some of those geographies: to negotiations within place, to the challenge of linking local struggles, to the possibility of an outward-looking local politics which reaches out beyond place.



## 13 throwntogetherness: the politics of the event of place

In the autumn of 1999 workers labouring on the bed of the river Elbe where it begins to open out to the sea at Hamburg came up against a massive boulder. It was a noteworthy event and made the news. The rock became popular and the people of Hamburg began to visit it. But this celebrated resident of the city turned out to be an immigrant. It is an erratic, pushed south by the ice thousands of years ago and left here as the ice retreated. By no means, then, a 'local' boulder.

Or is it? How long do you have to have been here to be local?

On 1 January 2000, German citizenship laws were relaxed somewhat and Ulla Neumann, the imaginative official for foreign immigrants in Hamburg, seized upon the immigrant boulder and the practices it had engendered; to raise questions, to urge a reimagining of the city as open, with the aim of its being lived more openly. The poster in figure 13.1, designed by Steffan Böhle, was the result. Some established immigrants were to be granted citizenship, to be accepted – like the rock – as 'of the place'. The design of the poster reinforced the argument. Hamburg as a major port and very visibly open to ships and workers and capital from around the world had long evoked one image of the city as cosmopolitan. There was an established and much-used logo: 'Hamburg: gateway to the world'. The poster, with the gateway cut through the immigrant rock, and with the city visible through it, both addressed a challenge to established German citizens to make this logo (this already-existing self-image) meaningful in another way, to take it at its word and press it home, and offered an invitation to immigrants to find out more.<sup>1</sup>

It was an attempt to urge an understanding of this place as permeable, to provoke a living of place as a constellation of trajectories, both 'natural' and 'cultural', where if even the rocks are on the move the question must be posed as to what can be claimed as belonging; where, at the least, the question of belonging needs to be framed in a new way. The gateway through the rock speaks of openness and migrants and lays down the challenge of the possibility of living together.

The poster plays to the way in which people live the city, practise it in a whole variety of ways, as they constantly make space-place. It is intended to be



figure 13.1 'Hamburg's Oldest Immigrant'

Source: Design © Steffan Böhle; used with the kind permission of Ulla Neumann

an active agent in that refiguring, reconstituting Hamburgers' story of their past in order to provoke a reimagination of the nature of the present. Its intent is to mobilise a political cosmology, in Fabian's (1983) terms, but a political cosmology which does not somehow exist prior to but is part and parcel of the way in which we live and produce time-space. As Ingold writes, 'the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagements with their surroundings' (1995, p. 76). A knowledge of the city produced through engagement. We Hamburgers love that boulder, we have accepted it into the city; an important element in our practised relation to the

city, indeed one of its iconic emblems, is a migrant.<sup>2</sup> An already instituted practice might shift our imagination which might provoke a reconsideration of (or at least more debate about) other practices.

Place as an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories poses the question of our throwntogetherness. This is Kevin Robins' point in insisting on the importance of material place (Chapter 9). The chance of space may set us down next to the unexpected neighbour. The multiplicity and the chance of space here in the constitution of place provide (an element of) that inevitable contingency which underlies the necessity for the institution of the social and which, at a moment of antagonism, is revealed in particular fractures which pose the question of the political. James Donald (1999), wrestling with the nature of the social and the political in the city, writes that 'We experience our social world as simply the way things are, as objective presence, because that contingency is systematically forgotten' (p. 168). Drawing on Laclau, he argues that, although we cannot hope to capture the fullness of that contingency, it does at particular moments present itself before us.<sup>3</sup> It is the undecidability of the essential contingency which makes possible the opening up of the field of the political: 'The moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the "political"' (Laclau, 1990, p. 35; cited in Donald, 1999, p. 168). *Hamburgs ältester Einwanderer!*, the poster, places itself at that moment, unsettling the givenness.

Places pose in particular form the question of our living together. And this question, as Donald also argues, through reference to Mouffe (1991), Nancy (1991) and Rajchman (1991, 1998), is the central question of the political. The combination of order and chance, intrinsic to space and here encapsulated in material place, is crucial. 'Chaos is at once a risk and a chance', wrote Derrida (1996). And Laclau argues that the element of dislocation opens up the very possibility of politics. Sennett (1970) urges us to make use of disorder, and Levin (1989) evokes 'productive incoherence'. The passage from Derrida runs like this:

This chaos and instability, which is fundamental, founding and irreducible, is at once naturally the worst against which we struggle with laws, rules, conventions, politics and provisional hegemony, but at the same time it is a chance, a chance to change, to destabilize. If there were continual stability, there would be no need for politics, and it is to the extent that stability is not natural, essential or substantial, that politics exists and ethics is possible. Chaos is at once a risk and a chance. (p. 84)

The relation to spatiality is two-fold: *first* that this irreducibility of instability is linked to, and certainly conditional upon, space/spatiality and *second* that much 'spatial politics' is concerned with how such chaos can be ordered, how juxtapositions may be regulated, how space might be coded, how the terms of



connectivity might be negotiated. Just as so many of our accustomed ways of imagining space have been attempts to tame it.

The space we call 'public space' raises these arguments most pointedly. There is widespread concern about 'the decline of public space' in the neoliberal city: the commercial privatisation of space, the advent of new enclosures such as, iconically, the shopping mall, and so forth. These are clearly processes we may witness with alarm, and for a number of good reasons. They involve the vesting of control over spaces in the hands of non-democratically-elected owners; they may involve the exclusion from many such spaces of groups whom we might have expected (for instance had the space been publicly owned) to have been allowed there (the exclusion of unemployed 'loiterers' – deemed not to be prospective shoppers – from shopping malls has probably emerged as the most-cited example). These are serious issues. But the tendency to romanticise public space as an emptiness which enables free and equal speech does not take on board the need to theorise space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal. Richard Rogers' call, in his report *Towards an urban renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 1999), for more public spaces in the city envisages them as squares, piazzas, unproblematically open to all. While one might share his desire for a greater presence of this element of the urban fabric, its 'public' nature needs to be held up to a scrutiny which is rarely devoted to it. From the greatest public square to the smallest public park these places are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations. Bea Campbell's ('public') shopping centres in *Goliath* (1993) dominated by different groups at different times of day and night (and dominated in explicitly excluding ways) are a good example (Massey, 1996b). In London there has been the sharpest of spats over the presence of pigeons (a tourist attraction, beloved by all, animals with rights *versus* pigeons as a flying, feathered health hazard) in Trafalgar Square. *Comedia's* (1995) study of public parks pointed clearly to the continuing daily negotiations and struggles, sometimes quiet and persistent, sometimes more forceful, through which day in day out these spaces are produced. Such 'public' space, unregulated, leaves a heterogeneous urban population to work out for itself who really is going to have the right to be there. All spaces are socially regulated in some way, if not by explicit rules (no ball games, no loitering) then by the potentially more competitive (more market-like?) regulation which exists in the absence of explicit (collective? public? democratic? autocratic?) controls. 'Open space', in that particular sense, is a dubious concept. As well as objecting to the new privatisations and exclusions, we might address the question of the social relations which

could construct any new, and better, notion of public space. And that might include, sometimes, facing up to the necessities of negotiated exclusion.

There is a further point. Rogers reflects Walzer (1995) in working with a notion of open-minded spaces. But this must be seen as an asymptotic process. There may be parallels here with Derrida and with theorists of radical democracy and notions of democracy-to-come, of a continually receding horizon of the open-minded-space-to-come, which will not ever be reached but must constantly be worked towards. This is like Robbins' 'phantom public sphere': a fantasy, but one which it is imperative that we continue to pursue. In Rosalyn Deutsche's words, 'If "the dissolution of the markers of certainty" calls us into public space, then public space is crucial to democracy not despite but because it is a phantom' (1996, p. 324). By the same token, and precisely because of the elements of chaos, openness and uncertainty which they both embody, space, and here specifically place, are potentially creative crucibles for the democratic sphere. The challenge is having the confidence to treat them in this way. For instituting democratic public spaces (and indeed the spaces of places more generally) necessitates operating with a concept of spatiality which keeps always under scrutiny the play of the social relations which construct them. 'Instead of trying to erase the traces of power and exclusion, democratic politics requires that they be brought to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation' (Mouffe, 1993, p. 149).

The argument is not that these places are not public. The very fact that they are necessarily negotiated, sometimes riven with antagonism, always contoured through the playing out of unequal social relations, is what renders them *genuinely* public. Deutsche, in her exploration of the possible meaning of public art, draws on Claude Lefort: 'The hallmark of democracy, says Lefort, is the disappearance of certainty about the foundations of social life' (p. 272). 'The public space, in Lefort's account, is the social space where, in the absence of a foundation, the meaning and unity of the social is negotiated – at once constituted and put at risk. What is recognised in public space is the legitimacy of debate about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate' (p. 273). As Deutsche reflects, 'Conflict is not something that befalls an originally, or potentially, harmonious urban space. Urban space is the product of conflict' (p. 278).

What applies to public space applies *a fortiori* to more ordinary places. These temporary constellations of trajectories, these events which are places, require negotiation. Ash Amin (2002) writes of such a politics of place as suggesting a different vocabulary: one of local accommodation, a vocabulary which addresses rights of presence and confronts the fact of difference. It would be a

vocabulary irreducible to a politics of community and it articulates a politics without guarantees. Moreover, places vary, and so does the nature of the internal negotiation that they call forth. 'Negotiation' here stands for the range of means through which accommodation, anyway always provisional, may be reached or not.

Chantal Mouffe defines the political as being predicated upon 'the always-to-be-achieved construction of a bounded yet heterogeneous, unstable and necessarily antagonistic "we"' (quoted in Donald, 1999, p. 100). Some kinds of places, on certain occasions, do require the construction of such a 'we', but most 'places' in most quotidian ways are of a much vaguer sort. They do not require the constitution of a single hegemonic 'we' (though there may be a multiplicity of implicit ones being wielded in the daily practices that make the place).<sup>4</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy offers the notion of the political as 'a community consciously undergoing the experience of its sharing' (1991, p. 40). The daily negotiation and contestation of a place does not require in quite that sense the conscious collective contestation of its identity (however temporarily established) nor are there the mechanisms for it. But insofar as they 'work' at all places are still not-inconsiderable collective achievements. They are formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent 'identities' are also themselves continually moulded. Place, in other words does – as many argue – change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practising* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us. The terms on which it takes place may be the indifference of Young's unassimilated otherness, or the more conscious full interaction which Sennett seeks, or a more fully politicised antagonism.

Donald cites Derrida's *Politics of friendship* on the distinction between respect and responsibility. It is a distinction Derrida aligns with his interpretation of the difference between space and time. Respect, he says, refers to distance, to space, to the gaze; while responsibility refers to time, to the voice and to listening (see Donald, 1999, p. 166). Derrida writes: 'There is no respect ... without the vision and distance of a *spacing*. No responsibility without response, without what speaking and hearing *invisibly* say to the ear, and which takes *time*' (1997, p. 60; emphasis in the original, cited in Donald, 1999, p. 166). One might be wary of elements in this formulation including that particular way of differentiating space and time, though the aspect of space as the social is clear. None the less, what 'places' – of all sorts – pose as a challenge and a responsibility is precisely what Derrida is after, the co-implication of his 'responsibility' and 'respect' – might one say time-space? – the recognition of the coevalness (and in 'place' co-presence) of a multiplicity of trajectories.

'Place' here could stand for the general condition of our being together (though it is meant here more specifically than that). However, the spatiality of

the social is implicated at a deeper level too. First, as a formal principle it is the spatial within time-space, and at this point most specifically its aspect of being the sphere of multiplicity, and the mutual opacity which that necessarily entails, which requires the constitution of the social and the political. Second, in political practice much of this constitution is articulated through the negotiation of places in the widest sense. Imaginations of space and place are both an element of and a stake *in* those negotiations. Hamburg's poster catches precisely at this.

This view of place is most often evoked when discussion turns to that metropolitan-academic preoccupation: *cities*. Donald's careful and stimulating discussion concerns cities specifically. He cites the inevitability of conflict in cities; the challenge of living together in such space-places (that the important question is less the one so often posed – how do I live in the city – but how do we live together – p. 139); he cites Rajchman's question of being 'at home' in a "world where our identity is not given, our being-together in question." That is the specific sense in which city life is inescapably political' (1999, p. 155). Cities are perhaps the places which are the greatest challenges to democracy (Amin et al., 2000). They are peculiarly large, intense and heterogeneous constellations of trajectories, demanding of complex negotiation.<sup>5</sup> This imagination of the (usually Western) city, however, has most often focused on cultural and ethnic mix – which is certainly one kind of meeting of trajectories effected through neoliberal globalisation. But there are other ways, too, in which such cities, and perhaps especially Western so-called 'world cities', have been the site of the colliding trajectories of globalisation.



Take London. London is a world city for capital as well as for international migration. The trajectories of capital, just as much as of ethnicity, come into collision here. Trading on its long history as mercantile hub of empire, London has gathered into itself a huge constellation of financial and associated functions. The financial City marks the city (the impossibility of distinguishing between them in speech provokes wandering Derridean thoughts). The City's trajectory is massive and (even allowing for acknowledged weaknesses and vulnerabilities) forceful. It is also a trajectory which is outwardlooking; its gaze sweeps the planet. Until the recent opening up of 'property-development opportunities' there, the City knew more about markets on distant continents than about what was happening just across the river. Moreover this is a trajectory which collides here in London with other economic histories which have, so far, continued to be made in this place. There are the remains of physical trade, a million service industries, national, local and international, a considerable manufacturing base and a tattered public sector infrastructure. These are trajectories with different

resources, distinct dynamics (and strengths in the market) and temporalities, which have their own directions in space-time, and which are quite differently embedded within 'globalisation'.

It is a real collision. The dominance of London by global financial industries changes the character and the conditions of existence of all else.<sup>6</sup> The working of this collision through land prices is the most evident of these effects. Manufacturing industry which might otherwise have survived is made uneconomical by the price it has to pay for land/premises. The continuing profitability of the process of production, before such costs are taken into account, is nullified by the inability to find or retain a site in the face of the voracious demand and the greater ability to pay, on the part of these 'world city' industries. Put another way, the growth of the City is an element in the production of unemployment among manufacturing workers. It places constraints on and presents obstacles to the growth, sometimes even the survival, of other parts of London's economy. Infrastructure is straining at the seams, its efficiency declining, and capacity problems are evident everywhere. The grotesquely high wages in the City have further knock-on effects, on prices in general but on housing costs in particular. It becomes impossible to sustain a public sector because public sector workers (given central government policy) cannot afford to live here. Even in my own neck of the woods, on the other side of London from the City, a 'local community policeman' has to commute in from Leicester; and a letter was dropped through my door (and through all the letterboxes in the area) interpellating me, and the rest of this area, through a specific bit of our identity (to 'The Home Owner' it said): and it went on to invite me to take advantage of the fact that I live in the same metropolis as the overpaid cohorts of global finance. Their annual bonuses would be pushing up house prices – maybe I wanted to sell.

This, then, is a clash of trajectories where the dominance of one of them reverberates through the whole of London: changing the conditions for other industries, undermining the public sector, producing a greater degree of economic inequality in London than in any other city in the UK (and that last fact in itself has effects on the lives of everyone). London's higher 'average' salaries conceal a vast inequality – but the additional costs which the high end of that distribution produces have to be borne by everyone.

London is a 'successful' city. Endlessly it is so characterised. (The other regions of the country are problems, we are told, but not London and the South East.) Yet the same documents almost invariably then go on to hint at a difficulty with this characterisation. London is a successful city, they aver, 'but there are still great areas of poverty and exclusion'. Spokespeople for London point to this evident fact in claims for a greater share of the national cake. Prime Minister Tony Blair deploys it constantly in his attempt to evade the issue of inequality between regions (there's poverty in London, too, you

know ...). (What is needed, of course, is redistribution *within* London – see Amin et al., 2003.)

The problem is in the conjunction. First in the conjunction 'but'. The sentence should rather read: 'London is a successful city *and partly as a result of the terms of that success* there are still great areas of poverty and exclusion.' And second, in the conjunction of trajectories of the economy: the huge concentration of world city industries (and especially finance) is one element in the constellation of forces *producing* that poverty and exclusion.<sup>7</sup>

~ This is a material collision, moreover, which forces political choice. What is to be the economic strategy of the city? At present it is simply to prioritise finance as the key to world citydom. But the fact that London's 'success' is one of the dynamics producing poverty and exclusion implies at least a query as to the meaning of this word 'successful' and should raise a question about the model of growth. It makes no sense to go on promoting 'growth' in the same old way (not, that is, if the aim, as constantly stated, is to *reduce* poverty and exclusion). Clearly, then, a decision has to be made: between reducing poverty and promoting the City. It is a real political choice. The very suggestion generates anxiety: to take one's foot off the accelerator might mean finance would flee to Frankfurt. This is the reply which is endlessly offered. And who knows how much truth there might be in that fear/threat? The point is that if there is *any* truth in it then there are mutually exclusive (antagonistic) options in front of us: on the one hand policies which favour the City and on the other policies which aim straight at redistribution. This collision of trajectories in place highlights a conflict which requires a political stance.<sup>8</sup>

It is a conflict which is usually hidden. Indeed the real difficulty *is* that lack of recognition. There is a refusal to recognise the antagonism. To those who point to the need to address the problem of poverty the response begins with political agreement. *Of course* they want to address poverty and exclusion (actual redistribution is less easily acceded to). This will be done by multiplier effects from the City (but we know that trickle-down doesn't work); or, a more recent version, soon virtually everyone will be drawn into this new economy (so who, then, will empty the dustbins, nurse the sick, be our local community policeman ...?).

At such a point, the argument can become a seemingly technical one over means of achievement. But what has really happened is that the antagonism has been displaced. Rather than an explicit conflict over political aims what we have now is a confrontation between imaginations of the city. The pro-finance view often rests upon a contrast between 'new economy' and 'old', supported by the myth of the new economy as panacea. (The centuries-old financial City is here – ironically – cast as 'new' in opposition to manufacturing as 'old'!) In this imaginary the economy has a classy centrepiece with the rest of the population finding a role in servicing it. It is this structure which

produces trickle down and multipliers to all. It is a unity. And it is a unity rhetorically bolstered through recourse to the establishment of external enemies: the other regions of the country (accused of taking too big a share, through redistribution, of the national tax revenue); and Frankfurt (portrayed as forever standing ready to take over as financial capital of Europe). The alternative imaginary refuses this proclaimed unity and instead stresses the multiplicity and interdependence of the various parts of the urban economy, together with recognition of the dislocations, the clashings of diversity, within it. An imagination of a simply coherent entity, with finance as the shining pinnacle, the engine of growth pulling all else along, but with some problems of internal uneven development still to be smoothed out, confronts an imagination of this place as a clash of trajectories of differential strength and where that differential strength is part of what must be negotiated. What is in dispute is what Rajchman has called the 'principle of the spatial dispositions of our being together' (1998, p. 94). Sometimes you have to blow apart the imagination of a space or place to find within it its potential, to reveal the 'disparition' 'in what presents itself as a perceptual totality' (p. 19). To challenge the class politics of London the city itself has to be reimagined as a clash of trajectories.

This itself, however, renders intervention even more tricky. For this has to be an intervention into a constellation of trajectories which, though interacting and undoubtedly affecting each other, have very different rhythms. There is no coherent 'now' to this place (Chapter 12). The thing which is place is not the closed synchrony of structuralism, nor is it the frozen slice-through-time which has so often been characterised as space. All of which has further implications for politics. It means that the negotiations of place take place on the move, between identities which are on the move. It also means, and this is more important to the argument here, that any politics catches trajectories at different points, is attempting to articulate rhythms which pulse at different beats. It is another aspect of the elusiveness of place which renders politics so difficult.

So, in London, progressive people want to solve in the short term the evident need for affordable housing, want larger regional differentials in wage rates (the London Weighting), argue that the 'national' minimum wage ought to be higher in the capital: in other words they want to ameliorate some of the problems posed by the dominance of the City. It is hard not to be sympathetic. Yet such a response will only fan the flames of the longer-term dynamic of the financial world city trajectory. (Yes the financial City can keep growing and somehow we will manage to service it.) Not only is this a patch-and-mend approach to London's economy, not only will such measures through market forces become inadequate almost as soon as they are implemented, but precisely by responding only to immediate processes they perpetuate the long-term dynamics (the dominance of finance, nationally increasing inequality,

exacerbating regional uneven development) which lie at the root of it. In the long term such an approach could make things worse (on the redistributors' own criteria).

All this is about cities, and a world city at that. But multiplicity, antagonisms and contrasting temporalities are the stuff of all places. John Rajchman (2001) has reflected upon the current intellectual infatuation (again) with cities: a transdisciplinary obsession. There has, he argues, been a long historical relation between philosophy and the city which has taken the form both of the city providing the conditions for the emergence of philosophy and of philosophy's being the 'city in the process of thinking' (p. 3) – the city as a provocation to philosophy in which 'a city is not only a sociological object, but also a machine that undoes and exceeds sociological definitions posing new problems for thinking and thinkers, images and image-makers' (p. 14). The city as productive of moments of absolute deterritorialisation and, continuing in Deleuzo-Guattarian vein, thus producing too a counterposition between 'the historical deterritorializations of the city' and 'the identities of states and the stories they tell of themselves' (Rajchman, 2001, p. 7) (a contrast which might reflect that between places as simply the unnamed juxtapositions of trajectories which require negotiation, and places with hegemonising identities, with stories 'they' tell of themselves). As Rajchman puts it, Benjamin and Simmel can both be read, in very different ways, as thinkers 'who saw in the peculiar spaces of the metropolis a way to depart from the more official philology or sociology of the German university to explore a zone that could no longer quite be fit[ted] within the great schemes of history and society of the day' (p. 12), an idea which Deleuze would generalise to a philosophy of society as always *en fuite*. It is a wonderfully provocative argument. And it leads Rajchman on to ask what different deterritorialisation is opened up by cities today: what kinds of lines of flight of thought take off 'when we start to depart from ways we have been determined to be towards something other, we are not yet quite sure what ...' (p. 17).

Maybe it is indeed that cities have been so productively both condition of and provocation to new thinking. Moreover, part of what this provocation has entailed (though not always explicitly) is a rethinking of city *space* – as accumulation of layers, as ungraspable juxtapositions, and so forth. This space is not, however, unique to the space of the city. It may be the extremity of cities which provokes for some a reimagining, but the in-principle nature of the spatiality is not confined to the urban.

The 'countryside' (such English visions arise, of security and stability) can be deterritorialising of the imagination too. The erratic boulder in Hamburg,

the migrant rocks which currently exist as Skiddaw, speak to the same 'new' spatiality as does the city, and open up more widely an appreciation of the temporary nature of the constellation which is place. Tectonic shifts, the ebb and flow of icecaps, the arrival of nonhuman and human migrants; that radical difference in temporalities emphasises more than cities ever can that a 'constellation' is not a coherent 'now'. The persistent focus on cities as the sites which most provoke disturbance in us is perhaps part of what has tamed (indeed is dependent upon the taming of) our vision of the rural. Yet reimagining countryside/Nature is more challenging still than responding to the changing spatiality (customarily figured as predominantly human) of the urban.

It is amazing how often this is missed, by even the most self-professedly nomadic of thinkers. Félix Guattari, whose notions of change are otherwise so strong, none the less in his *The three ecologies* (1989/2000) writes of 'natural equilibriums' (p. 66) and, even more bizarrely even if in metaphorical reference to making the desert bloom, of bringing vegetation back to the Sahara (also p. 66). The translator's introduction, too, reinforces this impression of a 'nature' which, if not interfered with by humans, would be 'in balance' (see, for instance, pp. 4 and 5). Or again, Brian Massumi (1992) urges that 'The equilibrium of the physical environment must be reestablished, so that cultures may go on living and learn to live more intensely, at a state far from equilibrium' (p. 141). Such dualisms, as argued in Chapter 9, are inherent in much of the writing of such as Giddens and Beck about 'the risk society'. While cultural mobility and mutability is celebrated, 'disturbances' of nature's pattern are viewed with alarm:

What seems to underpin the new cosmopolitan environmentalism ... is the premise that, left to itself, nature is docile; it maintains its given forms and positions. Culture on the other hand, is seen to be inherently dynamic, both self-transforming and responsible for the mobilization and transmutation of the material world – for better or worse. ... Western thought's most pervasive dualism, we might be forgiven for thinking, has returned to haunt cosmopolitan risk society. (Clark, 2002, p. 107)

It is an imagination which fails entirely to appreciate that 'traffic which is nature's own' (p. 104), or to understand the 'indigeneity' of plants and animals, and of rocks and stones, as no less elusive than that of humans.

The nonhuman has its trajectories also and the event of place demands, no less than with the human, a politics of negotiation. It is such a set of negotiations, and maybe in a serious sense frequently failed negotiations given 'nature's' reply, that Mike Davis (2000) documents in his glorious account of Los Angeles. (For the city and nature are not geographically distinct: Whatmore and Hinchliffe, 2002/3.) The production of Los Angeles as it is today, in its conflictual and often perilous throwtogetherness of nonhuman and human,

has involved culture clashes (with temperate zone geomorphologists and climatologists misinterpreting utterly the natural forces amongst which they had arrived), love/hate relations (a longing to live outside the city followed by shock and indignation when confronted by a coyote) and a refusal to take seriously (or rather a belief that money – 'public' money – could and should be used to combat) a whole slew of nonhuman dynamics (from tectonic plates to river basins to bush fires). This has been a human–nonhuman negotiation of place conducted, on the human side, within an overweening presumption of the ability to conquer. It is a manifestly different negotiation from that which has, for much of the past few hundred years, characterised an Amazonia where although in fact the interpenetration of human and nonhuman is everywhere to be found (Raffles, 2002), that interpenetration has occurred largely within an imagination of 'nature's' overweening power. These are extreme examples; the point is only that in every place there will be such negotiation and that these negotiations will vary. Moreover, just as in the case of the apparently more purely human negotiations, the consequences are not confined to those places alone. The nonhuman connectivities of both Los Angeles and Amazonia are global in their reach.

It is useful indeed to recognise the wider relevance of the doubts about space which first occur, to some, on the streets of the city. By that means, the import of the city is both increased and reduced. Increased, because it is, or has been, this particular kind of space which has so frequently refused to be contained within pregiven frameworks of thought and which has thus become the *espace provocateur* for more general new thinking. Reduced, because after all the city is not so absolutely special. Other doubts can be raised (and are so for me) in other places. This is important for political reasons. While the focus on cities has been productive it can be repetitive, with its insistent excited mantras, and it is excluding – not only of other, non-urban, places but of wider spatialities of global difference. It has its dubious ironies too: while globalisation is so often read as a discourse of closure and inevitability, too many of the new tales of the city are all about openness, chance and getting lost. Neither alone is an adequate story; together they are especially politically inadequate, their coexistence allowing us to play to our hearts' content on the urban streets, all the while inexorably caught up in the compound of global necessity. As King (2000) has pointedly suggested, Western academics' focus on Western world cities, the realms in which they tend to live, may be another form of inwardlookingness. Clark's argument revolves in part around material relations between Europe and Aotearoa New Zealand. In the late nineteenth century the biotic impact of colonialism was running riot: 'while the cities of the centre may have presented vistas pulsing with "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent", the settler formation could offer entire landmasses convulsing with the shock of the new' (Clark, 2002, pp. 117–18). Perhaps other things could be learned by reflecting on other places.

Los Angeles and Amazonia, as they were to become, were new to the early European settlers. But even for those who do not roam so far, or even those who remain 'in place', place is always different. Each is unique, and constantly productive of the new. The negotiation will always be an invention; there will be need for judgement, learning, improvisation; there will be no simply portable rules. Rather it is the unique, the emergence of the conflictual new, which throws up the necessity for the political.



## 14

# there are no rules of space and place

To return for a moment to the poster described in the previous chapter, depicting the immigrant boulder found in the Elbe. When the poster was put up, on a range of measures Hamburg was one of the richest cities in Europe – a wealthy city in a wealthy and powerful country. The campaign to recognise its essential hybridity, even down to the rocks, and the attempt to use this to question the terms of debate (what is local? not local?), to remove a ground from those who would argue, now, for closure (there is no appealing to an authenticity of the soil), is one which the political left is in general likely to applaud. Openness is good. 'The left', broadly speaking, deplores the closures of Fortress Europe and *la migra*. Quite right. Yet it is important to be clear about the terms of debate which underlie that position.

For at least parts of the left will also on other occasions argue equally vociferously *against* openness. While much of the language of enlightened cultural studies and the wider rhetorics of hybridity and unboundedness chime (sometimes all too easily) with the dominant tropes of neoliberalism, many of the same constituency are equally opposed to unbridled free trade: they stand against the enforced levering open of the economies of the South to Northern goods and services, opposing GATS and MAI; they defend the claim of indigenous peoples to their land and their close relation to it (all the while deploring the claim by Serbians). Some would counterpose to the triumphalism of globalisation a romanticism of the local. Just as the bulk of the political right is 'inconsistent' in extolling the free movement of capital while working actively to prevent the free movement of labour, and just as this is achieved by hailing in legitimisation two contradictory geographical imaginations, so the left can often be found in the mirror, opposing both positions (arguing against free trade and for unrestricted migration) and on grounds of equally antinomic principles.

How, for instance, and in the context of the Hamburg case and the wider argument for relaxing restrictions on immigration into the European Union,