Spaces of Culture

CITY—NATION—WORLD

Edited by

Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash

SPACES OF CULTURE

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CONTRIBUTORS

Barbara Adam is Reader in Social Theory at Cardiff University. She has published extensively on socio-environmental time and is the founding editor of *Time and Society*. Her first two books were awarded book prizes. Her latest monograph *Timescapes of Modernity. The Environment and Invisible Hazards* (1998) arises from research conducted during a two-year Fellowship under the British (ESRC) Global Environmental Change Research Programme.

Göran Dahl is Professor in Sociology at Lund University. His latest books are *Psykoanalys och kulturkritik* (*Psychoanalysis and Cultural Criticism*, 1992) and *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics* (1999). His recent research area is the New Right, fascism and radical conservatism in Europe and the USA. This project is funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary I Foundation.

Michael Dear is Director of the Southern California Studies Center and Professor of Geography at the University of Southern California. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and a fellow at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and has won awards for creativity in research from the Association of American Geographers and the University of Southern California.

Ron Eyerman is Professor of Sociology at Uppsala University and at the Center for Cultural Research, Växjö University. His latest books include *Music and Social Movements* (1998) and *Between Culture and Politics* (1994)

Mike Featherstone is Director of the *Theory, Culture & Society Centre* and Professor of Sociology and Communications at Nottingham Trent University, UK. He is founding editor of *Theory, Culture & Society* and the *TCS Book Series*. He is co-editor of the journal *Body & Society*. He is author of *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (1991) and *Undoing Culture* (1995). His edited and co-edited books include: *Global Culture* (1990), *The Body* (1991), *Global Modernities* (1995), *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk* (1995), *Images of Ageing* (1995), *Simmel on Culture* (1997) and *Love and Eroticism* (1999).

Steven Flusty is a doctoral student at the Department of Geography, University of Southern California, where he utilizes narrative commodity chains to investigate quotidian globalization. He has worked as consultant

to numerous architects and public agencies, and his study of exclusionary urban design has been published by the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design under the title 'Building paranoia: the proliferation of interdictory space and the erosion of spatial justice'.

Jonathan Friedman is Director d'Etudes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris and Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Lund, Sweden. He has written on structuralism and Marxism, theories of social transformation, the imaginary, and more recently on global processes, cultural formations and the practice of identity. His books include, *Modernity and Identity* with S. Lash (eds) (1992), *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (1994), *Consumption and Identity* (ed.) (1994), *System Structure and Contradiction in the Evolution of 'Asiatic' Social Formations* (1998).

Heidrun Friese, Berlin and Warwick, has published widely on social constructions of time and history, the anthropology of science and on social imagination. Her publications include *Lampedusa. Historische Anthropologie einer Insel* (1996), *Der Raum des Gelehrten. Eine Topographie akademischer Praxis* (with Peter Wagner, 1993), and *Identitäten* (ed. with Aleida Assmanu, 1998).

Scott Lash is Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is the author of *Sociology of Postmodernism* (1990), and co-author of *The End of Organized Capitalism* (1987), *Economies of Signs and Space* (1993) and *Reflexive Modernization* (1994). He is co-editor of *Risk, Environment and Modernity* (1996).

Timothy W. Luke is Professor of Political Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. His most recent books are *The Politics of Cyberspace* (co-edited with Chris Toulouse, 1998) and *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture* (1997).

Hilary Radner is Associate Professor in the Department of Film, Television and Theater at the University of Notre Dame, USA. She is the author of *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (1995), and co-editor of *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (with Jim Collins and Ava Preacher Collins, 1993), *Constructing the New Consumer Society* (with Pekka Sulkenen, John Holmwood and Gerhard Schulze, 1997) and *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality, the 1960s* (with Moya Luckett, 1999).

Saskia Sassen is Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago and Visiting Centennial Professor, London School of Economics. Her most recent books are *Globalization and its Discontents: Selected Essays 1984–1998.* (1998) and *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (1996). Her books have been translated into several languages. She has just completed *Immigration Policy in the Global Economy: From National Crisis*

to Multilateral Management. She continues work on two projects, 'Cities and their Crossborder Networks' and 'Governance and Accountability in a Global Economy.' She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

Richard Sennett is Visiting Centennial Professor in the Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is author of *Flesh and Stone: The Conscience of the Eye* and *The Fall of Public Man.*

Michael J. Shapiro is Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii. Among his recent publications are: *Reading 'Adam Smith': Desire, History and Value* (1993), *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (1997) and *Cinematic Political Thought: Narratives of Race, Nation and Gender* (1999).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos is Professor of Sociology at the School of Economics at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, Director of the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, and Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. His research interests include political sociology and sociology of law, epistemology, sociology of culture, counter-hegemonic globalization and participatory democracy. His publications include *O Pulsar da Revolução: Cronologia da Revolução de 25 de Abril 1973–1976* (1997), *Macau: O Pequeníssimo Dragão* (with Conceição Gomes, 1998) and *La Globalización del Derecho: Los Nuevos Caminos de la Regulación y la Emancipación* (1998).

Couze Venn teaches cultural studies and postcolonial theory at the University of East London and is a member of the editorial board of *Theory, Culture & Society.* His current research interests include the critique of modernity and postcoloniality, the theorization of subjectivity and the development of a critical phenomenology. He was a founder member of the influential journal *Ideology & Consciousness.* He is the co-author of *Changing the Subject* (1984 and 1998), and has written on various aspects of postcoloniality and on Foucault. His forthcoming work is *Occidentalism. Essays on Modernity and Subjectivity.*

Peter Wagner, Florence and Warwick, works on themes of a sociology and history of modernity in terms of both social and political institutions and intellectual discourses. His publications include *A Sociology of Modernity* (1994), *Der Raum des Gelehrten* (with Heidrun Friese, 1993), *Le travail et la nation* (co-editor, 1998), *Discourses on Society* (co-editor, 1991).

Wolfgang Welsch is Professor of Philosophy at the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena. Visiting Professorships include the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (1987), the Free University of Berlin (1987–1988), Humboldt University of Berlin (1992–1993), Stanford University (1994–1995) and Emory University (1998). He received the Max Planck Research Award in 1992. His research interests include philosophy of culture,

epistemology, aesthetics and philosophy of the twentieth century. He is the author of *Aisthesis. Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre* (1987), *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (1987, 5th ed. 1997), *Ästhetisches Denken* (1990, 5th ed. 1998), *Vernunft. Die zeitgenössische Vernunftkritik und das Konzept der transversalen Vernunft* (1995), *Grenzgänge derÄsthetik* (1996), *Undoing Aesthetics* (1997). He has edited the volumes *Wege aus der Moderne. Schlüsseltexte der Postmoderne-Diskussion* (1989), *Ästhetik im Widerstreit. Interventionen zum Werk von Jean-François Lyotard* (1991), *Die Aktualität des Ästhetischen* (1993), *Medien – Welten – Wirklichkeiten* (1998).

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash

If we seek to understand culture today, it is clear that we face a growing range of complexities. Culture which was assumed to possess a coherence and order, to enable it to act as the grounds for the formation of stable identities, no longer seems to be able to perform this task adequately. The linkages between culture and identity have become more problematic as the sources of cultural production and dissemination increase, and the possibilities of inhabiting a shared cultural world in which cultural meanings function in a common sense taken-for-granted manner recedes. In effect, both inside and outside the academy, we are all asked to do more cultural work today.

This can be linked to the process of globalization which, as has been pointed out many times, does not result in the homogenization and unification of culture, but rather in the provision of new spaces for the clashing of cultures (Robertson, 1992, 1995; Lash and Urry, 1993; Featherstone, 1995). The clashing and mixing of culture occurs not only across the boundaries of nation-state societies, but within them too. More voices demand to be heard and the assumed uniformity of national cultures begins to be seen as a myth. In one sense it can be argued that there have never been national cultures: it is a myth of comparable import to the myth Latour (1993) speaks about when he says 'we have never been modern'. For Latour, modernity has not been a realized or 'realizable' entity, but should be seen as a project, or better still as a projection.

The theorization of culture within sociology has been caught up in this process. As Heidrun Friese and Peter Wagner argue in their chapter in this collection, the tendency within sociology has been to move from an understanding of social life through structures and systems to a growing appreciation of the role of contingencies and uncertainties, coupled with a growing sense of cultural diversity. It is no longer adequate to conceptualize culture as an integrated whole. Rather, we are asked to focus upon the diverse and often incompatible range of cultural practices people engage in. Hence the linkages between culture and social structure and culture and action are perceived as weaker and more complex. Terms such as 'structure' and 'culture' were formerly used to point to the stability and coherence of social life: now they no longer perform the theoretical work asked of them. One of the implications here may well be to ask us to rethink the boundaries

of sociology and other social science disciplines, especially if we take into account Friese and Wagner's argument that we need to develop a greater understanding of the impact of globalization on social life.

This perspective is developed further by Barbara Adam in her contribution 'Radiated Identities'. Adam argues that the attempt to understand a global event such as the Chernobyl nuclear explosion and spread of radiation challenges our classical theoretical framework. To make sense of this event necessitates going beyond the traditional separation of disciplines, and the traditional focus upon intra-societal processes. To understand Chernobyl through separate disciplines becomes impossible when we are looking at globally networked processes which transcend national boundaries and which intermesh cultural and natural processes. Radiation disregards the boundaries of bodies, locality, nation and species. Adam suggests this makes us aware of networked global connectedness: something which is demonstrated when 'the actions of workers in the Ukraine can threaten the livelihood of farmers in North Wales and when, in turn, their milking of cows radiates babies in Malaysia'. This unsettles our traditional concepts of identity, and points to the limits of traditional scientific practices with their reductionism, analytical separation and assumptions of linear temporality. Instead, if we are to understand global processes, we need to develop a greater appreciation of chaos, complexity, temporality, disorder, context and connectivity.

A further discussion of some of the implications of global complexity is taken up in Richard Sennett's chapter 'Growth and failure: the new political economy and its culture'. Sennett argues that the transformations accompanying the new global economy exposes people to the consequences of the marketplace and erodes their self-worth. Instead of capitalism becoming ossified and bureaucratized along the lines of Max Weber's 'iron cage', we are now entering a period of instability in which loyalties to institutions diminish. Whereas strong stable institutions and bureaucratized work regimes favoured the values of purposiveness and responsibility, the basis for a coherent life narrative, today career pathways are replaced by jobs as we move towards a society without institutional shelters, a society in which individuals must bear the responsibility for their own survival. In this context of uncertainty the need to belong to a particular place becomes increasingly valued. At the same time, Sennett argues, there is potential for an 'active edge' – a productive interchange between the economic and place zones – yet the danger is that place does not act on the economy, but only reacts to it in a defensive way. The problem with globalization is that capital is mobile and place has little to bargain with against multinational corporations which can easily find another node in the global network for their operations.

The role of cities is important here, for they offer the potential of an open public life built around the values of diversity, urbanity and experience. Here the urban crowd, as described by Baudelaire, Aragon and Benjamin, offers some antidote to the predominant survivalist ethic of self-

responsibility. There have, of course, been a series of debates about the gendered nature of urban public space and whether the *flâneuse* was visible or invisible in the nineteenth-century city (Wolff, 1985; Wilson, 1992; Ryan, 1994; Nava, 1997). This aspect of cities, the freedom to wander the street, to immerse oneself in the crowd, as Hilary Radner notes in her chapter 'Roaming the City', migrated into fashion photography in the second half of the twentieth century. The 'street look' became a powerful new image of urban femininity. But, as Radner points out, rather than the invisible *flâneuse* who is lost in the crowd, fashion photography picks out and makes the fashion model highly visible in the street. The photographic images which became successful in the fashion magazines were images of active woman, whose dress code no longer became associated with authority, but with the defiantly youthful adolescent body, which adopted strong movements and a highly visible active image.

The representations of fashionable women which appeared in fashion magazines derive a particular set of the images of the city as entailing the cultural mixing of people and signs, of exciting, crowded, diverse street life. Hence the city was treated as a site for representation, masquerade and sociability, a theme which we find central to Richard Sennett's (1976) depiction of urban public space, which he takes up again in his piece in this book. For Sennett, if the city can retain the public spaces which harbour the cosmopolitan life, it can offer the possibility for people to develop forms of sociability based upon tolerance and self-distance, qualities which form the basis for an active public. Yet this means that cities need to find some way to become more open. How far can the contemporary cities achieve this?

The difficulties here are apparent if we seek to look at what some regard as the prototypical contemporary city: Los Angeles. This is the city notably described by Mike Davis (1990) with its freeways, fortified architecture, high-technology surveillance, private policing, panopticon malls, social diversions and exclusions. A city marked by its absence of public space. A city which, as Michael Dear and Steven Flusty remind us in their contribution to this volume, is more of a 'large dynamic urban region' than the traditional concentric zone model based on Chicago. This is the city that can be seen as part of 'the third wave of urbanization', which entails the domination of the car, the expansion of new communications technology and the increasing participation of women in the labour market. As Dear and Flusty remind us, it is now assumed that every city in the USA is growing in the fashion of Los Angeles; indeed, it is argued that in many ways it is the paradigmatic form for global cities. In this respect Los Angeles is seen as post-Fordist, tied into the new global circuits of capital. This results in a mosaic of monocultures, a fragmented pastiche of land-use, driven by the spatial logic of 'flexism' and global capital's capacity to evade any long-term commitment to place.

Dear and Flusty see flexism as leading to a balkanized divided city with a bifurcated social structure. At the top we have the 'cybergoisie' who

live in 'cyburbia' on the urban edges, habitats which are teleintegrated through state-of-the-art data transmission to form interactive virtual communities. Some of the inhabitants of cyburbia work in high-rise towers which form the business citadels, which are also linked into global electronic networks. At the bottom we have the 'protosurps' who live in the 'cyberias', the mulches of cheap on-call labour, along with the various groups of the excluded: the homeless, vagrants and criminalized, who are confined to the state of 'surpdom', and are left to inhabit the electronic outlands restricted to basic telephone services.

The mobility of capital and electronic information flows, according to Dear and Flusty, makes the discussion of *the* city, the city as a generic type, obsolete. Rather, urbanization should be understood as a quasi-random field of opportunities. The new spatial logic points to the emergence of the 'citistat', the net of megalopoles which form a single integrated urban system. Dear and Flusty's term 'citistat' resonates with the collective world city referred to by Virilio (1993: 72; see discussion in Featherstone, 1996a) which, he argues, has emerged with the synchronization of world time made possible through the globalization of information technology. The informational city (Castells, 1989) becomes a key component of globalization. It is further argued that the network of global cities bound together through electronic communication creates a new social form: 'the network society' (Castells, 1996, 1997). The global cities are the physical locations, which are the key nodal points in the communications networks (see also Sassen, 1994). The expanding set of global cities become paralleled by the construction of another city, the city of bits (Featherstone, 1999a). This data city is a virtual city built in electronic space. According to Tim Luke in his chapter in this volume, we are now witnessing its formation into a totally new sphere of human endeavour: the cybersphere.

For Luke, technology should be seen as a part of a process of the alteration of human beings' relation to nature, a process whereby humans create additional natures which act as delimiting worlds for human activity which structure the possibilities for social life. The first nature is the original nature, the ecological biosphere which surrounds yet resists us. Here nature is seen as 'that which cannot be produced'. The second nature is the technosphere, the anthropogenetic domain of the built environment and material urban landscape which human beings have collectively created and inhabit. The third nature is the cybersphere/telesphere, a second anthropogenetic domain, but in this case the structure is built from 'bits', not atoms, to produce the digitalized information world (the Internet, cyberspace, virtual reality). We can also speculate that this third nature could even give rise to a fourth nature, the sphere of artificial life, a post-anthropogenetic domain, a domain in which the genetic structures of life-forms are reduced to an information code which can be replicated, manipulated and engineered to reproduce and make new life. The development of these new life-forms would introduce complexities into the three previous domains of nature with the emergence of new plants, animals,

eventually humans, and computer-generated electronic organisms. The new systems have the potential to become self-replicating and self-mutating post-cyborg systems, in which the originating traces of the human species, which initiated the process, could become covered over and forgotten as new life-forms rapidly evolve in ways we cannot yet begin to foresee (De Landa, 1991, 1992; see discussion in Featherstone, 1996b).

For our present purposes we need to focus on the third nature, the cybersphere. According to Luke, the worlds of first and second nature were organized by state power so that the global and local were two ends of a geographical continuum defined by the nation-state. With the shift to the cybersphere we move to a postperspectival view of space and a new sense of time. There is a pluralization of subjects and objects of communication along with a proliferation of networks of information which renders the old unilinear view of the world and history impossible. In cyberspace we move beyond the old realist divisions of space/time, sender/receiver, medium/message. Through the extension of the Internet we are moving into the domain of 'dromoeconomics': where production is organized around the speed of flows of capital, labour, information and resources controlled through a network of virtual offices and virtual corporations. Manufacture gives way to 'digifacture', mass consumption gives way to mass customization. Cyberspace, then, offers the prospect of great changes in the ways in which wealth is produced, which point to major shifts in the structure of social interdependencies, power balances and modes of cultural reproduction.

As Saskia Sassen argues in her contribution, we have only just begun to move beyond the celebratory rhetoric of the Internet as a new form of democratic decentralization and are just starting to theorize the distribution of power in electronic space. She argues that the growing profitability of the Internet since business 'discovered' it in 1993, and the potential of the growing multimedia sector, will increase inequalities. It is not just that there will be slow lanes and fast lanes on the superhighway, depending on the ability to pay, but the fact that the Internet is being accompanied by a massive growth in intranets. Large corporations are able to use fire-walled nets at relatively low cost, hence, according to Sassen, we face a future of cyber-segmentation. One of Sassen's main intentions is to go beyond the usual analyses of the characteristics of the new electronic spaces which emphasize the speed, simultaneity and interconnectivity of the Internet, to focus on the embedding, the geography of the infrastructure. Electronic networks may well maximize the potential for geographical dispersal with globalization a consequence of following the economic logic of dispersal. Here we see the potential for a new form of centrality, the formation of a virtual, or transterrestrial centre, which binds together the global financial centres.

At the same time the coordination of dispersal points to a new terrestrial logic of agglomeration. Global cities are not only nodes in the flows across the financial networks, they are regional centres for the coordination of

the various manufacturing, design and financial aspects of this process. Global cities become hyperconcentrations of the infrastructure to house the corporate headquarters, financial management and variety of specialist business services which spring up. They also develop a significant cultural sector with entertainment districts and cultural tourist sites to provide the meeting places with the necessary ambience for deals to be enacted. Rather than the eclipse of face-to-face relations through globalization, in global cities we see an upsurge of the 'face-work' necessary to establish trust (see Thrift, 1996). Yet while we see an expansion in members of the new middle classes, alongside the high-waged professional occupations there is a whole infrastructure of low-waged jobs, with women forming the bulk of this labour force of clerical workers, cleaners, restaurant, bar and hotel workers (Sassen, 1994: 123).

While global cities provide the hyperconcentrations of infrastructure which make the electronic networks possible, within them there are great differences in the distribution of this infrastructure. New York City, for example, has the highest concentration of fibre optic cable in the world – yet Harlem has only one building wired up. The cost of bringing up to standard the communications networks in East Europe and Third World countries is massive, yet the growing economic profitability of communications has meant a wave of deregulation and privatization. Investment by communications multinational corporations is, therefore, likely to follow the logic of the market rather than socially determined need. Sassen ends her chapter with the question: are we to see cyberspace dominated by multinational corporations to the detriment of health, education and other public applications? One problem is that national governments still largely operate in a predigital era; they do not have the capacity to regulate multinational corporations and the flows of capital across the global markets.

While there are some transocietal institutions developing (the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) along with international courts, foundations and associations), we are still a long way from the monopolization of the means of violence and taxation, which could lead to the formation of a world state. Proposals such as the Tobin tax designed to regulate international financial flows, along with the various calls for global citizenship, as still seen as highly speculative (see Featherstone, 1996b).[1] As Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues in his chapter on the multicultural conception of human rights, we still see a struggle between those who seek to maintain the state as the guarantor of human rights and those who look forward to its replacement through the emergence of a global civil society and some form of global government. In opposition to those who favour the extension of human rights from above, along the lines of the Western model (a form of what Santos calls 'globalized localism'), we have proposals for a more cosmopolitan multicultural dialogical, or diatopical, form of human rights emerging from below. These are complex issues to which we will return shortly in the

context of a more sustained discussion of global culture. For our present purposes it is evident that to speak of the possibility of global citizenship and multicultural human rights is to raise a whole range of questions about the nature of the cultural spaces in which these new forms can develop. This takes us into questions about the changing nature of the public sphere, of the fate of public space in cities, and the possibility of a virtual or electronic public sphere.

Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere assumes that in eighteenth-century Europe various spaces (e.g., coffee houses, salons, table societies) developed, along with newspapers, journals, periodicals and reviews, which encouraged new forms of reasoned argumentation in public. For Habermas, this dialogical potential of the public sphere becomes eclipsed in the twentieth century with the expansion of the mass media, which he sees as essentially monological and instrumental, a means for the manipulation and closing down of public opinion. There is no sense that the mass media could be anything other than manipulative, or that new technologies such as the Internet and multimedia forms could increase interactivity and new forms of sociability and dialogue between distant others.

Contra Habermas, for whom technology is unavoidably tainted with instrumentality and is seen as part of the extension of system rationality which is closing off communicative interaction, it can be argued that the new forms of electronic communication could well provide a range of new quasi-public spaces, which encourage debate and active citizenship. In addition, as critics have pointed out against Habermas, the possibility of a unitary public sphere may not only be historically suspect, but also an unrealizable goal. Instead, it is possible to conceive a series of separate, yet overlapping, counter-public spheres which involve the working class, women, blacks and various social movements (see Calhoun, 1992). In addition, it may likewise not only be difficult to separate the public sphere from the literary public sphere (Hohendahl, 1982), but also be difficult to disentangle the public sphere from the broader cultural sphere (Feather-stone, 1995: ch. 2). If this is the case, then, it may well be productive to explore not only questions of active citizenship and public participation, but also questions of cultural citizenship: the access to resources to participate in cultural production. The 'right' to access electronic networks and participate in virtual spaces, along with the means to explore the new blurred genres of multimedia communication, are emergent issues which threaten to bracket some of the long-held assumptions about the public sphere.

It can, therefore, be argued that the proliferation of these new cultural spaces provides one important reason to rethink the notion of the public sphere and citizenship. Likewise, a similar shift seems to be taking place in the related area of social movements. As Ron Eyerman points out in his contribution to this volume, the dominant resource mobilization and rational choice models of social movements have more recently been challenged by perspectives which emphasize cultural praxis. Eyerman argues

against the usual way in which social movements are contrasted to tradition and points to the ways in which traditions can be reflexively constituted by social movements. Hence collective memories which are reinforced through ritual practices, along with art and music, become important emotional resources for sustaining allegiance to social movements. The way in which social movements seek to use cultural resources reflexively to create traditions suggests that the distinction between cultural movements and social movements may be more difficult to sustain than previously envisaged. Eyerman discusses the example of the role of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City in the 1920s in the formation of the black public sphere. The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural movement which drew on modernism to produce a great upsurge of Afro-American creativity in the arts and popular culture. While under existing definitions it should be seen as a cultural movement, because it lacked an expressed political aim, which is one of the defining characteristics of social movements, it was also a youth movement which contested the Uncle Tom stereotypes and respectability aspirations of previous black community leaders. Hence it suggests the line between social and cultural movements is not always easy to sustain.

There are, of course, those who prefer to have their traditions undiluted by reflexivity and who see the public sphere as having become a medium for the projection of private matters, the concern with celebrity and the lifestyles of the rich and famous, which preoccupy the mass media. Sacredness is seen as having become reduced to a quality of the marketplace, designed into the products of consumer culture, the identity industries, new social and religious movements. As Göran Dahl reminds us in his contribution to this volume, what is interesting is that this type of anti-bourgeois critique with its attack on reflexivity, individualization and the alleged homogenization and massification of culture, does not now come from the left, but increasingly from the radical right.

The new culturalism, as we find in the writings of de Benoist in France, seeks to stop what is seen as the reduction of all cultures to a single world civilization. Such rhetoric is strengthened by the perceived visibility of immigrants in Europe and the demands for increasing multiculturalism. We find similar arguments among technocratic conservatives such as Gehlen, Shelsky and Freyer in Germany. Gehlen, for example, argues that human beings need strong institutions which minimize the reflexivity and subjectivism which overburden the lives of ordinary people. We need to lower our horizons and accept that we now live in a 'post-history' in which genuine new developments and the possibility of utopian thought have become impossible. This was also the position of Carl Schmitt, who developed a strong critique of liberalism and universalism for their denial of cultural particularism, whose protection should be the duty of the state. At the same time, Dahl argues that the radical conservatives should be seen as modernists, for while they say 'no' to reflexivity, they say 'yes' to modern technology and the drive for efficiency. Yet this must be combined with the preservation of the longing for the sacred and the need for

sacrifice. Hence this perspective is used to develop a strong critique of not only the dangers of reflexivity, but with it the dangers of its carriers: the cosmopolitan middle-class. The latter are seen as completely against sacrifice; they do not seek to belong to any community or nation, only to themselves.

This opposition between the new culturalism, with its emphasis upon the sacred, the community and the nation, and the cosmopolitan middle-class ideal of empathy and tolerance raises a series of issues about contemporary cultural processes and the dominant modes of conceptualizing culture we have become accustomed to using. In the first place it points to the globalization of not only assumed universal processes following on from marketization, but also to the reactive focus upon ethnicity, regional culture and the nation, in which culture can be represented as having an immediacy and pre-reflexive communal quality. Both processes are central to the struggles we see taking place on the global stage. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos reminds us in his chapter, this suggests that there is not a single globalization, but rather globalizations in the plural, or in his words: 'Globalization . . . is the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in extending its reach over the globe, and by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local' (p. 216). This leads him to argue that there are four forms of globalization. First, globalized localism: the globalization of transnational corporations, McDonaldization, Americanization and the extension of English as the lingua franca. Secondly, localized globalism: the effects of globalism imposed upon the peripheral countries such as deforestation, heritage tourism, free trade enclaves. Thirdly, cosmopolitanism: the development of global alliances through NGOs, environmental groups, world federation of trade unions, the north–south dialogues. Fourthly, the common heritage of humankind: the ozone layer, the Amazon, Antarctica, biodiversity, outer space are seen as global questions which unite us all.

In terms of human rights, Santos tells us that the assumed universal form of human rights is in fact a form of globalized localism, that is Western human rights 'imposed' from above. Yet there is a further possibility, that of multicultural human rights issues as part of a cosmopolitan counter-hegemonic form of globalization emerging from below.[2] This second approach tends to see universality as a particular Western question, and contests the assumption that there is a universal human nature which we can know by rational means. Santos argues that our central task is to transform the conception and practice of human rights from globalized localism into a cosmopolitan project. We need a diatopical hermeneutics, a cross-cultural dialogue between different local traditions which are acknowledged as incomplete.

The multicultural notion of human rights developed by Santos is built upon a mestiza or hybrid view of culture: cultures are incomplete mixtures. This perspective is taken further by Wolfgang Welsch in his chapter on transculturality. Welsch argues that we need to move beyond the view

which originates with Herder of cultures as homogeneous, linguistically unified, autonomous 'islands'. This premise of culture as forming separate islands or spheres has been enormously influential and is still the basis for many conceptions of culture today. It is central to interculturalism, where cultures are seen as clashing or in dialogue, and multiculturalism, where societies are seen as being composed of a set of multiple cultures. Welsch argues that it is no longer realistic today to conceive cultures as either homogeneous or separate. Today cultures are internally differentiated and complex; externally they are entangled in complex networks with other cultures, and hence it is not easy to ascertain their boundaries. We have a process of mixing and hybridization in which all other cultures become the inner content of one's own culture. Transculturality, according to Welsch, alters the nature of the mode of diversity in the world for diversity in the form of single cultures will increasingly disappear. This means a movement from the perspective that differences are to be conceived in terms of the juxtaposition of delimited cultures, as we find in a mosaic format, to differences seen as the result of transcultural networks which have some things in common while differing in others. Hence the mode of differentiation has become more complex and we have overlaps and distinctions at the same time.

There are a number of points in common between this transcultural perspective and the argument developed by Couze Venn in his chapter 'Narrating the Postcolonial'. Postcolonialism recognizes the hybridity of all cultures as something which is a product of the encounter between cultures. Hybridity points to the situation of being neither inside nor outside a culture, but in a third space on the borderline, where one is inside and outside at the same time. Here we think of the 'double consciousness' described by Gilroy (1993) in relation to blacks in the West, along with the writings of Bhabha, Spivak, hooks, Hall and others. For Venn, postcolonial theory provides an opportunity to recover the capacity to pluralize modernity, to address the ethical project involved in recognizing the counter culture of modernity as addressed by Bauman and others. An analysis of the relationship between modernity, capitalism and colonialism has the potential for a recovery of the marginalized counter-discourses of modernity of those who do not fit in with the dominant rational masculine white subject – the exiles, Jews, slaves, women, homosexuals and colonized. The counter-discourse of modernity seeks to challenge the totalizing logocentric subject of modernity with its displacement of ontological questions and privileging of epistemology and equation of the progress of humanity with the progress of reason. This is also a theme taken up in Michael Shapiro's chapter on 'Triumphalist Geographies', in which he examines the ways in which modern European cartographies have sought to dehistoricize maps and impose a particular model of space on the rest of the planet. For Couze Venn, the relative displacement of the West through the rise of East Asia provides us with the possibility of thematizing multiple modernities, and recovering the traces of the memories of the victims

of oppression which became forgotten in the construction of the history of modernity as a collective singular with its emphasis upon one time, one humanity and one history.

These assumptions about hybridity and globalization are vigorously contested in Jonathan Friedman's contribution on 'The Hybridization of Roots and the Abhorrence of the Bush'. Friedman argues that we should take a long-term view of the current changes which we refer to as globalization. The current phase of globalization should not be understood as a part of a general evolutionary process. Rather, it is a temporary delimited phase which should be understood in relation to the break-up of hegemonies. It is part of a period of hegemonic decline characterized by increasing competition and the shift of capital to East Asia. The growth of transnational corporations should also be understood in terms of this process of decentralization of wealth. Hybridity should be seen as the cultural corollary to economic globalization. Friedman raises the question whether there is actually more mixing now than in the past when we had blues, jazz, pasta, etc. If today there is a greater consciousness of mixing, this may have more to do with the formation of a particular type of gaze on the part of upper-class and middle-class Westerners who are consumers of cultural objects and images. Hybridization is the ideology of the intellectuals drawn from these groups; for Friedman it is a labelling device, 'an attempt to define the cultural state of the world, a reading for the more sophisticated cosmopolitans'. But for Friedman, this cosmopolitan celebration of rootlessness and anti-ethnic orientation, should be seen as part of the logic of modern experience. Unlike previous groups of cultural specialists, the cosmopolitans do not have a civilizing mission or high culture; rather, they engage in the accumulation of differences.

According to Friedman there is a clear connection between intellectual decline and hegemonic decline. This is manifest in the decline of the public sphere. As the public sphere becomes weakened, the principle of rational argumentation along with notions of falsification and an ethical code, suffers and other modes take over. We get the formation of various groupings and clientships aiming to colonize the public sphere, which do not seek to legitimate themselves via any standards of intellectual practice. Intellectual life becomes subordinated to the logic of accumulating social power and status: they are new groups striving to become cultural elites who take it on themselves to become self-appointed representatives of the non-white poor of the world. The postcolonial critics engage in a rhetoric of the flowing and mixing of cultures, something which is only surprising if one expected to find a prior ordered and highly classified world.

The problem is that cultural products may well seem mixed to outsiders, but if one looks closely there may be little evidence of cultural hybridization in the activities and discourses of actual groups of people. If we say all cultures are hybrid and mixed, this is merely a trivial truism, which denies any operational significance to the term 'hybridization'. Rather, according to Friedman, we need to focus on how cultures are experienced.

Hybridity may well be a form of identity which is on the increase, but largely among certain groups such as cultural specialists. Cultures may well travel and move around the world, but ethnicity is still about the maintenance of social boundaries, something which remains a powerful force in the current phase of globalization. What appears as a new stage of mixing and flows should be understood in terms of the decline of Western hegemony. The fragmentation of nation-states and multiculturalism in the West are expressions of this process. In the global circuits of intellectual and high culture, along with the media and diplomatic elites, a cosmopolitan identity of a multicultural world has developed. From the perspective of the self-identified hybrid inhabiting the world cities, local identities seem backward.

These are important issues which go to the heart of the questions we raised at the beginning of this introduction: how are we to understand social structures and culture today in a world which is becoming rapidly globalized? Is it still possible to relate particular perspectives on culture such as hybridization and postcolonialism to the projects of social groups and class fractions, or is the speed and complexity of cultural production and dissemination pushing us beyond traditional modes of analysis? Around a decade ago these questions preoccupied us in the journal *Theory, Culture & Society* in terms of the debates surrounding postmodernism (see Featherstone, 1988, 1991; Lash, 1990). We face them again today in terms of the need to understand the development of globalization and technological culture. These questions are not only important, from the theoretical perspective, in terms of our need to make sense of the world, but also in terms of the practical interest we retain in the question: how are we to live in the world? Likewise we have an interest in the questions of the future of public space, the possibilities for closing off, or opening up, the public sphere in global cities, along with the possibilities for an electronic virtual public sphere and global citizenship. It, therefore, can be argued that from both the theoretical and practical points of view, we have a continuing interest in the spaces of culture.

Notes

1 In 1994 the daily flow through the world's foreign exchange markets exceeded $1 trillion a day. The proposal for a small percentage tax on these flows was first outlined by James Tobin. It has been estimated that around 80 per cent of this daily flow of this volatile 'global casino' is speculative or linked to money laundering. A tax on international transfers of money at the rate of 0.003 per cent (the Walker tax proposal) would finance all UN operations and a tax of 0.5 per cent (the Tobin proposal) would yield around $1,500 billion a year. This could be collected by nation-states taxing the flows across their borders and used to finance welfare and other state-led reconstruction programmes.

2 Boaventura de Sousa Santos also makes the connection between cosmopolitanism and citizenship, taking us in the direction of global citizenship, in his book *Towards a New Common Sense* (1995). He argues that citizenship must be deterritorialized, decanonized and

socially reconstructable (more dual or even triple citizenship). In effect we need to work to construct broader, more flexible conceptions of membership than one tied exclusively to the nation-state.

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Part I

TECHNOLOGICAL SPACE

1

GROWTH AND FAILURE: THE NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ITS CULTURE

Richard Sennett

I'd like to begin by referring to two experiences which are being rapidly transformed in the modern world: work and place. Both are changing in ways which, a mere 20 years ago, seemed unimaginable.

Then, the great corporate bureaucracies and government hierarchies of the developed world seemed securely entrenched, the products of centuries of economic development and nation-building. Commentators spoke of 'late capitalism' or 'mature capitalism' as though earlier forces of growth had now entered an end-game phase. Now, a new chapter has opened: the economy is global, and makes use of new technology; ways of working have altered, as short-term jobs replace stable careers; mammoth government and corporate bureaucracies are changing form, becoming both more flexible and less secure institutions.

Place has a different meaning now as well, in large part thanks to these economic changes. An earlier generation believed nations, and within nations cities, were places that could control their own fortunes; now, the emerging economic network is less susceptible to the controls of geography. A divide has thus opened between polity and economy.

I want to discuss how human beings experience these institutional changes in work and place – discuss, that is, the culture of the new political economy. Culture holds a dialogue with material life in which it speaks with its own voice but always addresses its more brutal and frequently taciturn partner. I'd like to put forward two propositions which seem to be emerging from this difficult discussion.

The first is that as the material world grows, ordinary people are experiencing failure in new forms. The new order erodes people's sense of

self-worth in the marketplace while also eroding traditional institutions which protected people against the market.

The second proposition is that the value of place has thereby increased. The sense of place is based on the need to belong not to 'society' in the abstract, but to somewhere in particular; in satisfying that need, people develop commitment and loyalty. As the shifting institutions of the economy diminish the experience of belonging somewhere special at work, people's commitments increase to geographic places like nations, cities and localities. The question is, commitments of what sort? Is place merely an icon for needs which cannot otherwise be satisfied? Or again, are actual places condemned to become defensive refuges against a hostile world?

These two themes might suggest an unrelievedly bleak view of our present condition. But this is not my view. Failure itself is not an unrelievedly bleak condition, for people often learn by failing at something – learn their limits, learn to pay attention to those who before they used merely as instruments of their own will. Most of all people may learn to put some distance between their sense of self and their troubled fortunes. Growth and failure thus stand in a different relationship from each other than do success and failure.

My hope is that, out of the troubled fortunes people are now experiencing in work, they might put some distance between self and work. Place could play a role in the experience of learning to separate one's sense of self from one's personal condition; one could have a place in the world on other terms. I am not invoking an abstract condition; this is what we mean by 'urbanity', it is the promise of urban life.

Impoverished Experience

To make sense of the culture of the emerging political economy, we might begin by defining its key word, 'growth'. The word can be divided, most simply, into four categories. The first is sheer increase in number. Growth of this sort appears in economic thinking among writers like Jean Baptiste Say, whose *loi des débouchés* postulated that 'increased supply creates its own demand'.[1] Increased number and size can of course lead to alteration of structure, which is how Adam Smith conceived growth in *The Wealth of Nations*. Larger markets trigger, he said, the division of labour in work. A third form of growth is metamorphosis; a body changes shape without necessarily increasing in number. Finally, a system can grow by becoming more open; its boundaries become febrile, its forms become mixed, it contracts or expands in parts without overall coordination.

The first sort of growth is the most familiar to us, because it is how we reckon profit and loss. The second, in which size begets complexity, is familiar to us in government bureaucracy as well as traditional corporations. Metamorphosis belongs most readily to our understanding of narratives, appearing for instance in the growth of a character in a novel. And

communications networks such as the Internet are obvious examples of how open systems grow; less obviously, subjectivity grows through open systems.

The age of High Capitalism, for convenience's sake, can be said to span the two centuries following the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. It was an era which lusted for sheer quantitative growth, but it had trouble dealing with the structural changes size inaugurated by its lust for more. Few of Smith's contemporaries in London or elsewhere in Europe wished to be cast on the uncharted seas of unregulated commerce; they wished the government to stand behind them, as it had in the past. In their magisterial study of the evolution of the American corporation, Oscar and Mary Handlin similarly depict uncertainty and fear among the very privatizing innovators divorcing corporation from commonwealth.[2]

Growth in this new capitalism entailed an inherent structural problem: the inverse relationship between quantitative increase and complexity on the one hand, and qualitative impoverishment on the other. Adam Smith believed that, rather than market exchange alone, the division of labour promoted by free markets would make for a more complex society. Society, he said, would become a honeycomb of tasks.[3] Yet individual experience becomes simpler as social structures grow more complex. Take his famous example of manufacturing nails: breaking down the task involved in making nails into its component parts condemned individual nail makers, like later workers on the Ford assembly lines, to a numbingly boring day, hour after hour spent doing one small job.

In the nineteenth century, critics of High Capitalism could see no easy way to end this trade-off of qualitative, experiential impoverishment for structural increase and complexity. In Marx's view, no reform could divorce numeric growth from the experiential impoverishment of labour; only a revolution could. Durkheim's advocacy of 'organic solidarity' as a solution to the human problems of the division of labour is, in the end, I believe, a religious solution. He was much influenced, for instance, by the views of Emmanuel Lammenais, the Christian socialist who believed only the cooperative, contemplative values of the monastic spirit could temper the boredom of industrial routine.

The paradox of experiential regression and structural development has both ended and become more acute in the emerging political economy. Modern technology promises to banish routine work to the innards of new machines, and does so. It could therefore be argued, from a strictly technological point of view, that the division of labour is coming to an end. But in the world using these machines, that argument doesn't hold. The division of labour now concerns those who get to work, and those who don't; large numbers of people are set free of routine tasks only to find themselves useless or under-used economically, especially in the context of the global labour supply.

The conditions of that labour market have been aptly and brutally summarized by the social commentator Garrick Utley as follows: '. . .

industry in the developed world today employs approximately 350 million people at an average hourly wage of $18.00, while in the past ten years international acceptance and expansion of the market economy has reached a potential labor force in developing countries of some 1.2 billion people working at an average cost of $2.00 an hour.'[4] The divide between the two is no longer simply between the skilled and the unskilled; computer code is written efficiently, for instance, in Bombay for one-third its cost in IBM home offices.

Unemployment and under-employment of the educated young give one picture of uselessness: too many qualified engineers, programmers, systems-analysts, not to speak of too many lawyers, MBAs, securities salespeople. But uselessness is a more ambiguous phenomenon, particularly among those with specialized training. Instead of the institutionally impoverished experience of the assembly line, poverty lies within the worker who hasn't made him or herself of value and so could simply disappear from view.

Glints of how the economic order arouses this fear of uselessness appear in popular classics about modern corporations like *Reengineering the Corporation* (1994). The authors, Michael Hammer and James Champy, defend 'reengineering' against the charge that it is a mere cover for firing people in saying, 'downsizing and restructuring only mean doing less with less. Reengineering, by contrast means doing *more* with less.'[5] The 'less' in the last sentence reverberates with the denials of an older Social Darwinism – that those who are not fit will somehow disappear.

The undertow connotation of uselessness is a dispensable self. Useless skills have a particular meaning in a skills-based economy. What Michael Young feared in his prophetic essay, *Meritocracy*, has come to pass: as the economy needs ever fewer highly educated people to run it, the 'moral distance' between mass and elite widens.[6] The Smithian paradox of experiential impoverishment in the course of structural development thus continues on new terms.

Unemployment and under-employment are of course long-standing economic ills, though some tough-minded economists argue that the new order has made these ills incurable, since the economy indeed profits from doing 'more with less'. What I wish to emphasize is that the classical model of growth offers no solution to its experiential deficits; neither sheer material increase nor the division of labour create richer human experience. Put abstractly, Number does not define the Good. Experiential impoverishment as a problem requires another model of development.

We might come closer to the qualitative dimensions of growth by exploring a form which seems far removed from the economic realm: metamorphosis.

Change from Within

'My purpose is to tell of bodies which have been transformed into shapes of a different kind', Ovid declared at the outset of the *Metamorphoses.*[7] You

will recall he believed that the world came into being when a god first sorted into distinct forms a primal 'shapeless, uncoordinated mass . . . whose ill-assorted elements were indiscriminately heaped together in one place'.[8] Subsequently, change in form became the law of life: Darwin enjoyed Ovid for good reason. But Ovid thought his own era – an age of iron – was reverting to the sheer impurity of the world's beginning. Perhaps therefore, in a godlike spirit, he sought to edify it by telling stories of how the gods and humans who change shape grow in stature in each new guise.

This, more broadly, is what narrative does to character – events changing character so that at the end of a narrative its personages are different from those they were at the beginning. And again broadly, narrative transformations occur in two dimensions: one is disruptive, the other is accumulative. In Kafka, as in Ovid, nothing quite prepares us for a man suddenly turning into a cockroach. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1916) would be a far less compelling story, however, if Gregor Samsa had suddenly become a golden retriever; at the end, we hardly think of his cockroach condition as a mere disruption of sense. By the end of the story its changes remain in our memory as a gradual silting up of sediments of his tragedy as a man, each shift in the story seeming to prefigure what came next – which is the retrospective logic of narrative. Almost all good writers of fiction work in both dimensions of metamorphosis, disrupting sense while accumulating meaning through change.

To translate this artistic work into social terms, we could say that here is a model of change from within, of internal evolution, of what one modern school of social thought calls rather grandly 'auto-poesis'. All institutions experience such metamorphoses of this sort, making sudden, lurching alterations which are later rationalized into a narrative logic. Moreover, metamorphosis can serve a critical purpose. Sudden shifts of form can confront what came before.

When Durkheim studied the division of labour, he focused on differentiation, that is, how one category of work is logically as well as functionally distinct from another; the categories make room for each other and respect each other's boundaries. What we call today the 'difference principle' addresses the illogic of such distinctions. The difference principle does not respect boundaries, say of gender or of class, but it seeks to test them, and so change their forms. Kafka made this test with the category human, Ovid with the category god; even modern computers test boundary distinctions and are increasingly capable of self-metamorphosis.

Yet take alone, metamorphosis in its social versions as change from within or as the difference principle is insufficient as a model of social experience, and especially when sheer alteration of form is emphasized. For this slights the other side of narrative time, its coherence. Basic social bonds like trust, loyalty and obligation are not instantly formed; they require a long time to develop; they require continuity rather than rupture. A system open to the growth of these social experiences must, that is, possess the qualities and the power of *duration*.