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Introduction

Part 1: The Politics of Place...

Michael Keith and Steve Pile

1. Why think about place, politics and identity?

Writing in the wake of yet another Conservative Party victory in the 1992 British general election and more urban conflict in Los Angeles and various British cities, it would appear that politics has changed very little - no matter where you look - whether at the level of the nation-state or on the streets.

On the other hand, many social commentators have detected some kind of a sea change - not only in the nature of western societies but also in global economic relations. This transformation is usually referred to as the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Unfortunately, debates on the nature of the modern and the postmodern have become internal and arcane (Pile and Rose, 1992). There is no broad agreement on what modernity was, on what postmodernity is, or on how we got from there to here, or on where we are going next.

Much of this debate revolves around three related issues: the relationship between time and space, the potential of politics and the construction of identity. This book is, however, not about the debate over modernism and postmodernism, instead the question is this: can concrete geographical and historical circumstances - whether the British general election or civil disturbances on the streets of Los Angeles - be understood as expressions of abstract social relations? Many theorists allege that the contemporary (whether it be modernity or postmodernity) is now much more complex than hitherto and that it is no longer good enough to theorise power as the expression of a singular dimension of oppression, such as class or gender or race. We may question how far this is true, but the effort now and here is to specify the relations between the many dimensions of oppression - including class, gender and race - and to then suggest strategies of resistance. In order to articulate an understanding of the multiplicity and flexibility of relations of domination, a whole range of spatial metaphors are commonly being used: position, location, situation, mapping; geometrics of domination, centre-margin, open-closed, inside-outside, global-local; liminal space, third space, not-space, impossible space; the city. Such terms are used to imply a complexity which is never directly explored or confronted (to use two more spatial metaphors) - partly because it is rarely clear whether the space invoked is 'real', 'imaginary', 'symbolic', a 'metaphor-concept' or some relationship between them or something else entirely. For example, the metaphor-concepts of exploration (which has deep roots in Imperialism) and confrontation (which implies a face-to-face, potentially violent, opposition) may evoke social relationships between authors, texts and readers which are not intended or are inappropriate.

In this introduction, we wish to achieve two things: *first*, in Part 1, we want to explore the politics of place; and, *second*, in Part 2, we want to confront the place of politics. In Part 1, we introduce the notion of *spatiality* by drawing on the writings of Frederic Jameson and Ed Soja. This review suggests that space cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive, abstract arena on which things happen. The spatialities of urban regeneration and the politics of diaspora illustrate precisely these themes. For the purposes of our argument, the first may be understood as an identity politics of place and the second as the spatialized politics of identity. In Part 2, we ground this discussion in debates surrounding the sense of space evoked by political theorists. At the end of Part 2, we describe how the essays collected here are both embedded in this tradition, and confront it, in analyses of the relationship between place, politics and identity.

2. The spatial vogue

One of the most prominent commentators on the condition of the contemporary, Fredric Jameson (1984, 1991), has suggested that these new patterns are distinguishable from old ones by the domination of social and cultural life by the logic of spatial organisation, rather than time.

"I think that it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism" (Jameson, 1991, 16).

Jameson suggests that there are three basic phases in the development of the spatial logic of society under capitalism. In the first stage, he argues that *market capitalism* was dominated by the spatial logic of the grid. Capitalism organised, and was organised by, a geometrical view of space. This view was subsequently replaced by the growing contradiction between lived experience and structure. In the second stage, *monopoly capitalism*, figurative space stand in the place of absent causes. Space represents, and is represented by, distorted images of the real determinations of social relations. Currently, the spatial logic of *multinational (postmodern) capitalism* is simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented - a kind of 'schizo-space'.

Indeed, for Jameson, schizophrenia seems to have become the mark of the age: old loyalties of class or gender or race fragment, dislocate, rupture, disperse; new loyalties of class and gender and race interrupt, disrupt, recombine, fuse. No-one is quite sure of the ground on which they stand, which direction they facing or where they are going. Under these circumstances, the subject is proclaimed dead; the agent of history no more.

"But what is involved here is in reality practical politics: since the crisis of socialist internationalism and the enormous strategic and tactical difficulties of coordinating local and grassroots of neighborhood political actions with national or international ones, such

urgent political dilemmas are all immediately functions of the enormously complex new international space in question" (Jameson, 1991, 413).

In order to counteract the political paralysis of today, Jameson develops an alternative view of space and political action, provisionally naming it as the aesthetic of cognitive mapping. Jameson is not calling for the mapping of old notions of space, instead this is the name of a new form of radical political culture; its fundamental object is the "world space of multinational capital" (Jameson, 1991, 54). Cognitive mapping is in some senses recognised to be both unimaginable and impossible; it attempts to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, between an awareness of global processes and the inability to grasp totality. Nevertheless, it is also meant to allow people to become aware of their own position in the world, and to give people the resources to resist and make their own history. It is the logic of capital itself which produces an uneven development of space. These spaces need to be 'mapped', so that they can be used by oppositional cultures and new social movements against the interests of capital as sites of resistance.

The problem for oppositional politics is that "everyone 'represents' several groups all at once" (Jameson, 1991, 322). This means that the identity of the subject position and of the political movement need to be understood simultaneously. This brings us back to what political pundits in Britain have described as Basildon man and Essex girl. These are geographically-specific, gendered stereotypes of working class people who vote against their class interest by voting for the Conservative Party - the party of capital. We should not forget, in the nostalgia for the simplicity of class war, that its rhetoric is increasingly useless - because, however fleetingly, it does not work. Identities supplant others - no matter how important an 'objective' circumstance or central an identity is argued to be by politicians, academics and pundits. Following Lefebvre, Jameson argues that what is needed, in order to help recover the sites of resistance, is

"a new kind of spatial imagination capable of confronting the past in a new way and reading its less tangible secrets off the template of its spatial structures - body, cosmos, city, as all those marked the more intangible organization of cultural and libidinal economies and linguistic forms" (Jameson, 1991, 364-65).

This contention suggests, at least, that space may be the template from which the secrets of reality are to be read. Later, Jameson notes - on the last page of his book - that work in this vein may best be exemplified by the writings of Ed Soja (Jameson, 1991, 418).

However, Soja, similarly drawing on Lefebvre but also more on Foucault, does not see space as so passive, undialectical. Both Soja and Jameson share a common concern for spatiality, partly because this term is designed to reinstate space at the heart of a dynamic conception of time-space relations. But Soja wants to locate his argument on different terrain from Jameson; while Jameson sees space as a process of distance, Soja would rather treat distance as a dialectic between separation and the desire to be close. This leaves the question of the individual's occupation of subject positions in a different conceptual place. For Jameson, the individual is

to be mapped by the spatial specificity of their subject positions, in order to uncover the hidden human geography of power, but Soja's schema suggests that even this dynamic understanding of the situation is too solid: space is not an innocent backdrop to position, it is itself filled with politics and ideology.

"We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (Soja, 1989, 6).

Soja (1989, 7, 122-126) argues that space has been misrecognised by contemporary social theory. It has suffered from a dual illusion: either space has been seen as opaque or as transparent. The *illusion of opaqueness* has led to a concentration on concrete forms, where space is fixed, dead and undialectical (following Foucault). What is lost from view are "the deeper social origins of spatiality, its problematic production and reproduction, its contextualization of politics, power, and ideology" (Soja, 1989, 124). The *illusion of transparency* dematerializes space, it becomes an abstraction, a supposedly real representation of concrete forms: "spatiality is reduced to a mental construct alone ... Social space folds into mental space ... [and] away from materialized social realities" (Soja, 1989, 125). This version echoes Jameson's identification of geometrical space, but connects the representation of space to actual space. Having made this connection, Soja is able to argue that the contemporary situation is marked by the convergence of three different kinds of spatialization: posthistoricism, postfordism and postmodernism. These, Soja continues, may now be reconnected - in a mutually reinforcing hermeneutic arc - to Jameson's radical cultural politics: i.e. cognitive mapping. It is the mapping of these features of space which will allow "a new way of seeing through the gratuitous veils of both reactionary postmodernism and late modern historicism to encourage the creation of a politicised spatial consciousness and a radical spatial praxis" (Soja, 1989, 75).

If, as Soja argues, "the geography and history of capitalism intersect in a complex social process which creates a constantly evolving historical sequence of spatialities" (1989, 127), then certain questions are invoked - and these relate to the way in which place, politics and identity are to be understood through an already spatialized array of concepts, such as mapping and spatiality. These issues may be introduced by turning to bell hooks, who is fast becoming a shibboleth for white academic men - including us - who want to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt their radical credentials.

3. Questions for mapping the politics of identity

"Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often impoverished. Theorizing about this experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating

oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a "safe" place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance" (hooks, 1991, 149).

Distinct, irreconcilable understandings of space underscore the cultural mappings of the contemporary. For Jameson space is a template, while for Soja such a geometrical conception of space is passive, fixed, undialectical and is no longer appropriate. For hooks, both these perspectives involve risks and dangers which are directly political; for those who have no place that can be safely called home, there must be a struggle for a place to be. Her evocation of the margins is simultaneously real and metaphorical - it defines an alternative spatiality: radical openness. A different sense of place is being theorized, no longer passive, no longer fixed, no longer undialectical - because disruptive features interrupt any tendency to see once more space as the passive receptacle for any social process that cares to fill it - but, still, in a very real sense about location and locatedness.

In this collection, the authors develop their own lines of disruption; new spaces of politics are identified, new politics of identity are located. Unwisely, perhaps, we would like to suggest that there are three key areas that distinguish these new projects:

- i locations of struggle
- ii communities of resistance
- iii political spaces.

These surfaces of articulation permit alternative agendas for geography and for those interested in space and place for other reasons. Key strategic moves are being made the authors in this book, ones which transgress and displace traditional notions of space and place, of time and history. New spaces of resistance are being opened up, where our 'place' (in all its meanings) is considered fundamentally important to our perspective, our location in the world, and our right and ability to challenge dominant discourses of power.

"As a radical standpoint, perspective, position, "the politics of location" necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of re-vision" (hooks, 1991, 145).

It is in this spirit of re-visioning that this volume charts attempts to de-limit positions which avoid two equally unacceptable arguments, a myth of spatial immanence and a fallacy of spatial relativism. The first is the notion, self-evidently bizarre on close inspection, alarmingly common in much social description, that there is a *singular*, true reading of any specific landscape involved in the mediation of identity. On the other hand, it is invidious and disingenuous to suggest that each and every reading of a specific landscape is either of equal value or equal validity; such notions lead to an entirely relativist notion of spatiality.

Instead, it may be argued that simultaneously present in any landscape are multiple enunciations of distinct forms of space - and these may be reconnected to the process of re-visioning and remembering the spatialities of counter-hegemonic cultural practices. We

may now use the term spatiality to capture the ways in which the social and spatial are inextricably realised one in the other; to conjure up both the circumstances in which society and space are simultaneously realised by thinking, feeling, doing individuals and also the many different conditions in which such realisations are experienced by thinking, feeling, doing subjects.

The spatialities in which we are interested in this volume are the source of both the complexity of our understandings of the spatial and the confusion in the contemporary vogue for a spatialized vocabulary. Most readily seen in the unproblematic use of metaphors of, and allusions to, the spatial there is a sense in which the geographical is being used to provide a secure grounding in the increasingly uncertain world of social and cultural theory. As some of the age-old core terms of sociology begin to lose themselves in a world of free-floating signification there is a seductive desire to return to some vestige of certainty via an aestheticized vocabulary of *tying down* elusive concepts, *mapping* our uncertainties and looking for *common ground*.

Transparent landscapes: the myth of spatial immanence

At times the resort to spatialized vocabulary deploys limited and misleadingly unproblematic evocations of spatiality. Typically, in an acknowledgement of the increased salience of notions of the spatial to contemporary social theory Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (1992) have contrasted the fixity of pre-modern identities (founded in, for example, religion) with the manner in which "social space opens up the way for the autonomous definition of identity" in modernity (Lash and Friedman, 1992, 5). They also draw attention to the importance of spatial scale: pointing out that Marshall Berman's (1988) analysis of modernity begins with the localism of place, and citing Jane Jacobs's (1961) concern with the neighbourhood in the life and death of cities. Yet in spite of this welcome acknowledgement they then go on to draw a tendentious equivalence, respectively, between notions of the public and the private, the universal and the local, and landscape and vernacular spaces (Lash and Friedman, 1992, 19).

The latter dichotomy - taken from the cultural geography of J. B. Jackson - has been drawn on even more explicitly by Sharon Zukin (1991, 1992) in describing the manner in which landscapes of power may triumph over the vernacular (1991, chapter 9). In her analysis of the cultural forms of contemporary capitalism, Zukin tends towards economic reductionism in an opposition between

"*markets* - the economic forces that detach people from established social institutions - and *place* - the spatial forms that anchor them to the social world, providing the basis of a stable identity." (Zukin, 1992, 223).

In order to analyse this transition, Zukin introduces the notion of 'liminal spaces'. She argues that the localism, or neighbourhood urbanism, of the modern city has been transformed into postmodern transitional space. This space is 'betwixt and between' economic institutions

but is best described by the adjective liminal because it "complicates the effort to construct spatial identity" (Zukin, 1992, 222). Liminal spaces are ambiguous and ambivalent, they slip between global markets and local place, between public use and private value, between work and home, between commerce and culture. Nevertheless, she time and again returns to an evocation of a singular immanent meaning which lies buried beneath the surface and awaits revelation. A scene is either 'landscape' or 'vernacular', a one to one correspondence between the image and consumption of a place and its *reality*. The implication here is that multiple meanings (liminal landscapes) reflect only the multi-faceted images of capital rather than other sources multiplicity (Zukin, 1992, 240).

Zukin provides an example of what she is talking about: a tour of the streets of Clerkenwell. The tour leader - who is a teacher and a recent in-migrant - guides the few visitors around the area, giving them a view of the cityscape which allows the city to be consumed as an ensemble. The city is subjugated to no particular narrative of history, the historic parts were merely presented as cultural artifacts to the audience. This is a liminal scene; the city is created as a cultural category. For Zukin, this tour exemplifies the way in which the sense of *place* has succumbed to *market* forces. Thus, the postmodern urban landscape impose multiple perspectives which are not only wedded to economic power but also facilitate "the erosion of locality - the erosion of the archetypal place-based community by market forces" (Zukin, 1992, 240).

Our point here is not to dismiss Zukin's work under the abusive rubric of economism but instead to suggest that this kind of economic base-cultural superstructure analysis taps just one form of spatiality which structures landscape, but never exhausts its meaning. Plagiarising desperately, landscape is made in the image of capital but this is not its sole image. When we walk the streets - whether as guides, tourists, or inhabitants - we are at once invoking a host of competing spatialities, not a straightforward spatialized reference with a correspondent true meaning.

Anything goes? The perils of spatial relativism

The search for order, the sense of digging behind the cultural façade to find the one true meaning of a landscape is sometimes, explicitly or implicitly, prompted by a fear that if every individual reading of geographical form is equally true then geographical analysis falls prey to cultural relativism, that *anything goes*. It is in this context that the work of Walter Benjamin can provide a useful counterpoint here; certainly his street tour is a long way from Zukin's.

In capturing the cities of Berlin and Paris in his writing Benjamin creates a world through disparate fragments of prose that on first appearance is exclusively his own. And in aestheticizing the spaces of the city he seems to go even further, turning prose into poetry. Well, yes. And no. Because Benjamin does much more. As the exemplary flâneur his work defines a sensibility that takes the specific to rise beyond the particular, prefiguring the urban

readings of Barthes and de Certeau and the politics of situationism, he finds the universal through a street plan, humanity through his arcades.

But Benjamin's arcade is in no way a grid reference or a mere location. It is a way of life, a metaphoric allusion to a form of sensibility, a Proustian metonym, an invocation of a way of seeing, a nodal point in a field of vision that condenses sets of contradictory meanings. It is all of these things and more. And none of them are identical. Each is closely related to most of the others but each evokes a slightly different form of spatiality. As Susan Sontag has commented on Benjamin's work *One Way Street*, "reminiscences of self are reminiscences of a place, and how he positions himself in it, navigates around it" (1979, 19).

We cannot read the street straightforwardly. Famously, 'botanising the asphalt' as flâneur immersed in the urban experience; the whole work of Benjamin is about the intertwining of experience, knowledge and spatiality. Visible or invisible, Benjamin knows the city and the street through a vision that may not be corporeal and may not acknowledge the gendered character of his own gaze (see Pollock, 1988) but most certainly celebrates the conflation of the sites of the urban and the sight of the city. Places are known through this sensibility but places also in turn constitute the sentient individual.

As Sontag at one point suggests, the whole opus of Benjamin might be called *A la recherche des espaces perdues*: "Benjamin is not trying to recover his past, but to understand it: to condense it into its spatial forms, its premonitory structures" (1979, 13). In this sense Benjamin's work provides us with an excellent illustration of the complex relationship between spatialities and identity that we are interested in in this volume. Space too is ambiguous, ambivalent, multi-faceted, duplicitous (Daniels, 1988). Difficult.

In part, reference to Benjamin is a useful reminder of the strictly licensed 'novelty' of a spatialized vocabulary of social theory. But more significantly his work throws light on the relation between identity and the spaces through which identity is both produced and expressed. The spaces of Benjamin's Paris and Berlin are both real and metaphorical simultaneously. They are not just a personal view but then they are not the true representation of city society either. Too often used as a residual descriptive container which defines the empirical, these spatialities are instead to be understood as a constitutive element of the social. Neither are these spaces ethically rudderless. Politically, it should not be forgotten that Benjamin's work provides the literary provenance for Theodor Adorno's powerful analysis of the interaction of the epistemological and the aesthetic.

We are suggesting a more complex relationship between the so-called real and the so-called metaphorical; one does not merely cover the other, one is not more real than the other. For example, to return to the work of Zukin and her description of Disneyland, where

"stage-sets evoke the social production of visual consumption, with its history of resort and fantasy architecture, its fictive nexus in Disney World, and its dependence on markets

to foster products that in turn create a sense of place. In this landscape, socio-spatial identity is derived purely from what we consume" (1992, 243).

This bleak formulation - I consume therefore I am - functions not as critique (as it does in the artwork of Barbara Kruger's formula "I shop therefore I am") but as a normative description.

Her analysis implies, demands, the recovery of authentic, good landscapes, which contrast to the Mickey Mouse worlds of capital. Such nostalgia is unreal - how can the authentic be authenticated, or more properly who is to authenticate the vernacular? We would argue that spatialities draw on a relationship between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic that is not beyond truth and falsity - but is different from it. Is Hardy's Wessex a reliable source any more or less than Rushdie's India? Well, yes. And no. It depends.

We can develop this argument about the 'dependency of truth claims' further through a relatively prosaic example. A few years ago certain Labour Party controlled local authorities in the UK, particularly those in London, chose to describe themselves as "Nuclear Free Zones". It is impossible to evaluate such self-designations purely in terms of the putative truth or falsity of their meaning. Assessed in the spirit of literalism such designations were always manifestly absurd - given the failure of the contemporary nuclear device to respect the borders of the territorially-inclined bureaucrat.

But the notion of Nuclear Free Zones was never intended to stand for such literal interpretation. They were meant to evoke a particular kind of politics by an appeal to the emotions that people felt about the places where they lived, their communities, their localities - their homes. Nuclear Free Zones were intended to make links, they stood as territorial metaphors of a particular kind of 1980s politics - a different politics of consumption that tried to unite the many different fractions of consumption and production classes behind a progressive political platform. Not so much "I consume therefore I am" as "I die therefore I am".

So how should the nuclear free zone be judged? As true or false? As real or metaphorical? As authentic or unauthentic? As true as a burning breast or as false as a bleeding heart? Quite clearly they represented a particular invocation of spatiality. And, given the course of events in the late 1980s, it might be argued that Nuclear Free Zones were cursed by English anti-intellectualism and Anglo-Saxon empiricism - the preferred politics of the literal-minded - which hijacked the symbolism and stranded Nuclear Free Zones in civic debates about the price of signposts and the cost of re-routing the trains carrying nuclear waste.

Much can be said for and about expenditure priorities and more immediate health hazards, but the Right used this particular tactic to lampoon the Left as Loony, and ultimately was yet another nail in the coffin of local democracy. The Nuclear Free Zones were literally daft, but the strategy - right or wrong, good or bad - worked by deploying a spatialized, political language. It created, however briefly, a new space of resistance that tried to weld place, politics

and identity, but only succeeded in provoking a backlash from a Thatcher government tired of thorns in its side.

The question we would like to ask is this: if Nuclear Free Zones were so daft, why did they require a response at all? We would like to suggest two dimensions of an answer, based on one premise. The premise is that the tactic could not be ignored because the Nuclear Free Zones foregrounded something that was meant to remain on the margins of public debate - the stupidity of a defence policy based on Mutually Assured Destruction (i.e. MAD) - at the heart of the public arena of national politics. This presentation of the margins at the political centre contains two basic strategies: the identity politics of place and the spatialized politics of identity. Neither strategy carries a guarantee of success but may be illustrated by two examples: one drawn from the politics of urban regeneration in London's docklands and the second from the politics of the diaspora.

4. "This Land is Our Land": territorialized politics in London's docklands

The recent spectacular crash of Olympia & York in May 1992 has put the planned £3 billion development of Canary Wharf in question and focused national and international attention on London's docklands. On Guy Fawkes night 1992, a satirical T.V. programme - *Alas Smith and Jones* - found a funny side. Drawing on a scene from the musical version of Charles Dickens's *Oliver*, the players sang: "who will buy?". Good question: who will buy the Canary Wharf development? There are levels of irony here. The film *Oliver* sanitizes the London that Dickens once walked through. The scene in the movie was shot in one of Bath's most prestigious crescents - the singers and dancers have clearly never missed a hot meal or a hot bath in their lives. Canary Wharf is an island of wealth - red and green marble has been bought from Italy and Guatemala, young trees bought from Canada and the quality of the development is of the highest order (Punter, 1992); the Tower (1 Canada Place) - now so much the symbol of docklands, but originally intended to be only one of three skyscrapers - stands 'proud' amidst some of the most deprived estates in one of the most deprived boroughs not just in London but in the country. This disparity is resented.

Even during the building of the project, its financial prudence and its appropriateness were being questioned. A local doctor remembers that, during the topping-out ceremony of the 850 foot Tower, one bank manager put it this way: "fucking white elephant if you ask me" (Widgery, 1991, 159). This caustic observation must be understood against several contexts: *first*, the political economy of the re-development of London's docks; *second*, the impending financial collapse of Olympia & York (at the time of the remark still only predicted by the most pessimistic of city analysts and optimistic of Leftist radicals); and, *third*, the feelings - and actions - of the people who live in the shadow of the Tower - physically and metaphorically. It is this last aspect with which this subsection is most concerned, because - in the response of local people to the proposed redevelopment of the docks and the imposition of the London

Docklands Development Corporation - can be seen a particular political mobilisation of place and identity.

A Dog's Breakfast: the political economy of regenerating the docks

In the 1950s and 1960s, despite the reconstruction of London's docks after the Second World War, it became clear that they were becoming uneconomic. Several factors contributed to this situation: partly as a result of the war, London's role as a major trade centre had been undermined; there was an over-capacity on up-stream docks and warehouse facilities; manufacturing firms used war damage compensation to move out of the East End and into the new towns being built outside London; much of the transport system had fallen derelict; and, many buildings had been destroyed by the blitz and those that were left had become obsolete. The two most important factors, however, appear to have been: *first*, that changes in maritime technology required larger deeper docks with the capacity to take container ships (Ambrose, 1986, 218); and, *second*, that the Port of London Authority realised that the land around the docks would be more profitable if it were used for office expansion and the docks' functions were relocated to Tilbury. The combined result was that there was ever-decreasing investment in the docks and the East End more generally. In 1967, the East India Dock became the first to close and the rest of the docks were quick to follow - until the Royal Docks ceased operation in 1982 (Hardy, 1983; Brownill, 1990, 19; Coupland, 1992).

By the early 1970s, London's docks and the land around them had been identified as the largest opportunity for redevelopment in Europe (see Ambrose, 1986, 221; Brownill, 1990, 1). The closure of the docks meant that 22 square kilometres of land had become redundant - the problem was what to do with all that space. Unfortunately, there was a wide range of interest groups which each had their own answers to this question, including a sizeable local population with strongly assertive political traditions (see Ambrose, 1986). This produced a situation of bewildering complexity. Throughout the 1970s, a stream of reports and alternative plans emerged from a succession of agencies; these documents highlighted sharp divisions of opinion. For example, two main issues were identified: employment and housing. On employment, one side argued that any kind of development - including office blocks leisure, the service sector and alike, should be allowed - if it meant jobs; while the other side argued that new employment should be matched to the skills of the people that already lived in Docklands. On housing, some people wanted private housing speculation - which would create a 'normal' tenure balance; on the other hand, people wanted more low-rent public housing. The problem was further complicated because some people wanted homes rather than offices. Centrally, the community groups wanted the power to be able to control development, and to control the resources to enable development.

Even so, different interest groups took different views, and these would alter in particular situations and over time. Broadly four arenas of disagreement can be identified, mutually

opposing views were held not only within each arena, but also between groups in each arena. There were conflicts between:

- i commercial, industrial and community interests;
- ii the Greater London Council, each of the five local boroughs (Tower Hamlets, Newham, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich) and the Port of London Authority;
- iii local government and central government; and,
- iv various representatives (from local councillors through the chairs of local community groups to members of other groups, like Docklands Childcare Campaign) of 'the community' and people resident in and around docklands.

By the end of the 1970s, the development of London's Docklands had become a Gordian knot. In 1979, the then newly elected Conservative government cut that knot. Within months of being elected, Michael Heseltine (then Secretary of State for the Environment) was proposing to set up Urban Development Corporations (UDCs), with centrally appointed Boards and access to state funding. One was to be set up in London's Docklands.

These UDCs were based on the assumption that only private investment could save Docklands - and not state planning; so, the purpose of the UDCs was to do everything possible to get private and institutional money into the area, while simultaneously preventing public intervention in the redevelopment of the area. The UDCs were enabled by the powers of the 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act; which also relaxed planning controls, enabled the compulsory sale of public land, set up inducements for private capital, and controlled public spending.

In July 1981, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was set up under the chairmanship of Nigel Brookes. For Nigel Brookes, regeneration was not about developing docklands in ways which suited the needs of local people and he was certainly not interested in allowing the participation of local people in decision-making. In the initial period, local people were denied access to the decision-makers who were about to radically alter their lives.

Despite being a supposedly laissez-faire free-market, huge sums of money have been channelled into the LDDC. By 1991, £1,134 million had been spent by the LDDC alone. Unsurprisingly, a lot has happened in Docklands. By March 1989, there has been £6 billion of private sector investment; 117,000 dwellings have been built or started (i.e. about 3 a day since the inception of the LDDC); 20,000 jobs have been created; and, 0.81 million sq. m. of floor-space built (see Brownill, 1991, 1). Canary Wharf alone is massive: the access route, Westferry Circus, is the size of Trafalgar Square in central London. It will have 0.95 million square metres of floor-space, which is of equivalent size to Manchester's. It will consume the same amount of electricity as a city the size of Oxford, and steel used in the construction will

amount to a third of the United Kingdom's annual output. Altogether the LDDC estimated that there will be 30,000 dwellings built, 200,000 jobs created and 1.9 million square metres of office space.

Nevertheless, it can easily be demonstrated that regeneration has not helped local people. Since 1981, homelessness has increased by 304%, while it increased 66% in inner London as a whole. Of the 17,000 dwellings that have been started, 85% are private developments, while only 5% are council houses. Total employment is said to have risen to over 42,000, but this represents a real rise of only 10,000 because of job losses in the area. Moreover, 44% of those working in Docklands travel in from outside. Of the 20,000 supposedly new jobs created, 75% are transfers from elsewhere. It is not surprising therefore to find that unemployment levels are twice the rate of the London average (i.e. some 12-13% in the Docklands boroughs, but 7-8% in London as a whole). All this despite over £7 billion investment over so-called the decade of achievement.

The resistances of docklands' people: different spaces, different politics

From the beginning, there was a high degree of conflict about the development of London's Docklands. People were especially annoyed about the imposition of the LDDC, which meant the removal of local democracy. Local people had no way of representing their views to decision-makers, and the decision-makers did not consult local people.

"By the time the LDDC was set up, there were already a large number of community organisations in existence ... These groups had definite demands for how the land should be used in Docklands and for greater community involvement" (Brownill, 1990, 108)

There were (and are) specific geographies to these protests, people organised in different ways at different times in different places. . The notion of docklands became a symbol around which people mobilized, a way in which residents identified their neighbourhood, and an administrative and economic zone; an imagined geography and a spatialized political economy - a way of seeing and a way of life. Nevertheless, it is useful to categorise these groups into three types: docklands-wide, area-specific, and interest-based.

i Docklands-wide: such as Joint Docklands Action Group, Docklands Consultative Committee, Docklands Forum.

ii Area specific: such as Wapping Parents Action Group, Association of Island Communities, Association of Wapping Organisations, Newham Docklands Forum, North Southwark Community Development Project, Rotherhithe Community Planning Centre.

iii Interest based: such as Trades Unions, Church organisations, and special interest groups.

The intersection between these organizations led to a multi-layered and multi-dimensional geography of resistance. Partly as a result of the range of groups and their different interests, partly because of the powers given to the LDDC, and partly due to the geographical dislocation between the various Docklands communities, resistance tended to be fragmented and frustrated. Nevertheless people were tied to their land, and they wanted to have a say. As one campaigner said in 1987:

"There are spaces that we can open up and where we can win things, we are not interested in romantic failure" (Peter Dunn, Docklands Community Poster Project; cited in Nairne, 1990, pp 189).

Different spaces of resistance were opened up, and there were some successes.

Across docklands, an attempt to articulate people's concerns was made through the production of Community Murals by the Docklands Community Poster Project (see Evans and Gohl, 1986, 86-90; Nairne, 1990, 182-189; Wallis, 1991, 300-303). In 1984 (pre-dating John Major's Citizens' Charter), community groups produced "The Peoples' Charter for Docklands" which was taken to Parliament by a "People's Armada" on 17 April 1984. If docklands is linked by anything then it is the river, so in 1985 and 1986 community groups organised more People's Armadas; each containing a flotilla of barges, including one with a banner saying 'Docklands Fights Back', reminding everyone who saw it that docklands communities had not disappeared.

Other forms of resistance were local and the result of local circumstances. For example, in 1983, Newham Docklands Forum produced a "People's Plan" for the Royal Docks area in which they outlined their proposals to address poor housing and economic decline. Although this plan was not adopted, there were positive effects - the community gained a Plan Centre, a laundrette, a training centre and a creche in Pier Parade. This may not seem like much, but this was an extremely run down area. At King's Cross, where greater planning gains were possible, this strategy also proved effective. And now, in 1992, Newham Docklands Forum are drawing up a second "People's Plan" in order to fill the planning and development vacuum created by the recession and the end of the LDDC.

One successful campaign was in the Surrey Docks, where there was a riverside open space at Cherry Gardens. The LDDC identified this as a prime site for luxury homes, but it had been acquired by Southwark Council and they intended to build housing for rent and allow riverside access. Nevertheless, the site was vested by the LDDC, who proposed to build four pairs of seven story luxury blocks on the waterfront. Local people were incensed, and a vigorous campaign mounted, backed by the Rotherhithe Community Planning Centre. The LDDC was left in no doubt as to the strength of local feeling. So, in March 1985, they offered one third of the site to housing associations for rented housing. Fortuitously, while the argument raged, archaeological remains were found on the site and these are believed to be Edward III's manor house. This tipped the balance, in January 1986, the LDDC offered half the site back to Southwark Council, who promptly built low-density housing for local people.

Up until 1987, the LDDC was ascendant; obvious changes had occurred in Docklands, and opposition the LDDC had been successfully excluded from the decision-making process. The Cherry Gardens success was at least partly the result of an archaeological stroke of luck. Nevertheless, problems were already becoming all too visible. In part, these were related to the crash of the stock exchange on 'Black Monday' in October 1987, misguided spending, especially on the hopelessly inadequate Docklands Light Railway, and a failure to provide adequate transport links, such as the extension of the Jubilee underground line. These events, and the continued actions of community groups, have forced onto the agenda the other sides of the LDDC's "Ten Years of Achievement". Docklands is (in)famous for Canary Wharf, post-modern architecture, and gentrification, but two other docklands are now seen to exist: the Docklands belonging to the indigenous communities and the Docklands that cannot be sold for love nor money. Under these circumstances, perhaps the greatest achievement of the community groups is that they have not gone away. By mobilizing a territorialized sense of both place and community identity, they forced themselves onto the political agenda and, because of their continued commitment to "their land" (even though they neither own it nor control it), they will outlast the LDDC and continue to resist the fly-by-night property developers.

5. Diasporic politics and post-colonial authority

The ways in which we talk in everyday language is routinely spatially marked (Keith, 1988; Pile, 1990). Frequently, in efforts to speak to others, to empathise or to generalise, this marking is toned down, suppressed, even eliminated. Again, we see a particular kind of slippage by which the constitutive spatiality of 'being' is, *sotto voce*, muted in a bid for universality. There is a rhetorical root to such a move. Discourses that are ostentatiously marked with their spatiality are conventionally assumed to be narrow-minded, bounded; coming complete with a self-confessed specificity that, it is frequently assumed, restricts their relevance. Working within common-sense understandings of knowledge the markings of spatiality can become the stigmata of parochialism.

In this sense narratives of identity formation in mainstream social science have frequently spoken to an interplay of commonality and difference that erases spatiality through a homogenization of the specific - not a process of *misrepresentation* through over-generalization but instead a naturalisation of particular experiences within a frequently implicit spatial frame of reference. Typically this frame of reference operates at a higher level of generalisation, such as the silent evocation of (national) societies or the reified subject positions of either post-colonial subjection or Eurocentric domination.

This is in part de Certeau's point when he argues that "normative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes" and that "every story is a travel story - a spatial practice" (1984, 115). This spatialized syntax is frequently not obvious even if it is invariably present, if only as an absence. Just as all knowledge on close inspection is both empowered and restrained by its situated

generation, all narratives can be unpacked to reveal the frequently implicit spatialities that they evoke, varying from the mundane to the contradictory.

An exemplary case of this is the manner in which popular, media and academic discussion of the experiences of British Black communities frequently implies the generality of a space-time rubric that is loosely aligned with post-war consensus politics and Fordist labour migration. Yet the narratives of Black communities in the port cities of London, Bristol and Liverpool, pre-dating Fordist labour demand, have their own historicity and spatiality that may have marked the consciousness, practice and racialization of migrant communities, though you might never think so from reading most accounts of 'Black Britain'. It is precisely these traces that Barnor Hesse is interested in examining in his chapter in this volume. The distinct experiences of different migrant communities with African and Caribbean origins is inscribed in the production of space at the local level and yet nationally such communities are bracketed by a single *articulating principle* that captures British Black experiences in the vocabulary of the post-war settlement.

Likewise, particular realisations of colonial ideology may have been inscribed in locally specific ideologies of Empire; these underscored the definitions of 'self' and 'other' that lay at the heart of spatially diverse and contradictory understandings of nation, whiteness, power, subjection, commonwealth, and, which were installed at the heart of the imperial metropolis (Hall, 1992).

In contrast to this sort of silenced spatiality, the diversity of different migrant histories commonly now draws on the geographically rich notion of diasporic politics. In this context the more recent work of Paul Gilroy provides a useful illustration of a project to reconcile precisely the sort of dilemmas we have been working through here by using the imagined geographies of the Black diaspora. Gilroy has formulated what can be read as a strategic double-take on the recurrent tensions of a politics of identity. On the one hand he is attempting to avoid the ethnic essentialism of some forms of identity politics whilst claiming that racialized differences remain significant and at times incommensurable.

The corollary of this is an acknowledgement that, whilst the critiques of Enlightenment reason associated with postmodernity have a power that needs to be recognised, he does not want to let go of the gains that particular forms of rationality offer in fighting racialized oppression. Gilroy sometimes expresses this in terms of an outline of the potential for a specifically Black modernism. Loosely defined, his project appears to work on narrative and conceptual levels, with the notion of an imagined spatiality of diasporic politics serving to mediate these tensions. At the level of historical narrative, the project stresses the international links between Black intellectuals throughout the last hundred years and more; Black diasporic intellectual forms intermingled both within a diasporic international context and with western thought as well. Black nationalism is tied to Hegelian thought just as Pan-Africanism resonates in parallel struggles across and beyond the diaspora.

But more significantly for our argument, the diaspora invokes an imagined geography, a spatiality that draws on connections across oceans and continents and yet unifies the Black experience inside a shared *territory*. This experience is the source of difference and yet does not legitimate the elevation of 'the Black experience' to an incommunicable cultural essence. It is a spatialization of Black consciousness which is not controlled by those who "would police black cultural expression in the name of their own particular history or priorities" (Gilroy, 1991, 5). Neither is the space of the diaspora the party ground for the celebration of "the saturnalia which attends the dissolution of the essential black subject" (Gilroy, 1991, 5). It might almost be said that Gilroy is looking for a third space or an excluded middle-ground between these two extremes.

So instead, the diaspora is an invocation of communal space which is simultaneously both inside and outside the West. The outcome of such positioning is a form of cultural fusion; such *syncretism* produces diaspora-specific resources of resistance, a black sensibility which for Gilroy has the power to conflate ethics, aesthetics culture and politics by the creation of subversive new public spaces in seemingly the least propitious of circumstances. It is in such spaces that even in Victorian England touring Black musicians can subvert imperial ideologies and speak to the experiences of the white working classes in the 19th century as much as their heirs provide the diasporic syncretism of musical forms that inform the cultures of late 20th century cosmopolitanism (Gilroy, 1987). In short the spatiality of the diaspora is the ground on which momentary and ever shifting lines are drawn between inside and outside, oppressor and oppressed, the same and the other.

These lines stress interconnection as much as distinction but they produce a space in which identities are momentarily authenticated, on which what might be called *arbitrary closure* occurs. Rejecting both essentialized and depthless representations of Black identity, Gilroy's diaspora is the spatiality which contingently mediates Black authority, in the explicit knowledge that an imagined space of diasporic identity is located within global systems that not only make such claims context specific but also make communication through the myriad forms of cultural syncretism inevitable. It is a stress on the connections through space and the corresponding links between places and peoples that Doreen Massey has also been particularly interested in exploring (1991, 1992, this volume), a rhetoric in which the bonding of different experiences through their spatialization displaces the common implications of exclusion that the geography of *communities* can imply.

In Gilroy's work the cultural politics of musical expression provide an exemplary case of this linking process. Reggae, soul, rap and many other genres of Black music link the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and Americas. Such cultural forms draw on a specific shared diasporic sense of identity but also communicate outside diasporic boundaries. So 'raga(muffin)' in the 1990s becomes a form of musical syncretism that is rooted in the Black internationalism of the diaspora but communicates beyond it. In processes of cultural fusion it becomes a mode of the expressions of dissent in the youth clubs of the riot torn, almost all white Meadowell Estate in

the North East of England. It is also taken up by young Bengalis in the East End of London who mix it with an alternative diasporic sensibility in drawing on the Punjabi musical forms of Bhangra music.

The political significance of such expressions may be moot but their political content is manifest. What is of particular relevance here is that they rely on a cultural hybridity through which political codes of difference are crossed and transgressed through the processes of syncretism rooted in simultaneously imaginary and real spatialities. In the terms of an important article by Paul Gilroy, 'it ain't where you're from it's where you're at'.

The cultural politics of diaspora thus conceived also find an epistemological equivalent, seen repeatedly in the troubled ways in which social science has variously legitimated and discredited ethnically specific perspectives in the productions of *knowledge* about *race relations*. Such perspectives, sometimes described as local knowledges, have at times drawn respectability out of the postmodern critique of the possibilities of meta-narrative certainty. Yet the possible slippage into ethnic essentialism and cultural relativism that follows defines tensions that the notion of diaspora neatly sidesteps.

So, set against the domination of the established academy, post-colonial discourse for Homi Bhabha may productively appropriate the crisis of Enlightenment reason, which is marked by the incommensurability of different articulations of identity. Typically, he has celebrated the "conflictual articulation of meaning and place, the partial - and double-identifications of race, gender, class, generation at their point of unfamiliarity, even incommensurability" (Bhabha, 1992, 60).

Bhabha goes on to suggest that his focus is "the moment of culture caught in an aporetic, contingent position, in-between a plurality of practices that are different and yet must occupy the same space of adjudication and articulation" (1992, 60). This he describes as a liminal form of cultural identification. In another sense what is being expressed here is the simultaneous realisation of different spatialities. Post-colonial realities routinely produce such co-presence because at root they are forever articulating Fanon's paradox that "the Black man's soul is a white Man's artefact". This in no way should be taken as meaning that post-colonial identities are exclusively controlled by colonial legacy. But it is more mundanely the case that discourses of racialization invoke different, frequently irreconcilable identities. In British racist discourse the 'coloured' of coloured migrants is not commensurable with the omnibus abusive epithet 'Paki' or the gendered and aged 'Black' that informs the criminalization of young Afro-Caribbean men.

It is the simultaneous presence of multiple spatialities that provides the medium through which such contradictions may be subsumed or even naturalised (Keith, 1993). This suggests that epistemological problems associated with situated knowledges may in part be resolved by unpacking the spatialities that they so unproblematically evoke (see Part 2 below). Just as Gilroy's identity formation is tied to the imagined geography of diaspora, the epistemological

incommensurability with which Bhabha is concerned is linked to the liminal spaces on which his analysis rests.

Politically, there is a reactionary vocabulary of both the identity politics of place and a spatialized politics of identity grounded in particular notions of space. It is the rhetoric of origins, of exclusion, of boundary marking, of invasion and succession, of purity and contamination; the glossary of ethnic cleansing. But there are also more progressive formulations which also become meaningless deprived of the metaphors of spatiality. Debates around territorialized and diasporic politics and political authority are just two instances where opposing the reactionary and promoting the progressive is possible only if the spatializations on which they rest are unpacked and made explicit. Such spatialities are necessarily always the source of both ethical optimism and political caution.

6. From imagination to politics to reality ... and all the way back again

The two illustrations above exemplify the identity politics of place and the spatialized politics of identity. Many of the themes touched on in these examples are central to a brilliant novel, which takes hybridization as its central dynamic, whose characters' identities are the site of struggle between purity and impurity, the sacred and the profane. It is a novel that tells of the experiences of the uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis that lies at the heart of the migrant condition, which itself stands as metaphor for the experiences of the whole of humanity. It is a novel about the desperate search for wholeness by its two principal protagonists, two characters who are exceptional not in their personification of hybridity and syncretism but only through the circumstances that force them to realise that they can never be made whole, or perhaps more significantly, can never be made pure, two identities which through what they lack remain in eternal search for completion. It is very much a novel about how absences are constitutive of presence, a source that Homi Bhabha has used to illustrate his notions of incommensurable identities and Stuart Hall has used to describe the emergence of the new ethnicities in late 20th century Britain (Bhabha, 1992; Hall, 1988).

The novel is *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, a work that prompted a crisis at the very heart of liberalism, on the ground where free speech and mutual tolerance became mutually irreconcilable. In both a banal and a profound sense what the Rushdie affair was about was the way in which a burnished, polyphonous, complex and contradictory piece of prose was transformed into an Orientalist symbol in a racist society. In Part 2 of this introduction we want to suggest that both in the text and in its realisation *The Satanic Verses* can be understood in a way that usefully points towards both the theoretical problematics that lie at the heart of this collection and also to the theoretical value that a spatialized reading of the novel might accrue.

As Rushdie has said himself "the city as reality and the city as metaphor is at the heart of all my work" (1991, 404). As one of his characters puts it

" 'The modern city' Otto Cone on his hobbyhorse had lectured his bored family at the table, 'is the *locus classicus* of impossible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side upon the omnibus. One universe, on a zebra crossing, is caught for an instant, blinking like a rabbit, in the headlamps of a motor-vehicle in which an entirely alien and contradictory continuum is to be found. And as long as that's all, they pass in the night, jostling on Tube stations, raising their hats in some hotel corridor, it's not so bad. But if they meet! It's uranium and plutonium, each makes the other decompose, boom' " (Rushdie, 1988, 314).

With considerable feeling Rushdie has said "it is hard to express how it feels to attempt to portray an objective reality and then to have become its subject" (1991, 404).

Running through the novel, spaces become the forces of dislocation that both make our longing *to know* that much more powerful and make our inability to do so or to judge between difference that much more difficult. At times the book satirizes Islam but it is clearly written by a secular author who seriously examines the perennial puzzle of faith and the loss of faith and who equally seriously disparages those who claim to have the answers to such mysteries, particularly if such answers are trite. There is an echo of something Rushdie himself wrote ten years ago in the novel *Shame*.

"Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject! ... Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about you in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions. Is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out their territories? Can only the dead speak?" (Rushdie, 1983, 28).

Both the central problem and the the subsequent events surrounding *The Satanic Verses* return over and again to the vexed question of judging between different kinds of difference. But who is to play Pontius Pilate and pass judgement on Rushdie, however reluctantly?

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