

# Place

*a short introduction*

Tim Cresswell

Uzo



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## Reading 'A Global Sense of Place'

The purpose of this chapter is to consider, in some depth, how place has been thought through in a key reading from the discipline. Of course there are many possible readings and many of them have been mentioned in previous chapters. Doreen Massey's paper 'A Global Sense of Place' has been widely cited as a plea for a new conceptualization of place as open and hybrid – a product of interconnecting flows – of routes rather than roots. This extroverted notion of place calls into question the whole history of place as a center of meaning connected to a rooted and 'authentic' sense of identity forever challenged by mobility. It also makes a critical intervention into the widely held notions of the erosion of place through globalization and time-space compression. I have chosen this paper, then, because it allows for reflection on all of the central themes that surround the notion of place and points towards a new way of thinking. Looking at this paper alone, however, would not do justice to the complexity and political urgency of the debates around place. It needs to be understood in its intellectual and historical context. For this reason the chapter also includes excerpts from David Harvey's chapter 'From Space to Place and Back Again' from his book *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1996). Finally a nuanced response to both of these papers is given by Jon May in his paper 'Globalization and the Politics of Place' (1996).

### Historical Context

'A Global Sense of Place' was published in 1991 and republished in 1994 in Massey's book *Space, Place and Gender*. It has also been anthologized in the 1997 collection *Reading Human Geography* (Barnes

and Gregory 1997) and, in a slightly different form, in the 1993 collection *Mapping the Futures* (Bird *et al.* 1993). This was a time, as Massey writes herself, when the world was experiencing rapid 'globalization'. Transport, communications and institutional support for global capital (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc.) had conspired to seemingly make places less important – less unique. Anti-globalization protests were small and unreported until the latter part of the 1990s. In the UK, more and more people flew abroad for holidays while the high street at home seemed increasingly homogenous as global chains such as MacDonalds appeared across the globe. Alongside this apparent homogenization a new kind of diversity was formed in the western world. Clothes came from around the world (labels read 'product of more than one country'), 'ethnic' restaurants expanded from the expected Chinese and Indian (in the UK) examples to include Mexican, Vietnamese or Mongolian (for instance). Supermarkets displayed a bewildering array of foodstuffs that often needed elaborate explanations on a nearby sign ('how to use a star fruit'). It suddenly became possible to buy fifteen varieties of rice from around the world. It seemed that two complimentary changes were occurring at a global scale – the repetition of outlets owned by multinational corporations everywhere across the globe (homogenization) and the flowering of a diverse array of international cultural products in urban areas everywhere. Both of these appeared to threaten the notion of unique places.

The early 1990s also witnessed a number of violent place-based uprisings usually based on the desires of oppressed minorities for nationhood or some other form of regional autonomy. The one that was most often portrayed in the Western media was the break up of Yugoslavia and the horrors of ethnic cleansing that accompanied it. The period also saw the rise of Islamic fundamentalism – such as the success of the Taliban in Afghanistan – which was, in part, a reaction to globalization and the perceived cultural imperialism of the United States and Europe. On a smaller scale the United States, in particular, was witnessing a rapid proliferation of 'gated communities' – specially managed places to live with extremely tight security designed to protect against the imagined horrors of city life (Till 1993). The heritage industry was also active, attempting to package places and their histories in a sanitized way in order to attract tourists and their money. So at many scales place was very much on the agenda either through its apparent homogenization or through various attempts to create places from the nation to the heritage park.

It was in this context that Doreen Massey and David Harvey engaged in quite different analyses of the idea of place in the

contemporary world and what it might mean. As we will see, Harvey, whose paper 'From Space to Place and Back Again' was first given at a conference at the Tate Gallery in 1990, was quite disturbed by the emergence of a politics of place that could often be quite reactionary and exclusionary – using place to define one group of people over and against others. Massey, on the other hand, sought to redefine place as a much more open and progressive force in the world. We will start with Harvey.

### Harvey on Place

David Harvey, in his paper 'From Space to Place and Back Again' begins with an example from his home town of Baltimore to make his more abstract arguments about place.

On Sunday August 14, 1994 a brutal double murder occurred in Guilford. An elderly white couple, both distinguished physicians but now retired in their 80s, were found in their bed bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat. Murder is no stranger to Baltimore (the rate for the city is one a day). But in the eyes of the media the Guilford killings were special. The main local newspaper – the *Baltimore Sun* – devoted full-page coverage to them when most other murders received nominal attention. The media dwelt at length on how this was the third such incident in Guilford in recent months and that something plainly had to be done to protect the community if it was to survive. The solution that had long been pressed by the Guilford Community Association was to turn Guilford into a gated community with restricted access.  
(Harvey 1996, 292)

Harvey reports how the media turned to the views of Oscar Newman, the author of *Defensible Space* (1972) who suggested that the production of gated communities was one way to secure neighborhoods against crimes such as prostitution, drug dealing and mugging. Gated communities are essentially collections of houses (and sometimes shops and leisure services) with a wall around them and one or two ways in and out. These entrances/exits can then be policed by private security forces, cctv and other forms of surveillance. Residents have passes to allow them in and out and guests have to be recorded. In the case of Guilford the production of the gated community would effectively separate a white community (in Guilford) from a black community (beyond).

The whole tenor of the *Sun's* report implied ... that crime was an African-American and 'underclass' habit and that therefore the construction of barriers against people of color and of low income, however regrettable, might be justifiable as a means to secure a defensible space of 'community' for an affluent white middle-class population that might otherwise flee the city. Place had to be secured against the uncontrolled vectors of spatiality.

(Harvey 1996, 292)

As it turned out, the murders in Guilford were not committed by some random intruder from the world beyond but by the grandson of the couple.

Here Harvey pits the idea of place (as a secure bounded community) against what he calls the 'uncontrolled vectors of spatiality'. As is often the case in the history of geography place stands against fluidity and flux which are portrayed as threatening. Note it is not Harvey who is saying that place can be a secure haven in an unpredictable world. He is simply observing that this is how the argument is constructed in the *Baltimore Sun*. Nonetheless his choice of this example does indicate something of the way he uses place in his own work.

So what kind of place is Guilford? It has a name, a boundary, and distinctive social and physical qualities. It has achieved a certain kind of 'permanence' in the midst of the fluxes and flows of urban life. Protection of this permanence has become a political-economic project not only for Guilford residents but also for a wide range of institutions in the city (government, the media, and finance in particular). And it has a discursive/symbolic meaning well beyond that of mere location, so that events that occur there have a particular significance, as signified by the response in the press and the media to the murders. Guilford plainly fits into cartographies of struggle, power, and discourse in Baltimore city in very special ways. But different maps locate it differently, as the two contrasting reports in the *Sun* clearly indicated.

(Harvey 1996, 293)

Here Harvey uses the well rehearsed and familiar characteristics of place ('a discursive/symbolic meaning well beyond that of mere location') to argue that it is just such characteristics that become important in the attempts of privileged groups in Baltimore to further 'fix' Guilford as a secure white bourgeois place. It is important to bear in mind Harvey's choice of example when exploring the rest of his paper on the nature of place. One aspect of place that the example

does clearly show (and this was Harvey's intention) is that places don't just exist but that they are always and continually being socially constructed by powerful institutional forces in society.

Place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. This is the baseline proposition from which I start. The only interesting question that can then be asked: is by what social process(es) is place constructed? There are two ways to get a fix on that problem. The first is to recapitulate what the relational view of space-time tells us:

entities achieve relative stability in both their bounding and their internal ordering of processes creating space, for a time. Such permanences come to occupy a piece of space in an exclusive way (for a time) and thereby define a place – their place – (for a time). The process of place formation is a process of carving out 'permanences' from the flow of processes creating spatio-temporality. But the 'permanences' – no matter how solid they may seem – are not eternal but always subject to time as 'perpetual perishing.' They are contingent on processes of creation, sustenance and dissolution.

(Above, 261)

A double meaning can, therefore, be given to place as (a) a mere position of location within a map of space-time constituted within some social process or (b) an entity or 'permanence' occurring within and transformative of the construction of space-time ... The difference in meanings is between putting down a marker such as 30.03°S and 51.10°W on a map of the globe or naming the city of Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil.

(Harvey 1996, 293–294)

So place for Harvey, is a conditional form of 'permanence' in the flow of space and time. Although using a completely different language this recalls Tuan's observation that 'if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place' (Tuan 1977, 6). But Harvey is more interested in the political world than Tuan and the pause that comes with place allows not so much a sense of existential belonging but an opportunity to mark particular boundaries and constitute particular forms of local government and social power. Harvey's attention is focused on the 'political economy of place construction under capitalism'.

Capital is relatively free to move around the globe at the press of a button. Capital is mobile. Place, on the other hand, is fixed. This tension between mobile capital and fixed place is fundamental for

Harvey. The 'permanence' of place is a form of investment in fixity. Infrastructures have to be built that cannot readily be moved at a moment's notice.

The tension between place-bound fixity and spatial mobility of capital erupts into generalized crisis, however, when the landscape shaped in relation to a certain phase of development (capitalist or pre-capitalist) becomes a barrier to further accumulation. The geographical configuration of places must then be reshaped around new transport and communications systems and physical infrastructures, new centers and styles of production and consumption, new agglomerations of labor power, and modified social infrastructures ... Old places ... have to be devalued, destroyed, and redeveloped while new places are created. The cathedral city becomes a heritage center, the mining community becomes a ghost town, the old industrial center is deindustrialised, speculative boom towns or gentrified neighbourhoods arise on the frontier of capitalist development or out of the ashes of deindustrialised communities (Harvey 1996, 296)

So the permanence of place and the mobility of capital are always in tension and places are constantly having to adapt to conditions beyond their boundaries. Places compete to get a share of the mobile capital – encouraging companies to invest in their particular form of fixity. Places have to sell themselves as good places to live and work and invest (Kearns and Philo 1993).

It is this mobility of capital that many see as the prime force of globalization and the main reason for the perceived homogenization of places around the world. As capital becomes more mobile and mass communication more ubiquitous, the argument goes, places become less important (Meyrowitz 1985). But Harvey resists this line of argument:

But it does not mean that the meaning of place has changed in social life and in certain respects the effect has been to make place more rather than less important. This probably accounts for the vast outpouring of works over the past ten years or so in which 'place' figures prominently in the title. (Harvey 1996, 297)

In conditions in which the global economy has reconfigured space and time radically, Harvey argues, people tend to think more about the security of their particular place in the world. The threat to place posed by the global economy makes us more aware of what we value

in the places we live and work. In addition the dramatic reduction in costs of transport and communication, at least in the developed world, has made objective location (how far a place is from other places) less relevant. This means that the qualitative aspects of place – the quality of life – have increased in importance when a multinational company (for instance) chooses a location. Thus:

Those who reside in a place ... become acutely aware that they are in competition with other places for highly mobile capital ... Residents worry about what package they can offer which will bring development while satisfying their own wants and needs. People in places therefore try to differentiate their place from other places and become more competitive (and perhaps antagonistic and exclusionary with respect to each other) in order to capture or retain capital investment. Within this process, the selling of place, using all the artifices of advertising and image construction that can be mustered has become of considerable importance.

(Harvey 1996, 298)

Think of the efforts of cities around the world to become 'safe' and 'attractive' places for people to live and work. So called 'urban renaissance' projects such as the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, Spain, the Millennium Dome in London or the Portman Center in downtown Atlanta are part and parcel of the need to attract both businesses and consumers (i.e. residents) to particular places rather than others. Similarly large cultural events such as World's Fairs, Olympic Games and World Cups are used to sell places to a world audience. Universities compete for students by advertising their location as well as their academic merit.

Investment in consumption spectacles, the selling of images of places, competition over the definition of cultural and symbolic capital, the revival of vernacular traditions associated with places as a consumer attraction, all become conflated in inter-place competition.

(Harvey 1996, 298)

Harvey's next move is to consider the formative influence of the work of Martin Heidegger and his notion of 'dwelling'. He notes (as Edward Relph had several decades earlier) that Heidegger sees place-as-dwelling as the 'locale of the truth of being' – as the thing that makes humans human. He points out that Heidegger was already terrified of time-space compression in pre-war Germany because it resulted in a loss of place-based identity. It is this terror



that forces Heidegger to withdraw from the world into his Black Forest farmhouse (see Chapter 2). Harvey finds this withdrawal problematic:

For example, what might the conditions of 'dwelling' be in a highly industrialized, modernist, and capitalist world? We cannot turn back to the Black Forest farmhouse, but what is it that we might turn to? The issue of authenticity (rootedness) of the experience of place (and nature of place) is, for example a difficult one. To begin with ... the problem of authenticity is itself peculiarly modern. Only as modern industrialization separates us from the process of production and we encounter the environment as a finished commodity does it emerge. Being rooted in place, Tuan (1977, 198) argues, is a different kind of experience from having and cultivating a sense of place. 'A truly rooted community may have shrines and monuments, but it is unlikely to have museums and societies for the preservation of the past.' The effort to evoke a sense of place and of the past is now often deliberate and conscious. (Harvey 1996, 302)

Clearly, then, it is not possible for large numbers of modern dwellers to retreat to farmhouses in the Black Forest or anywhere else (though where I live, in West Wales, there is plenty of evidence of people moving from the urban southeast of England to find some sense of attachment to place). But all around us there are efforts underway to make places more distinctive and visible and to provide a sense of pride and belonging. Often, as Harvey notes, this takes the form of 'heritage' where a sense of rootedness in the past and in place is provided for the consumption of locals and tourists. Urban areas are cleaned up and marketed as heritage areas (I am thinking of San Diego's gaslight district, London's Covent Garden or Boston's Faneuil Hall area). Signposts appear with elaborate 'olde worlde' maps and details of the history of this or that particular place. All of this is part of a search for 'authenticity' and rootedness. Ironically, of course, they are only necessary because 'being in place' cannot be taken for granted.

But the new values put on place are not simply for the benefit of tourists. Place has also become a political symbol for those who want to fight against the ever-present power of global capitalism. As Harvey notes, Kirkpatrick Sale was moved to write in *The Nation* that 'The only political vision that offers any hope of salvation is one based on an understanding of, a rootedness in, a deep commitment to, and a resacralization of *place*' (Harvey 1996, 302).

This permits a second cut at why place is becoming more rather than less important in the contemporary world. What Heidegger holds out, and what many subsequent writers have drawn from him, is the possibility of some kind of resistance to or rejection of any simple capitalist (or modernist) logic of place construction. It would then follow that the increasing market penetration of technological rationality, of commodification and market values, and capital accumulation into social life ... together with time-space compression, will provoke resistances that increasingly focus on alternative constructions of place ... The search for an authentic sense of community and of an authentic relation to nature among many radical and ecological movements is the cutting edge of exactly such a sensibility. (Harvey 1996, 302)

This search for an authentic sense of place in the world is what Harvey (following Raymond Williams) calls 'militant particularism'. This term indicates the political use of the particularity of place as a form of resistance against the forces of global capitalism. All over the world groups have been and are attempting to build their own places and communities in order to live differently from the mass of people. Communes, organic farms, traveler communities, urban neighborhood groups and religious enclaves are all examples of this. Also, Harvey continues, place is often seen as the 'locus of collective memory' – a site where identity is created through the construction of memories linking a group of people into the past.

The preservation or construction of a sense of place is then an active moment in the passage from memory to hope, from past to future. And the reconstruction of places can reveal hidden memories that hold out the prospects for different futures. 'Critical regionalism' as it is called in architecture, invoking as it so often does vernacular traditions and icons of place, is considered a basis for a politics of resistance to commodity flows and monetization. 'Militant particularism' seizes upon the qualities of place, reanimates the bond between the environmental and the social, and seeks to bend the social processes constructing space-time to a radically different purpose. Some memories can be suppressed and others rescued from the shadows as identities shift and political trajectories into the future get redefined ... Imagined places, the Utopian thoughts and desires of countless peoples, have consequently played a vital role in animating politics. (Harvey 1996, 306)

This construction of imagined places is important to Harvey (indeed he later wrote a whole book on the theme called *Spaces of Hope*

(Harvey 2000)). It is in these imagined places (sometimes partly realized as utopian communities) that people act out resistance to the wider world of capital accumulation. It is not just small groups of people leading alternative lifestyles that use place to resist the forces of global capital though. Mainstream religions and nations also need to use place to emphasize what they see as their distinctiveness and independence from wider pressures. Thus nations invest in monuments, grand buildings and other projects to fill the place of the nation with meaning and memory and thus secure their power and authority. In Britain the Labour government constructed the Millennium Dome in East London in order to produce a sense of national pride and project into the unknown future of the twenty-first century. In many respects this sense of investment in place shares much with the residents of Guilford seeking to protect and promote their little piece of Baltimore.

Harvey takes issue with the idea that a place can unproblematically stand for the memory and identity of a particular group of people. It may be true, he argues, that collective memory is often made concrete through the production of particular places but this production of memory in place is no more than an element in the perpetuation of a particular social order that seeks to inscribe some memories at the expense of others. Places do not come with some memories attached as it by nature but rather they are the 'contested terrain of competing definitions' (Harvey 1996, 309). He uses the example of the Acropolis in Athens. While some argue that the monument stands for a particular kind of Greece that is unique and separate from the rest of the world others insist that the place is the repository of a wider sense of 'Western civilization'.

The burden that the Acropolis bears is that it simultaneously 'belongs' to radically divergent imagined communities. And the question as to whom it 'truly' belongs has no direct theoretical answer: it is determined through political contestation and struggle and, hence, is a relatively unstable determination. (Harvey 1996, 310)

In summary then, Harvey portrays place as a deeply ambiguous facet of modern and postmodern life. On the one hand investments in place can play a role in resisting the global circulation of capital but on the other it is often quite an exclusionary force in the world where groups of people define themselves against threatening others who are not included in the particular vision of place being enacted. The flows of globalization, on the other hand, are seen as anxiety

provoking for those people who seek to invest in the fixities of place-based existence.

Doreen Massey's paper is in many ways a response to this kind of thinking, a response that hinges on a redefinition of place as an inclusive and progressive site of social life. It appeared alongside Harvey's paper in the 1993 collection *Mapping the Futures*. Her paper is included, almost in its entirety below.

### A Global Sense of Place

This is an era – it is often said – when things are speeding up, and spreading out: Capital is going through a new phase of internationalization, especially in its financial parts. More people travel more frequently and for longer distances. Your clothes have probably been made in a range of countries from Latin America to South East Asia. Dinner consists of food shipped in from all over the world. And if you have a screen in your office, instead of opening a letter which – care of Her Majesty's Post Office – has taken some days to wend its way across the country, you now get interrupted by e-mail.

This view of the current age is one now frequently found in a wide range of books and journals. Much of what is written about space, place and postmodern times emphasizes a new phase in what Marx once called 'the annihilation of space by time'. The process is argued, or – more usually – asserted, to have gained a new momentum, to have reached a new stage. It is a phenomenon which has been called 'time-space compression'. And the general acceptance that something of the sort is going on is marked by the almost obligatory use in the literature of terms and phrases such as speed-up, global village, overcoming spatial barriers, the disruption of horizons, and so forth.

One of the results of this is an increasing uncertainty about what we mean by 'places' and how we relate to them. How, in the face of all this movement and intermixing, can we retain any sense of a local place and its peculiarity? An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities is set against the current fragmentation and disruption. The counterposition is anyway dubious, of course; 'place' and 'community' have only rarely been coterminous. But the occasional longing for such coherence is nonetheless a sign of the geographical fragmentation, the spatial disruption, of our times. And occasionally, too, it has been part of what has given rise to defensive and reactionary responses – certain forms of nationalism, sentimentalized recovering of sanitized 'heritages', and outright antagonism to newcomers and 'outsiders'. One of the effects of such responses is that place itself, the seeking after a sense of place, has come to be seen by some as necessarily reactionary.

But is that necessarily so? Can't we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-enclosing and

defensive, but outward looking? A sense of place which is adequate to this era of time-space compression? To begin with, there are some questions to be asked about time-space compression itself. Who is it that experiences it and how? Do we all benefit from and suffer from it in the same way?

For instance, to what extent does the currently popular characterization of time-space compression represent very much a Western, colonizer's view? The sense of dislocation which some feel at the sight of a once well-known local street now lined with a succession of cultural imports – the pizzeria, the kebab house, the branch of the middle-eastern bank – must have been felt for centuries, though from a different point of view; by colonized peoples all over the world as they watched the importation, maybe even used, the products of, first, European colonization, maybe British (from new forms of transport to liver salts and custard powder), later US, as they learned to eat wheat instead of rice or corn, to drink Coca-Cola, just as today we try our enchiladas.

Moreover, as well as querying the ethnocentricity of the idea of time-space compression and its current acceleration, we also need to ask about its causes: what is it that determines our degrees of mobility, that influences the sense we have of space and place? Time-space compression refers to movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all of this. The usual interpretation is that it results overwhelmingly from the actions of capital, and from its currently increasing internationalization. On this interpretation, then, it is time space and money which make the world go round, and us go round (or not) the world. It is capitalism and its developments which are argued to determine our understanding and our experience of space.

But surely this is insufficient. Among the many other things which clearly influence that experience, there are, for instance, 'race' and gender. The degree to which we can move between countries, or walk about the streets at night, or venture out of hotels in foreign cities, is not just influenced by 'capital'. Survey after survey has shown how women's mobility, for instance, is restricted – in a thousand different ways, from physical violence to being ogled at or made to feel quite simply 'out of place' – not by 'capital' but by men ... A simple resort to explanation in terms of 'money' or 'capital' alone could not begin to get to grips with the issue. The current speed-up may be strongly determined by economic forces, but it is not the economy alone which determines our experience of space and place. In other words, and put simply, there is a lot more determining how we experience space than what 'capital' gets up to.

...

Imagine for a moment that you are on a satellite, further out and beyond all actual satellites; you can see 'planet earth' from a distance and unusually for someone with only peaceful intentions, you are equipped with the kind of technology which allows you to see the colors of people's eyes and the numbers on their numberplates. You can see all the movement and tune in

to all the communication that is going on. Furthest out are the satellites, then aeroplanes, the long haul between London and Tokyo and the hop from San Salvador to Guatemala City. Some of this is people moving, some of it is physical trade, some is media broadcasting. There are faxes, e-mails, film distribution networks, financial flows and transactions. Look in closer and there are ships and trains, steam trains slogging laboriously up hills somewhere in Asia. Look in closer still and there are lorries and cars and buses, and further down, somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, there's a woman – amongst many women – on foot, who still spends hours a day collecting water.

Now I want to make one simple point here, and that is about what one might call the *power-geometry* of it all, the power geometry of time-space compression. For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.

In a sense at the end of all the spectra are those who are both doing the moving and the communicating and who are in some way in a position of control in relation to it – the jet-setters, the ones sending and receiving the faxes and the e-mail, holding the international conference calls, the ones distributing the films, controlling the news, organizing the investments and the international currency transactions. These are the groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases. On its more prosaic fringes this group probably includes a fair number of Western academics and journalists – those, in other words, who write most about it.

But there are also groups who are also doing a lot of physical moving, but who are not 'in charge' of the process in the same way at all. The refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala and the undocumented migrant workers from Michoacán in Mexico, crowding into Tijuana to make a perhaps fatal dash for it across the border into the US to grab a chance of a new life. Here the experiences of movement, and indeed of a confusing plurality of cultures, is very different. And there are those from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, who come half-way round the world only to get held up in an interrogation room at Heathrow.

Or – a different case again – there are those who are simply on the receiving end of time-space compression. The pensioner in a bed-sit in any inner city in the country, eating British working-class-style fish and chips from a Chinese take-away, watching a US film on a Japanese television; and

not daring to go out after dark. And anyway the public transport's been cut.

...

There is, in other words, a highly complex social differentiation. There are differences in the degree of movement and communication, but also in the degree of control and of initiation. The ways in which people are placed within 'time-space compression' are highly complicated and extremely varied.

...

But this way of thinking about time-space compression also returns us to the question of place and a sense of place. How, in the context of all these socially varied time-space changes do we think about 'places'? In an era when, it is argued, 'local communities' seem to be increasingly broken up, when you can go abroad and find the same shops, the same music as at home, or eat your favourite foreign-holiday food at a restaurant down the road – and when everybody has a different experience of all this – how do we think about 'locality'?

Many of those who write about time-space compression emphasize the insecurity and unsettling impact of its effects, the feelings of vulnerability which it can produce. Some, therefore go on from this to argue that, in the middle of all this flux, people desperately need a bit of peace and quiet – and that a strong sense of place, of locality, can form one kind of refuge from the hubbub. So the search after the 'real' meanings of place, the unearthing of heritages and so forth, is interpreted as being, in part, a response to desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change. A 'sense of place', of rootedness, can provide – in this form and on this interpretation – stability and a source of unproblematic identity. In that guise, however, place and the spatially local are then rejected by many progressive people as almost necessarily reactionary. They are interpreted as an evasion; as a retreat from the (actually unavoidable) dynamic and change of 'real life', which is what we must seize if we are to change things for the better. On this reading, place and locality are foci for a form of romanticized escapism from the real business of the world. While 'time' is equated with movement and progress, 'space/place' is equated with stasis and reaction.

There are some serious inadequacies in this argument. There is the question of why it is assumed that time-space compression will produce insecurity. There is the need to face up to – rather than simply deny – people's need for attachment of some sort, whether through place or anything else. Nonetheless, it is certainly the case that there is indeed at the moment a recrudescence of some very problematic senses of place, from reactionary nationalisms, to competitive localisms, to introverted obsessions with 'heritage'. We need, therefore, to think through what might be an adequately progressive sense of place, one which would fit in with the current global-local times and the feelings and relations they give rise to, *and*, which would be useful in what are, after all, political struggles often



inevitably based on place. The question is how to hold on to that notion of geographical difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary.

There are a number of distinct ways in which the 'reactionary' notion of place described above is problematic. One is the idea that places have single, essential, identities. Another is the idea that identity of place – the sense of place – is constructed out of an introverted, inward-looking history based on delving into the past for internalized origins, translating the name from the Domesday Book ... A particular problem with this conception of place is that it seems to require the drawing of boundaries. Geographers have long been exercised by the problem of defining regions, and this question of 'definition' has almost always been reduced to the issue of drawing lines around a place ... But that kind of boundary around an area precisely distinguishes between an inside and an outside. It can so easily be yet another way of constructing a counterposition between 'us' and 'them'.

And yet if one considers almost any real place, and certainly one not defined primarily by administrative or political boundaries, these supposed characteristics have little real purchase.

Take, for instance, a walk down Kilburn High Road, my local shopping centre. It is a pretty ordinary place, north-west of the centre of London. Under the railway bridge the newspaper stand sells papers from every county of what my neighbours, many of whom come from there, still often call the Irish Free State. The postboxes down the High Road, and many an empty space of a wall, are adorned with the letters IRA. Other available spaces are plastered this week with posters for a special meeting in remembrance: Ten Years after the Hunger Strike. At the local theatre Eamon Morrissey has a one-man show; the National Club has the Wolfe Tones on, and at the Black Lion there's Finnegans Wake. In two shops I notice this week's lottery ticket winners: in one the name is Teresa Gleeson, in the other, Chouman Hassan.

Thread your way through the often almost stationary traffic diagonally across the road from the newsstand and there's a shop which as long as I can remember has displayed saris in the window. Four life-sized models of Indian women, and reams of cloth. On the door a notice announces a forthcoming concert at Wembley Arena: Anand Miland presents Rekha, live, with Amir Khan, Jai Chawla and Ravenna Tandon. On another ad, for the end of the month, is written, 'All Hindus are cordially invited'. In another newsagents I chat with the man who keeps it, a Muslim unutterably depressed by events in the Gulf, silently chafing at having to sell the *Sun*. Overhead there is always at least one aeroplane – we seem to be on a flight path to Heathrow and by the time they're over Kilburn you can see them clearly enough to tell the airline and wonder as you struggle with your shopping where they're coming from. Below, the reason the traffic is snarled up (another odd effect of time-space compression!) is in part because this is one of the main entrances to and escape routes from



London, the road to Staples Corner and the beginning of the M1 to 'the North'.

Kilburn is a place for which I have a great affection; I have lived there many years. It certainly has 'a character of its own'. But it is possible to feel all this without subscribing to any of the static and defensive – and in that sense reactionary – notions of 'place' which were referred to above. First, while Kilburn may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares. It could hardly be less so. People's routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously. If it is now recognized that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both.

One of the problems here has been a persistent identification of place with 'community'. Yet this is a misidentification. On the one hand, communities can exist without being in the same place – from networks of friends with like interests, to major religions, ethnic or political communities. On the other hand, the instances of places housing single 'communities' in the sense of coherent social groups are probably – and I would argue, have for long been – quite rare. Moreover, even where they do exist this in no way implies a single sense of place. For people occupy different positions within any community. We could counterpose to the chaotic mix of Kilburn the relatively stable and homogeneous community (at least of popular imagery) of a small mining village. Homogeneous? 'Communities' too have internal structures. To take the most obvious example, I'm sure a woman's sense of place in a mining village – the spaces through which she normally moves, the meeting places, the connections outside – are different from a man's. Their 'sense of place' will be different.

Moreover, not only does 'Kilburn', then, have many different identities (or its full identity is a complex mix of all these) it is also, looked at in this way, absolutely *not* introverted. It is (or ought to be) impossible even to begin thinking about Kilburn High Road without bringing into play half the world and a considerable amount of British imperialist history (and this certainly goes for mining villages too). Imagining it this way provokes in you (or at least in me) a really global sense of place.

And finally, in contrasting this way of looking at places with the defensive, reactionary view, I certainly could not begin to, nor would I want to, define 'Kilburn' by drawing its enclosing boundaries.

So, at this point in the argument, get back in your mind's eye on a satellite, go right out again and look back at the globe. This time, however, imagine not just all the physical movement, nor even all the often invisible communications, but also and especially all the social relations, all the links

between people. Fill it in with all those different experiences of time-space compression. For what is happening is that the geography of social relations is changing. In many cases such relations are increasingly stretched out over space. Economic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international.

It is from that perspective that it is possible to envisage an alternative interpretation of place. In this interpretation, what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus. If one moves in from the satellite towards the globe, holding all those networks of social relations and movements and communications in one's head, then each 'place' can be seen as a particular, unique, point of their intersection. It is, indeed, a *meeting place*. Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent. And this in turn allows a sense of place, which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local.

This is not a question of making the ritualistic connections to 'the wider system' – the people in the local meeting who bring up international capitalism every time you try and have a discussion about rubbish-collection – the point is that there are real relations with real content – economic, political, cultural – between any local place and the wider world in which it is set. In economic geography the argument has long been accepted that it is not possible to understand the 'inner city', for instance its loss of jobs, the decline of manufacturing employment there, by looking only at the inner city. Any adequate explanation has to set the inner city in its wider geographical context. Perhaps it is appropriate to think how that kind of understanding could be extended to the notion of sense of place.

These arguments, then, highlight a number of ways in which a progressive concept of place might be developed. First of all, it is absolutely not static. If places can be conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together, then it is also the case that these interactions themselves are not motionless things, frozen in time. They are processes. One of the great one-liners of Marxist exchanges has for long been, 'Ah, but capital is not a thing, it is a process.' Perhaps this should be said also about places; that places are processes, too.

Second, places do not have to have boundaries in the sense of divisions which frame simple enclosures. 'Boundaries' may of course be necessary,

for the purposes of certain kinds of studies for instance, but they are not necessary for the conceptualization of a place itself. Definition in this sense does not have to be through simple counterposition to the outside; it can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage to that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place. This helps us get away from the common association between penetrability and vulnerability. For it is this kind of association which makes invasion by newcomers so threatening.

Third, clearly places do not have single, unique 'identities'; they are full of internal conflicts. Just think, for instance, about London's Docklands, a place which is at the moment quite clearly *defined* by conflict: a conflict over what its past has been (the nature of its 'heritage'), conflict over what should be its present development, conflict over what should be its future.

Fourth, and finally, none of this denies place nor the importance of the uniqueness of place. The specificity of place is continually reproduced, but it is not a specificity which results from some long, internalized history. There are a number of sources of this specificity – the uniqueness of place. There is the fact that the wider social relations in which places are set are themselves geographically differentiated. Globalization (in the economy, or in culture, or in anything else) does not entail simply homogenization. On the contrary, the globalization of social relations is yet another source of (the reproduction of) geographical uneven development, and thus of the uniqueness of place. There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations. There is the fact that this very mixture together in one place may produce effects which would not have happened otherwise. And finally, all these relations interact with and take a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of a place, with that history itself imagined as the product of layer upon layer of different sets of linkages, both local and to the wider world.

In her portrait of Corsica, *Granite Island*, Dorothy Carrington travels the island seeking out the roots of its character. All the different layers of peoples and cultures are explored; the long and tumultuous relationship with France, with Genoa and Aragon in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, back though the much earlier incorporation into the Byzantine Empire, and before that domination by the Vandals, before that being part of the Roman Empire, before that the colonization and settlements of the Carthaginians and the Greeks ... until we find ... that even the megalith builders had come to Corsica from somewhere else.

It is a sense of place, an understanding to 'its character' which can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond. A progressive sense of place would recognize that, without being threatened by it. What we need, it seems to me, is a global sense of local, a global sense of place.

Massey's first move in this paper is to question dominant assumptions about time-space compression and globalization. As we saw in Harvey's paper these global flows of people, information, products and capital are often seen as anxiety provoking – as forces to be resisted. Massey's view is different. She argues that such views are the product of seeing global processes purely in terms of capitalism. And yet, she points out, they are also gendered and raced. The ubiquitous mobility of the world is too often portrayed as a universal condition resulting from transformations in capital. Harvey may agree that mobilities are often differentiated according to race and gender but these are not the aspects he emphasizes. Massey uses examples of people moving in all kinds of ways to show how the reasons for people's movements are far from homogeneous. Some are forced to move, some move at will and others are effectively forced to stay still. To simply pit the apparent fixity of place against the apparent fluidity of the global economy, Massey suggests, is to miss the specificity of people's mobile experience.

Massey gives many examples of this which are easy to relate to and we can all think of others. Take, for example, the relationship between the global elite, the 'ex-pats' for instance, who live in Hong Kong or Singapore and the people that serve them – the domestic servants from the Philippines or the cleaners and maids who look after their rooms in Hyatts and Marriots all over the world. They are all mobile but in very different ways and for different reasons. To think of them all as simply fragments of the globalization of capital misses the point. There are clear issues of gender and race in these examples too. Cleaners and maids in business class hotels in the developed West are usually poorer migrant women from the less developed world. The people in the rooms are from different worlds. Hong Kong's ex-pat community is wealthy and predominantly white and male. The domestic servants are not. Massey uses the phrase 'power-geometry' to describe the way in which the complicated movements of people are infused with power that is not only an issue of capital but also other ubiquitous forms of social relation.

Massey's next move is to suggest that when we rethink 'time-space compression' and 'globalization' in these ways we also have to think again about place. She notes how one response to time-space compression has been the sense of anxiety that leads to people looking for a 'little peace and quiet' and retreating into a romantic sense of place very much like the one outlined by Harvey. Such a retreat, Massey points out, is almost necessarily reactionary. She cites nationalisms, heritage crusades and the fear of outsiders as examples of reactionary withdrawals into place. All of these were very apparent

in the early 1990s when she was writing. Now we could think of the almost pathological hatred of 'asylum seekers' in the United Kingdom, the more generalized fear of the foreign in post 9/11 USA and the treatment of potential Afghan immigrants to Australia as examples of the same kind of retreat.

And yet to simply see place as a static and rooted reaction to a dynamic and mobile world holds several problems for Massey. First it may be the case that people do need some sense of place to hold on to – even a need for 'rootedness' – and this need not be always reactionary. Second the flow and flux of global movement might not necessarily be anxiety provoking. The reactionary sense of place that disturbs Harvey is, for Massey marked by at least three interconnected ways of thinking.

1. A close connection between place and a singular form of identity.
2. A desire to show how the place is authentically rooted in history.
3. A need for a clear sense of boundaries around a place separating it from the world outside.

The first of these suggests that particular places have singular unitary identities – New York means this, Wales means that. Often these identities are based on ideas about race. Place at the national scale for instance often acts in a way that ties a particular 'race' or ethnic group to a particular area of land. So the ex-British Prime Minister John Major famously argued that Britain was a nation of 'long shadows on county cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and – as George Orwell said – old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist.' Clearly this is not everyone's view of Britain. The idea that particular groups of people with their own 'culture' belong, as if by nature, in a particular place is, however, widespread. Successive America presidents have made similar statements about the United States. Ronald Reagan in September 1980 said in a televised debate:

I have always believed that this land was placed here between the two great oceans by some divine plan. It was placed here to be found by a special kind of people – people who had a special love for freedom and who had the courage to uproot themselves and leave hearth and homeland and come to what in the beginning was the most undeveloped wilderness possible. We spoke a multitude of tongues – landed on this eastern shore and then went out over the mountains and the prairies and the deserts and the far Western mountains of the Pacific, building cities and towns and farms and schools and churches.

Just as Major tapped into well-developed stereotypes about Britain as a particular kind of place so Reagan mobilized long-held views of 'America' as a frontier nation for particular political ends. There is almost a common-sense way in which particular identities are mapped onto the world. We will see in Chapter 4 how such visions often lead to reprehensible treatment of those who do not fit such an identity.

The second part of Massey's delineation of a reactionary sense of place is the constant desire to show how places and their identities are rooted in history. This explains the modern desire for heritage at both national and local scales. National governments and cultural elites are often keen to root a sense of national identity in a historical story of where it has come from and where it is going – a creation myth. Elaborate traditions are invented in order to bolster these stories. Museums display these histories. Not far from where I live and work there is a museum called Celtica which taps into colorful myths about the Celts – the semi-mythical body of people who are supposed to provide the deep-rooted historical heritage of Wales (as well as Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, etc.). This is far from unique and places like it, can, I imagine, be found just about all over the globe. Often these histories are very selective and exclude the experiences of more recent arrivals. Returning to the idea of 'Britishness' the conservative politician Norman Tebbit made the following claim in September 2002: 'My father's family came to Britain in the 16th Century, but I regard the Anglo-Saxon period, King Alfred and William the Conqueror as part of my inheritance.' He went on to say how the challenge for late twentieth century Britain was, as he saw it to: 'persuade these people (immigrants) that Waterloo, Trafalgar and the Battle of Britain, is part of their heritage.' Here a particular exclusionary view of heritage is mapped onto a place – Britain – in a way that effectively excludes a large portion of the British population for whom other aspects of British history – colonialism, slavery, economic exploitation – may be more immediate.

The third issue in the reactionary definition of place is that of boundaries. Boundaries are a key element in Massey's discussion. She makes it quite clear that, to her, places are not about boundaries. Boundaries, she argues, simply make distinctions between 'them' and 'us' and therefore contribute to a reactionary politics. This, of course, stands in distinction to Harvey's tale of Guilford and the construction of very literal boundaries in the form of walls and gates around it. Of course some places have literal boundaries and others do not. Nation-states have boundaries which have to be negotiated. Political entities within nations also have formal boundaries that we often cross

without noticing. On a smaller scale, however, we are often hard pressed to think of where a place begins and ends. And focusing on this issue, as Massey points out, tends to negate the multitude of flows that cross boundaries constantly. Massey's criticism here, however, is a little misplaced as very few geographers (outside of those dealing with the geopolitics of national and sub-national boundaries) write about boundaries in relation to place. Humanists, for instance, would be the last to claim that place was clearly and unambiguously bounded.

Massey's description of Kilburn is a celebration of diversity and hybridity. Her portrait is an evocative mix of people of multiple ethnicities living and working side by side. The symbols she picks out are symbols of Irish, Muslim or Hindu life. This is quite clearly not a place seeking to distance itself from the wide world but one made up of constantly changing elements of that wider world. Massey's Kilburn is, in her words, a 'meeting place' where a particular 'constellation of social relations' comes together in place. Her observations of Kilburn draws her toward a new 'extrovert' 'progressive' and 'global' sense of place marked by the following:

1. Place as process.
2. Place as defined by the outside.
3. Place as site of multiple identities and histories.
4. A uniqueness of place defined by its interactions.

Massey's new definition of place is really quite different from ones that went before it. Tuan and Relph, you will recall, were quite clear that processes and forms of movement were, when extended too far, quite antithetical to the construction of places. The French anthropologist Marc Augé also sees travel as the moving force in the construction of non-place. So what would these writers on place make of Massey's use of the word? One criticism that it is possible to make of the 'global sense of place' is that it is hard to point to anything specific about it. The traditional humanistic definition of place at least has the advantage of being quite clear about the importance of the existential sense of rootedness to make their arguments for the importance of place. What is the 'place' component of Massey's Kilburn? Is it no more than an accidental coming together of many different flows in one location?

And surely it is also the case that many people all over the world do invest (in non-reactionary ways) in a search for comparative fixity. Although it is true that there are few places not influenced by global flows of commodities, ideas and people there are many places where families have lived for generations or where a little more globalization

would be welcome. I am thinking here of towns where locals would like a local branch of a global chain such as Starbucks, McDonalds or the Body Shop but the local economy is simply too marginal and depressed for these symbols of the globe to locate there. In Chapter 4 we will see how some groups make quite positive and inclusive attempts to tap into a place's history or promote a particular notion of place as an act of resistance and affirmation in the face of wider forces. In other words, a little bit of fixity might not always be such a bad thing.

A great deal, it seems to me, depends on what particular instance of place we chose to look at. Both Harvey and Massey choose to illustrate their ideas about place with reference to specific places near to where they live – Harvey writes about Guilford in Baltimore and Massey considers Kilburn in London. Both of these places obviously mean something to the authors personally. But notice how different the examples are. Harvey's Guilford is a place that sees itself under threat from difference and seeks to create clear boundaries – literally a wall with monitored gates – to distinguish itself from the threatening outside. Massey's Kilburn on the other hand is a place of radical openness – defined by its permeability. It is not surprising, therefore, that the more theoretical considerations of place that follow are different too. To Harvey place seems just too reactionary – too based on the exclusion of 'others'. Massey's Kilburn, on the other hand allows her to suggest that it is okay to seek identity in place because the identity is never fixed and bounded.

### Beyond Reactionary and Progressive Senses of Place

Stoke Newington is an area of Inner North London which has recently been subject to gentrification. A new cultural elite has moved in along with their expensive and diverse restaurants, boutiques and furniture shops.

If we are to believe the pundits, Stoke Newington has arrived. Take a stroll through Church Street, the trendier of the area's two shopping centers, and the suspicion is confirmed. In place of the old barbers there is now a kite shop, instead of a butchers, a delicatessen. The fish and chip shop has long gone, replaced by a (reassuringly expensive) Indian restaurant and in its book shops one no longer need to search through Frederick Forsyth to find the elusive little collection on Forster.

(May 1996, 197)



Jon May conducted his doctoral research there and found that the politics of place in Stoke Newington should lead us to be careful about putting all our eggs in one theoretical basket in regards to place. His research involved ethnographic fieldwork and extensive interviewing of local residents – both working class and members of the new cultural elite. One couple, Paul and Pat, look back to the 'good old days' of Stoke Newington as a cohesive working class (and white) neighborhood where everyone knew each other and you didn't have to lock the door. For them the main reason the place has changed for the worse is immigration. They blame immigrants (i.e. non-white people) for crime and decay of community.

- Jon: Because it must have been, when you were little, it must have been almost entirely white around here.
- Pat: Oh yeah, yeah! Yeah it was. And you left your front door open all night and it wouldn't matter. You know, it just wouldn't matter. But now! God, you got to lock everything up. (May 1996, 200)

To Pat and Paul, Stoke Newington is not a place of new and appealing diversity but a place in decline (Paul has suffered from a declining local job market and has had seven jobs in ten years – many part time). Paul looks at the 'diversity' of the area and sees scapegoats for his own precarious situation. Pat and Paul's sense of loss, although clearly racist, is nonetheless profound.

Both Paul and Pat have seen the area where they grew up change beyond all recognition and such changes precipitate a very real sense of loss. For Pat, this sense of disenfranchisement has become centered upon the High Street where those landmarks through which she has always constructed her sense of place are being appropriated by others and where, when she feels as if she has nowhere to go, it seems as though others are being provided with a readymade sense of place. (May 1996, 201)

Despite the despair of Pat and Paul over the rising immigrant (principally Kurdish) population and diminished sense of Englishness, others are attracted to the area because it does 'conjure up images of this England lost; a quieter more stable England of parish churches and village greens, reaching back to the area's founding moment as the "village in the woode"' (May 1996, 202). The local council installed mock gas lamps along one street while residents were busy installing wood floors and Aga cookers. Two streets (Shakespeare Walk and Milton Grove) were granted conservation

status in order to promote the heritage of the area. May interviewed a graphic designer (Alex) who had recently moved into the area because of the iconography of Englishness. Note how different Alex's perspective is from Pat and Paul's:

Coming from Church Street you've got that glorious shot of the church spires and trees and the park, and all that ... it's a real sort of postcardy thing. The only that that's missing is the cricket pitch ... It's very sort of Englishy, and I think it will probably remain so, you know.

Alex quoted by (May 1996, 203)

So Alex sees Stoke Newington almost as a picture of stereotypical Englishness while Paul and Pat see only a lack of the very same qualities. Alex's vision is similarly based on racial homogeneity. Neither of these visions of the place could be said to be progressive. Both look to the past for a sense of Englishness but they are very different visions. Paul and Pat look to a past that is working class based on High Street pubs and corner stores while Alex buys into the (middle class) iconography of churches and rurality. This is best illustrated by their differing accounts of a local pub that had been called the Red Lion and had been changed to the Magpie and Stump. To Alex the change of name and the redecorated interior marked a distinct improvement – it became a comfortable middle class establishment that Alex referred to as 'traditional'. Before the change the pub had been, in Alex's eyes 'an awful place with about three people in there'. To Paul, however, this change was just another sign of the erosion of the place he had known. The Red Lion had been a place Paul had grown up going to and playing darts in. The Magpie and Stump was now a yuppie pub: 'It used to be a nice pub, and I mean the Red Lion, it's a nice name for a pub. The Magpie and Stump! Why bring in the yuppie names, why not keep the traditional thing?' (May 1996, 203). As May puts it:

Battles over an area's past are therefore of crucial importance in defining a local sense of place. But at issue is not some elusive question of historical authenticity, of whose image of the past is closer to what an area was 'really like'. Rather, it is a question of the material politics articulated by each vision. Ironically, that sense of Englishness – constructed through a particular reading of the area's past – that Stoke Newington's middle class residents are building, is directly contributing to that sense of England lost that pervaded Paul and Pat's earlier accounts and complicating any ideas of a universal retreat into the mythology of a 'bounded' sense of place. (May 1996, 205)

Beyond the senses of place of Pat and Paul on the one hand and Alex on the other, May found another way of thinking about Stoke Newington that gestured toward Massey's global sense of place. Some residents were attracted to Stoke Newington *because* of its perceived diversity. Amanda is another resident of the area who takes pleasure in the sights and sounds of a local market place.

It's just that I LEARN things there, I mean it's really humbling sometimes... for instance, there's a lot of Africans and West Indians that I talk to, colleagues and friends at work – more Africans – who really sneer at us because we are the so called 'civilised society', but we've lost a big part of ourselves. Whether it's a spiritual part, or a bit that you can't really, you know, it's not logical, it's not material, and that's really quite recent for me.

Amanda in (May 1996, 206)

To May, people such as Amanda enjoy a kind of aestheticized difference – they stand back from the crowd and enjoy it in all its variety. May argues that this is an appreciation of diversity as a picturesque scene that gives those who look on a sense of cultural capital – a sense of their own self worth in being able to appreciate difference. For Amanda and others 'the city and its other residents are reduced to the sights of an afternoon stroll, part of an agreeable lifestyle aesthetic for those suitably insulated from the reality of life in a declining inner-city neighbourhood' (May 1996, 208)

Crucially this sense of an aesthetic appreciation of difference cannot be reconciled with either Harvey's or Massey's sense of place:

[T]he images of Stoke Newington provided by some of the area's new cultural class residents suggest neither that radically 'bounded' sense of place identified by some... nor yet the emergence of that more 'progressive' sense of place championed by others... Rather, it has been suggested that we may need to recognize the multiple place identities people now draw upon and consider more carefully the ways in which such identities are constructed. The control over local space which Stoke Newington's new cultural class residents now enjoy, for example, allows such residents to construct Stoke Newington as a space in which 'one can have it all'. Whilst the neighbourhood's historical associations can support an image of place built around the iconography of a mythical village England, those same residents demonstrate a desire for difference that draws them towards a more obviously 'global sense of place'. Yet the way in which this latter place identity is constructed is anything but progressive, suggesting we may need to pay more attention to the way in which such connections are imagined,

and by whom, before automatically assuming that a global sense of place describes a more progressive identity politics. (May 1996, 210-211)

May's engagement with Stoke Newington and its residents provides a third example of the politics of place in a globalized world. Unlike the essays of Harvey and Massey, May's paper is based on several years of ethnographic fieldwork to find out the multiple ways in which people relate to the same place. Issues of boundaries and rootedness and connections are still there but they are used in complicated ways by people. The simple, observable, fact of diversity does not necessarily produce a progressive sense of place and the search for roots in history does not have to be reactionary.

### Conclusions

These accounts of place, through the examples of Guilford, Kilburn and Stoke Newington, reveal just how complicated the idea of place is. It is not just that these are different places in the simple sense of being located in different parts of London and in Baltimore. They all have complicated relationships both to the past and to other places near and far. But these accounts also show how place is a way of understanding the world. The theorizations of place by Massey, Harvey and May lead them to see different aspects of these places in the world. But theory is not just the property of intellectuals. Paul and Pat, Alex and Amanda, the residents of Stoke Newington, are also everyday theorists who bring their own ideas of place to bear of the place they live in. As with Massey, Harvey and May they understand place differently.