

for space

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Part Five

A relational politics of the spatial

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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figure 13.1 *'Hamburg's Oldest Immigrant'*

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

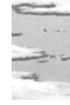


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connectivity might be negotiated. Just as so many of our accustomed ways of imagining space have been attempts to tame it.



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

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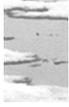
could construct any new, and better, notion of public space. And that might include, sometimes, facing up to the necessities of negotiated exclusion.

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

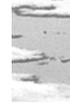


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produces trickle down and multipliers to all. It is a unity. And it is a unity rhetorically bolstered through recourse to the establishment of external enemies: the other regions of the country (accused of taking too big a share, through redistribution,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

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

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



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



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

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

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



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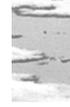
the migrant rocks which currently exist as Skiddaw, speak to the same 'new' spatiality as does the city, and open up more widely an appreciation of the temporary nature of the constellation which is place. Tectonic shifts, the ebb and flow of icecaps, the arrival of nonhuman and human migrants; that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

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

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

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

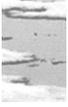
The nonhuman has its trajectories also and the event of place demands, no less than with the human, a politics of negotiation. It is such a set of negotiations, and maybe in a serious sense frequently failed negotiations given 'nature's' reply, that Mike Davis (2000) documents in his glorious account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



throwntogetherness: the politics of the event of place

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

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



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