

Part I

Referencing Globalization



1

The Sociology of Space and Place

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall show that space (and place) should be central to sociology. But the history of sociology in the twentieth century has in some ways been the history of the singular absence of space. This was an absence that could not be entirely sustained. Here and there space broke through, disrupting pre-existing notions which were formed around distinctions which had mainly served to construct an a-spatial sociology. Societies were typically viewed as endogenous, as having their own a-spatial structures. Furthermore, societies were viewed as separate from each other, and the processes of normative consensus or structural conflict or strategic conduct were conceptualized as internal to each society, whose boundaries were coterminous with the nation-state. There was little recognition of the processes of internal differentiation across space.

This was so although the beginning of the twentieth century saw a series of sweeping technological and cultural changes which totally transformed the spatial underpinnings of contemporary life (Kern, 1983; Soja, 1989). These changes included the telegraph, the telephone, X-rays, cinema, radio, the bicycle, the internal combustion engine, the airplane, the passport, the skyscraper, relativity theory, cubism, the stream-of-consciousness novel and psychoanalysis. However, these changes were not reflected within sociology at the time and they became the province of a separate and increasingly positivist science of geography that set up and maintained a strict demarcation and academic division of labor from its social scientific neighbors.

In the next section I summarize some of the early “classical” writings on space which developed within the context of geography’s colonization of the spatial. In the section following I show what in the late 1970s changed this and brought space into sociology and social theory more generally. In the final section

analysis is provided of the recent emergence of a research program of a sociology of place, which brings out the importance of diverse spatial mobilities across, into, and beyond such places.

THE “CLASSICS” AND SPACE

The sociological classics dealt with space in a rather cryptic and undeveloped way. Marx and Engels were obviously concerned with how capitalist industrialization brought about the exceedingly rapid growth of industrial towns and cities. In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx and Engels describe how fixed, fast-frozen relations are swept away, all newly formed relations become antiquated before they can ossify, and “all that is solid melts into air” (1888, p. 54; Berman, 1983). Marx and Engels argue *inter alia* that capitalism breaks the feudal ties of people to their “natural superiors”; it forces the bourgeois class to seek markets across the surface of the globe and this destroys local and regional markets; masses of laborers are crowded into factories, so concentrating the proletariat and producing a class-for-itself; and the development of trade unionism is assisted by the improved transportation and communication that capitalism brings in its wake. In his later works, especially *Capital*, Marx analyzes how capitalist accumulation is based upon the annihilation of space by time and how this consequently produces striking transformations of agriculture, industry, and population across time and space.

Some similar processes are analyzed by Durkheim, although the consequences are viewed very differently. In *The Division of Labor in Society* it is argued that there are two types of society with associated forms of solidarity, mechanical (based on likeness or similarity) and organic (based on difference and complementarity). It is the growth in the division of labor, of dramatically increased specialization, that brings about transition from the former to the latter. This heightened division of labor results from increases in material and moral density. The former involves increases in the density of population in a given area, particularly because of the development of new forms of communication and because of the growth in towns and cities. Moral density refers to the increased density of social interaction. Different parts of society lose their individuality as individuals come to have more and more contacts and interactions. This produces a new organic solidarity of mutual interdependence, although on occasions cities are centers of social pathology. Overall Durkheim presented a thesis of modernization in which local geographical loyalties will be gradually undermined by the growth of new occupationally based divisions of labor. In *Elementary Forms* Durkheim also presents a social theory of space. This has two elements: first, since everyone within a society represents space in the same way, this implies that the cause of such notions is essentially “social”; second, in some cases at least the spatial representations will literally mirror its dominant patterns of social organization.

Max Weber made very few references to space, although his brother, Alfred Weber, was a seminal contributor to the theory of industrial location. Max

Weber was relatively critical of attempts to use spatial notions in his analysis of the city. He rejected analysis in terms of size and density and mainly concentrated on how the emergence of the medieval city constituted a challenge to the surrounding feudal system. The city was characterized by autonomy and it was there for the first time that people came together as individual citizens (Weber, 1921).

The most important classical contributor to a sociology of space and place is Simmel (Frisby, 1992a, b; Frisby and Featherstone, 1997). He analyzed five basic qualities of spatial forms found in those social interactions that turn an empty space into something meaningful. These qualities are the exclusive or unique character of a space; the ways in which a space may be divided into pieces and activities spatially “framed”; the degree to which social interactions may be localized in space; the degree of proximity/distance, especially in the city, and the role of the sense of sight; and the possibility of changing locations, and the consequences especially of the arrival of the “stranger.” Overall Simmel sees space as becoming less significant as social organization becomes detached from space.

In “Metropolis and the City” (in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997), Simmel develops more specific arguments about space and the city. First, because of the richness and diverse sets of stimuli in the metropolis, people have to develop an attitude of reserve and insensitivity to feeling. Without the development of such an attitude people would not be able to cope with such experiences caused by a high density of population. The urban personality is reserved, detached and blasé. Second, at the same time the city assures individuals of a distinctive type of personal freedom. Compared with the small-scale community, the modern city gives room to individuals and to the peculiarities of their inner and outer development. It is the spatial form of the large city that permits the unique development of individuals who are placed within an exceptionally wide range of contacts. Third, the city is based on the money economy, which is the source and expression of the rationality and intellectualism of the city. Both money and the intellect share a matter-of-fact attitude toward people and things. It is money that produces a leveling of feeling and attitude. Fourth, the money economy generates a concern for precision and punctuality, since it makes people more calculating about their activities and relationships. Simmel does not so much explain urban life in terms of the spatial form of the city as provide an early examination of the effects of “modern” patterns of mobility on social life wherever it is located. He shows that motion, the diversity of stimuli, and the visual appropriations of places are centrally important features of the modern experience.

These analyses were not much developed by the “urban sociology” established in the interwar period at the University of Chicago. This work involved the attempt to develop ecological approaches to the study of the city, such as the concentric ring theory. Theoretically important was Wirth’s “Urbanism as a way of life” (1938; followed by Redfield’s “The folk society,” 1947). Wirth argued that there are three causes of the differences in social patterns between urban and rural areas. These are: *size*, which produces segregation, indifference and social distance; *density*, which causes people to relate to each other in terms of specific

roles, urban segregation between occupants of such roles, and greater formal regulation; and *heterogeneity*, which means that people participate in different social circles, none of which commands their total involvement, and this results in discrepant and unstable statuses. Wirth and Redfield thus claim that the organization of space, mainly in terms of size and density, produces corresponding social patterns.

Much effort has been spent on testing the hypothesis that there are two distinct ways of life and that these result from the respective size, density and heterogeneity of urban and rural areas. However, the research has largely shown that there are no such simple urban and rural patterns. Indeed, urban areas often contain close-knit social groups, such as the urban villages of Bethnal Green in London or of the immigrant ghettos in North American cities. More generally, Gans (1986) questioned the thesis that most city dwellers are isolated, individualized and autonomous. Even inner-city areas can be centers of a complex sociality focused around, for example, gentrification. Other city areas are more suburban, where the focus of activity is the home and where the main forms of activity are car-based (see Sheller and Urry, 2000, on urban sociology's treatment of automobility). In such cases it is the forms of mobility that are important, and less the size and density of the urban area. Furthermore, rural life is not simply organized around farm-based communities, where people frequently meet each other, are connected in diverse ways, and tend to know each other's friends (Frankenberg, 1966). Studies of rural communities have shown that there may be considerable conflict and opposition in such places, especially around status, access to land and housing, and the nature of the "environment" (Newby, 1979).

To a significant extent, then, sociology took over such easy contrasts in its endeavor to construct a spatially determined analysis of the urban and rural way of life. Elsewhere it was shown that the concept of "community" can be used in various ways (Bell and Newby, 1976). First, there is its use in a topographical sense, to refer to the boundaries of a particular settlement; second, there is the sense of community as a local social system implying a degree of social interconnection of local people and institutions; third, there is "communion," a particular kind of human association implying personal ties, belongingness, and warmth; and, fourth, there is community as ideology, where efforts are made to attach conceptions of communion to buildings, or areas, or estates, or cities, and so on, in ways which conceal and perpetuate the non-communion relations that are actually found.

Finally here, sociology has tended to reproduce not just the distinction in popular discourse between the countryside and the city (Williams, 1973), but also Tönnies's opposition of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Such binary distinctions have been especially criticized by Schmalenbach (1977), who adds a third term, the *Bund*. The *Bund* involves community, but this is a community that is conscious and freely chosen on the basis of mutual sentiment and emotional feeling. And *contra* Weber, the affective basis of such a *Bund* is not irrational and unconscious but conscious, rational and non-traditional. Such *Bünde* are not permanent or necessarily stable (Hetherington, 1994).

BRINGING SPACE BACK IN: THE 1970S AND 1980S

In this section I outline the Marxist and post-Marxist critique of this treatment of space and place. Castells (1977, 1978) argued that any scientific discipline needed a properly constituted “theoretical object,” and maintained that urban sociology (and by implication rural sociology) did not possess such a theoretical object. Such an object would be based on a distinctive “structuralist” analysis of the unfolding contradictions of capitalist relations. These relations are increasingly organized on an international basis and this gives a particular role to towns and cities which have become centers not of production, but of “collective consumption.” This term refers to services generally provided by the state and necessary for the “reproduction” of the energies and skills of the labor force.

Castells, having identified a proper “theoretical object” for urban sociology, “collective consumption,” uses this to explain particular kinds of spatially varied politics. He argues that collective consumption cannot be provided unproblematically since states are rarely able (and willing) to raise sufficient taxation revenues. All sorts of disputes arise over the forms and levels of provision, such as the quality of public housing, the location of health care, the nature of public transport, and so on. Each of these services becomes “politicized” because they are provided collectively. Thus a sphere of urban politics emerges focused around these forms of collective consumption. Castells devotes particular attention to analyzing “urban social movements.” These normally comprise a number of different urban groups but come under the dominance of working-class organizations, to become in effect a new kind of class politics. Thus, he argues strongly against efforts to understand the urban in terms either of “culture” or “way of life” or of a spatial determinism.

A more geographical focus was developed by Massey (1984). She argued that spatiality is an integral and active feature of the processes of capitalist production; it has various aspects besides that of region, including distance, movement, proximity, specificity, perception, symbolism, and meaning; and space makes a clear difference to the degree to which, to use realist terminology, the causal powers of social entities (such as class, the state, capitalist relations, patriarchy) are realized (Sayer, 1992). In particular, there are a number of distinct spatial forms taken by the social division of labor; there is no particular historical ordering in the emergence of each of these forms of restructuring; that which develops depends upon the specific struggle between capital and wage labor; one important pattern of spatial restructuring involves the relocation of certain more routine elements of production away from headquarters and research and development functions; and these diverse patterns of spatial restructuring generate new patterns of inequality, which are not just social but also spatial. On this account a particular locality is the outcome of a unique set of “layers” of restructuring dependent upon different rounds of accumulation. How these layers combine together in particular places, and especially how international, national, and local capitals combine together to produce particular local social

and political effects, became the subject of major research programs (for example, in the UK, Bagguley et al., 1990).

One implication of spatial differentiation is to challenge the notion that social class is a *national* phenomenon, that classes are essentially specified by the boundaries of the nation-state. The emphasis within the restructuring literature on local/regional variation has led analysts to rethink social classes through this prism of space (later, gender and ethnicity were subject to similar analyses). Thus, there are international determinants of the social class relations *within* a nation-state; there are large variations in local stratification structures within a society, so that the national pattern may not be found in any particular place at all; the combination of local, national, and international enterprises may produce locally unexpected and perverse commonalties and conflicts of class interest; there are marked variations in the degree of spatial concentration of class; some class conflicts are in fact caused by, or are displaced onto, spatial conflicts; and, in certain cases, localities emerge with distinct powers to produce significant social and political effects (see Urry, 1995; Fröbel et al., 1977, on the “new international division of labor”).

Some of these points were developed into Harvey’s (1989) concept of “time-space compression.” He shows how capitalism entails different “spatial fixes” within different historical periods. In each capitalist epoch, space is organized in such a way as to facilitate the growth of production, the reproduction of labor power and the maximization of profit. And it is through the reorganization of such time-space that capitalism overcomes its periods of crisis and lays the foundations for a new period of capital accumulation and the further transformation of space and nature through time.

Harvey examines Marx’s thesis of the annihilation of space by time and attempts to demonstrate how this explains the shift from “Fordism” to the flexible accumulation of “post-Fordism.” The latter involves a new spatial fix and most significantly new ways in which time and space are represented. Central is the “time-space compression” of both human and physical experiences and processes. Harvey brings out how this “compression” can generate a sense of foreboding, such as when the railway first transformed the countryside. In the past couple of decades mobility has been carried to further extremes, so that time and space appear literally *compressed*: “we are forced to alter . . . how we represent the world to ourselves. . . . Space appears to shrink to a ‘global village’ of telecommunications and a ‘spaceship earth’ of economic and ecological interdependencies . . . we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of *compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds” (Harvey, 1989, p. 240). Interestingly, Heidegger in 1950 foresaw much of this “shrinking” of the distances of time and space, the importance of “instant information” on the radio, and the way that television is abolishing remoteness and thus “un-distancing” humans and things (Zimmerman, 1990, pp. 151, 209).

However, these dramatic ways in which time and space are compressed does not mean that places necessarily decrease in importance. People appear to have become more sensitized to what different places in the world contain or what they may signify. There is an insistent urge to seek for roots “in a world where

image streams accelerate and become more and more placeless. Who are we and to what space/place do we belong? Am I a citizen of the world, the nation, the locality? Can I have a virtual existence in cyberspace?" (Harvey, 1996, p. 246). Thus, the less important the temporal and spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of mobile capital, migrants, tourists, and asylum-seekers to the variations of place, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated, albeit through processes which are highly capitalized.

Finally, Giddens, in his post-Marxist theory of time and space, argued that the movement of individuals through time and space is to be grasped through the interpenetration of presence and absence, which results from the location of the human body and the changing means of its interchange with the wider society (Giddens, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1991). Each new technology transforms the intermingling of presence and absence, the forms by which memories are stored and weigh upon the present, and the ways in which the long-term *durée* of major social institutions are drawn upon within contingent social acts. Presence-availability depends upon the degree to which, and the forms through which, people are co-present within an individual's social milieu. Communities of high presence-availability include almost all societies up to a few hundred years ago. Presence-availability has been transformed in the past century or two through the development of new transportation technologies and the separation of the media of communication from the media of transportation. Thus there is variation in "time-space distancing," the processes by which societies are "stretched" over shorter or longer spans of time and space. Such stretching reflects the fact that social activity increasingly depends upon interactions with those who are absent in time-space. In contemporary societies there is the disembedding of time and space from social activities, the development of an "empty" dimension of time, the separation of space from place, and the emergence of disembedding mechanisms, of symbolic tokens and expert systems, which lift social relations out of local involvement. Expert systems bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which are valued independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them. Such systems depend on trust, on a qualitative leap or commitment related to absence in time and/or space. Trust in disembedding mechanisms is vested not in individuals but in abstract systems or capacities, and is specifically related to absence in time and space.

TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF PLACE

In the contributions so far considered, space and time have been treated as Newtonian, as objective, linear, and absolute notions in which there are three dimensions of space and the separate dimension of time. It is presumed that objects are located within these objective dimensions of time and space, that objects are not intrinsically "spaced" and "timed." However, in recent years the challenges to these views from twentieth-century science have begun to trickle into the sociology of place and space.

Thus, for example, twentieth-century physics has shown that time is not a separate dimension along which objects may travel forwards or backwards. Time is now conceived of as irreversible and as constitutive of physical and social entities. This is clearly seen in the expansion of the universe through the cosmological arrow of time, following the singular historical event of the “big bang.” There are many mundane examples of such irreversibility: coffee always cools, organisms always age, spring follows winter, and so on. There can be no going back, no reabsorbing of the heat, no return to youth, no spring before winter, and so on. Laws of nature are historical and imply pastness, presentness, and futureness. “The great thing about time is that it goes on” (Eddington, quoted in Coveney and Highfield, 1990, p. 83), while “irreversibility [of time] is the mechanism that brings order out of chaos” (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p. 292; see also Hayles, 1991; Adam, 1998).

More recently, chaos and complexity theories have begun to inflect sociological analysis (Byrne, 1998). Such theories involve repudiating simple dichotomies of order and disorder, of being and becoming. Physical systems do not, it seems, exhibit and sustain structural stability. The commonsense notion that small changes in causes produce small changes in effects is mistaken. Instead, there is deterministic chaos, dynamic becoming, and non-linear changes in the properties of systems as a whole rather than transformations within particular components. Time in such a perspective is highly discontinuous, and there are many non-equilibrium situations in which abrupt and unpredictable changes occur as the parameters are changed over time. Following a perfectly deterministic set of rules, unpredictable yet patterned results can be generated. The classic example is the famous butterfly effect, where minuscule changes at one location produce, in very particular circumstances, massive weather effects elsewhere. Such complex systems are characterized by counter-intuitive outcomes that occur temporally and spatially distant from where they appear to have originated.

Complexity theory emphasizes how complex feedback loops exacerbate initial stresses in the system and render it unable to absorb shocks in a simple way which re-establishes the original equilibrium. Very strong interactions are seen to occur between the parts of a system and there is a lack of a central hierarchical structure. Zohar and Marshall (1994) elaborate the implications of the concept of the *quantum society*. They describe the collapse of the old certainties of classical physics, characterized by rigid categories of absolute time and space; solid impenetrable matter made up of interacting “billiard balls” and strictly determinant laws of motion. In its place there is “the strange world of quantum physics, an indeterminate world whose almost eerie laws mock the boundaries of space, time and matter” (Zohar and Marshall, 1994, p. 33). They particularly develop analogies between the wave/particle effect and the emergent characteristics of social life: “Quantum reality” has the potential to be both particle-like and wave-like. Particles are individuals, located and measurable in space and time. They are either here or there, now or then. Waves are “non-local,” they are spread out across all of space and time, and their instantaneous effects are everywhere. Waves extend themselves in every direction at once, they overlap

and combine with other waves to form new realities (new emergent wholes), such as those changes occurring at the emergent global level (Zohar and Marshall, 1994, p. 326; Urry, 2000).

Many writers have directly or indirectly developed aspects of these arguments in relationship to the social world (Byrne, 1998; Cilliers, 1998). I shall now discuss three older writers whose ideas connect to such notions: Lefebvre, Bachelard and Benjamin. First, Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is not a neutral and passive geometry. Space is produced and reproduced and thus represents the site of struggle. Moreover, all sorts of different spatial phenomena – land, territory, site, and so on – should be understood as part of the same dialectical structure of space or spatialization. While conventionally these different phenomena are separated as a result of fragmented discipline-based analyses, they need to be brought together in a unified structure.

This comprises three elements. First, there are “spatial practices.” These range from individual routines to the systematic creation of zones and regions. Such spatial practices are over time concretized in the built environment and in the landscape. The most significant spatial practices are those of property and other forms of capital. Second, there are representations of space, the forms of knowledge and practices that organize and represent space, particularly through the techniques of planning and the state. And, third, there are the spaces of representation, or the collective experiences of space. These include symbolic differentiations and collective fantasies around space, the resistances to the dominant practices, and resulting forms of individual and collective transgression. Lefebvre is particularly concerned with the production of space under capitalism. Different forms of space succeed each other through time. There is succession from natural to absolute to abstract space, the effect being progressively to expel nature from the social. Abstract space is the high point of capitalist relations, leading to extraordinary “created spaces.” Shields’s (1991) analysis of social spatialization develops Lefebvre’s examination of the cultural construction of space. He examines the changing social spatialization of the beach, as it went from a medical zone to a pleasure zone; the social construction of the place-myths of Brighton and Niagara Falls; the construction of the “north” and “south” “spaces” of Britain; and the contested space myths of the north of Canada (see Urry, 1995, for other examples).

Bachelard (1969) likewise develops a conception of space that is qualitative and heterogeneous, rather than abstract, empty and static. He specifically considers the nature of the “house” and argues that it is not to be seen as a purely physical object. In particular, it is the site within which one’s imagination and daydreaming can take place and be given free rein (Bachelard, 1969, p. 6). And the home is also a metaphor for intimacy. Houses are within us and we reside in houses. In particular, all sorts of spaces, such as the house in which one is born, are imbued with memory traces. And that belongingness derives from the materiality of the particular place in question. Moreover, Bachelard argues that the very duration of time is itself dependent upon such spatial specificity. Space is necessary to give quality to time. Or, as Game (1995, p. 201) expresses it, “Space transforms time in such a way that memory is made possible.” Thus a

space such as a house plays a particularly significant role in the forming and sustaining of memory. It shelters daydreaming. Further, our bodies do not forget the first house that we encounter. Bachelard (1969, p. 15) talks of a “passionate liaison” between the body and this initial house. Its characteristics are physically inscribed in us. Memories are materially localized and so the temporality of memory is spatially rooted. Bachelard spatializes the temporality of memory. Houses are lived through one’s body and its memories (Game, 1995, pp. 202–3). Memories of places are embodied. The past is “passed” on to us not merely in what we think or what we do but in how we do it. And places are not just seen, as in the scopic regime of the “sightseer,” but perceived through the diverse senses that may make us ache to be somewhere else or shiver at the prospect of having to stay put (see Urry, 2000, on the senses). Proust conveys this embodied character of memory: “our arms and legs are full of torpid memories” (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 203).

Benjamin (1979) draws on similar themes in his analysis of how people “read” the city (see also Buck-Morss, 1989). This is not a matter of intellectual or positivistic observation; instead, it involves fantasy, wish-processes, and dreams. The city is the repository of people’s memories and of the past; and it also functions as a receptacle of cultural symbols. These memories are embodied in buildings that then take on a significance different from that intended by the architect. However, this is not simply a matter of individual interpretation, since buildings demonstrate collective myths. Understanding these myths entails a process of unlocking or undermining existing interpretations and traditions and of juxtaposing conflicting elements together. Even derelict buildings may leave traces and reveal memories, dreams, and hopes of previous periods. Wright’s *A Journey through Ruins* (1992) well demonstrates Benjamin’s method, as he begins his journey with an old toilet in Dalston Lane in east London.

Benjamin was also concerned with the similarities between artistic perception and the reading of the urban text. Benjamin suggests that buildings are normally appreciated in passing, in a state of distraction, as people are moving on elsewhere. This is by contrast with people’s “concentrated” absorption of paintings in a gallery. Most famously, Benjamin examined the role of the flâneur, the stroller, who wandered around the city sampling life in a distracted and unpremeditated form (Buck-Morss, 1989). The voyeuristic and distracted nature of the encounter with the urban means that memories of the past can be ignited by some current event. It is only with distracted perception that this chance linking of past and present can occur and undermine the oppressive weight of past traditions. Benjamin also analyzes those places concerned only with entertainment, such as the expositions in Paris; they transform visitors to the level of the commodity as they enter a “phantasmagorical world.”

Following on from these theories, a variety of crucial points about place have been developed by writers influenced in one way or another by these older contributions. However, the kinds of points now made are diverse and mean that the sociology of place has moved a long way from the simple and objective dimensionality of Newtonian space and time.

First, it is now more clearly seen that places are not necessarily static and unchanging (Massey, 1994, pp. 136–7). Places involve process and such processes involve more local and much wider sets of social relations. Massey states that what I have termed localness is a “distinct mixture together in one place [which] produce[s] effects which would not have happened otherwise” (1994, pp. 156, 138). Places can therefore be loosely understood as multiplex, as a set of spaces where ranges of relational networks and flows coalesce, interconnect, and fragment. Any such place can be viewed as the particular nexus between, on the one hand, propinquity characterized by intensely thick co-present interaction, and on the other hand, fast flowing webs and networks stretched corporeally, virtually and imaginatively across distances. These propinquities and extensive networks come together to enable performances in, and of, particular places.

In particular, places, we now know, are “gendered.” Men and women can have different relations to the “city,” which is often dominated by male interests and by the predominant forms of representation, such as monuments, commemorative buildings, and historic sites, that record male activities. We also know just how important urban design is for the safe dwelling and mobility of women, especially in those places dominated by automobility (Wilson, 1991; Ardener, 1993; Wolff, 1995; Sheller and Urry, 2000). There are, of course, complex interconnections between such analyses and those of ethnicity. Particularly in the USA, much focus has been placed on showing the changing spatial distribution of different ethnic groups and especially the development of a black underclass in the inner city (Wilson, 1987). Wilson argues that this has resulted from the spatial mobility of the black middle class that in large numbers left the black areas. This has helped to undermine the bases of community life, at the same time that such areas have been devastated by massive deindustrialization as jobs moved south and west and out to the suburbs. There is an “emptying out of the ghetto” (Wacquant, 1989; Davis, 1990).

Changing gender and ethnic character is associated with cities being reconstructed as centers for postmodern consumption (and employment); the city is becoming a spectacle, a “dreamscape of visual consumption,” according to Zukin (1992, p. 221). She shows how property developers have constructed these new landscapes of power, stage sets within which consumption can take place, including especially wining and dining (see Bell and Valentine, 1997, on how “we are where we eat”). These dreamscapes pose significant problems for people’s identity, which have historically been founded on place, on where people come from or have moved to. Yet postmodern landscapes are all about place, such as Main Street in EuroDisney, World Fairs or Covent Garden in London. But these are simulated places for consumption. They are barely places that people any longer come from, or live in, or which provide much of a sense of social identity. Somewhat similarly, Sennett (1991) argues that in the contemporary city different buildings no longer exercise a moral function – the most significant new spaces are those based around consumption and tourism. Such spaces are specifically designed to wall off the differences between diverse social groups and to separate the inner life of people from their public activities.

Objects are thus very significant in this construction of place. Various kinds of objects, activities, or media images may constitute the basis of such an “imagined presence.” They carry that imagined presence across the members of a local community, although much of the time members of such a place may not be conscious of this imagined community. Various objects can function in this way – and not just the immense monuments of place and community. Oldenburg has described the significance of informal casual meeting places: bars, cafés, community centers, spaces under pear trees, and so on. He calls these “third places,” places beyond work and households where communities come into being and neighborhood life can be sustained (Oldenburg, 1989; Diken, 1998).

Finally, even those places which are based upon geographical propinquity depend upon diverse mobilities. There are countless ways of reaffirming a sense of dwelling through movement within a community’s boundaries, such as walking along well worn paths. But any such community is also interconnected to many other places through diverse kinds of travel. Raymond Williams in *Border Country* (1988) is “fascinated by the networks men and women set up, the trails and territorial structures they make as they move across a region, and the ways these interact or interfere with each other” (Pinkney, 1991, p. 49; Cresswell, 1997, p. 373). Massey similarly argues that the identity of a place is derived in large part from its interchanges with other places that may be stimulating and progressive. Sometimes, though, such notions depend upon gender-unequal relationships to the possibilities of travel. Massey discusses how “mum” can function as the symbolic center to whom “prodigal sons” return when the going elsewhere gets tough (1994, p. 180).

Finally, I shall consider two examples where research has shown how places are constituted through networks of movement. First, among British road protestors and travelers, dwellings are often impermanent and characterized, according to one participant, by “their shared air of impermanence, of being ready to move on...re-locate to other universities, mountain-tops, ghettos, factories, safe houses, abandoned farms” (Mckay, 1996, p. 8). There is a sense of movement, of continuous acts of transgression, as happens in the case of a peace convoy. Their dwelling spaces are constituted through various routeways and specific sacred nodes. Dwelling is intense, impermanent, and mobile. These cultures of resistance are constituted as “a *network . . . of independent collectives and communities*” (Albion Free State Manifesto, 1974; see McKay, 1996, p. 11). Such groupings form a “loose network of loose networks,” such as those involved in free festivals, rural fairs, alternative music, hunt sabotage, road protests, new age traveling, rave culture, poll tax protest, peace convoys, animal rights, and so on (Mckay, 1996, p. 11). These networks are reinforced by various patterns of travel, in which there is a kind of resistant mapping of key events, places, routeways, and so on (see Urry, 2000, on corporeal mobility).

Second, the literature on diasporas shows how cultures have been made and remade as a consequence of the flows of peoples, objects, and images backwards and forwards across borders (Bhabha, 1990). Gilroy specifically argues that: “In opposition to . . . ethnically absolute approaches, I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of

analysis...and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 15). Diasporic societies cannot persist without much corporeal, imaginative, and increasingly virtual travel both to that homeland and to other sites of the diaspora (Kaplan, 1996, pp. 134–6). Clifford (1997, p. 247) summarizes:

dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labor migration. Airplanes, telephones, tape cassettes, camcorders, and mobile job markets reduce distances and facilitate two-way traffic, legal and illegal, between the world’s places.

The sacred places and the family and community members to be visited are located in various “societies” linked through “structured travel circuits” (Clifford, 1997, p. 253). Such modes of travel and exchange – what Clifford terms the “lateral axes of diaspora” – reorganize the very sense of what is a social group’s “heritage,” which is never simply fixed, stable, natural, and “authentic” (Clifford, 1997, p. 269). In particular, the close-knit family, kin, clan, and ethnic connections within a diaspora enable the flows of migrants and income across national borders and the more general organization of diasporic trade.

The tendency for diasporas to live within major “global” cities means that they particularly contribute to, and profit from, the increasingly cosmopolitan character of such places (Hannerz, 1996). This can be seen with the overseas Chinese who have generated Chinatowns in many major cities across the globe. The largest is in New York and is a strikingly recent phenomenon. In the 1960s there were only 15,000 residents but over the next twenty years they had grown twenty-fold, with a staggering array of services, workshops, and increasingly professional trades. Chinatowns have of course become key nodes within the routeways of “global tourism,” since they sell authentic “ethnic quaintness,” a quaintness cleaned up and repackaged for the international tourist gaze (Cohen, 1997, p. 93).

Diasporas thus indicate the more general point about place, summarized by bell hooks (1991, p. 148) when she writes: “home is no longer one place. It is locations” – and, we might add, the mobilities between such locations. I have described sociology’s journey to make sense of such places, a journey that involves traveling in and out of diverse intellectual homes, producing a hybrid analysis drawn from many locations.