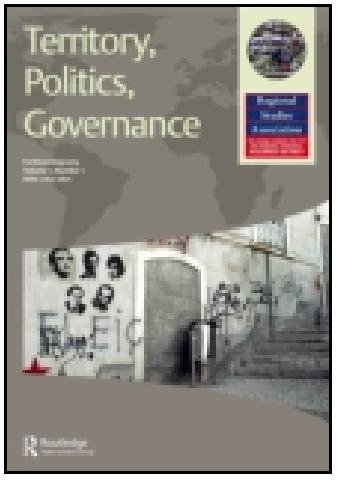

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Territory, Scale, and Why Capitalism Matters

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Territory, Scale, and Why Capitalism Matters

KEVIN R. COX

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Abstract A number of recent contributions have been critical of those theorizations of scale and territory that emerged in the last two decades. They have argued, variably, that a de-centered world of flows and networks, whether a recent phenomenon or something that is in the nature of space relations, trumps the assumptions of verticality, centricity and fixity that are, in their view, central to those theorizations. They define their view of space as relational in contrast to what they believe to be the non-relational view embedded in concepts of scale and territory. These critiques have been met, in turn, by a number of ripostes which argue, essentially, that there is no contradiction between relational views of space and the concepts of scale and territory. In both the critiques and the rebuttals, though, there is a curious refusal to seriously engage with concrete social relations; relations that make scale and territory and *pace* the rebuttals, necessary features of spatial organization rather than contingent ones.

Extracto En publicaciones recientes se han expresado opiniones críticas sobre las teorizaciones de escala y territorio que han surgido en los dos últimos decenios. Se ha argumentado, de forma variable, que un mundo descentrado de flujos y redes, ya sea un fenómeno reciente o algo que forma parte de la naturaleza de las relaciones espaciales, prevalece sobre las suposiciones de verticalidad, centricidad y fijación que son, según su opinión, fundamentales para estas teorizaciones. Definen sus perspectivas del espacio como algo relacional en comparación con lo que consideran que es la visión no relacional arraigada en conceptos de escala y territorio. A su vez, estas críticas han recibido varias réplicas en las que se sostiene que básicamente no existe ninguna contradicción entre las perspectivas relacionales del espacio y los conceptos de escala y territorio. Sin embargo, tanto en las críticas como en las refutaciones existe un curioso rechazo a participar seriamente en relaciones sociales concretas; relaciones que, pese a las refutaciones, convierten la escala y el territorio en características no contingentes sino necesarias de la organización espacial.

摘要　过去二十多年来所发展的尺度与领域之理论，在近日受到诸多批判。这些批判不一而足地主张，涵括流动和网络的去中心化世界，不论是晚近的现象抑或是空间关係的本质，　皆取代了垂直性、集中性与固着性等假设，而这些假设皆被认定为其所批判的理论核心。相对于他们所认为的根据尺度和领域概念的非关係性视角而言，他们对空间概念的定义是关係性的。然而此类批判却遭到诸多反驳，主张空间的关係性视角，和尺度与领域的概念并无冲突。但不论是批判或反驳的论点，皆不愿认真涉入实质的社会关係，这些社会关係形塑了尺度与领域，并为反驳的主张定调，而此皆为空间组织的必要特性，而非偶然的关係。

关键词：网络；政治；权力；领域；能动性；固着性；尺度；历史唯物论

Résumé Certaines contributions récentes ont été critiques à l'égard des propositions théoriques quant aux notions d'échelle et de territoire qui ont fait le jour pendant les deux dernières décennies. Elles ont affirmé variablement qu'un monde de flux et de réseaux décentré, que ce

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soit un phénomène récent ou dans la nature des relations spatiales, l'emporte sur les suppositions de verticalité, de centrage et de fixité qui sont, à leur avis, tributaires de ces propositions théoriques. Elles présentent leur conception de l'espace comme relationnelle, contrairement à leur interprétation du point de vue non relationnel qui est ancré dans les notions d'échelle et de territoire. À leur tour, ces critiques ont été satisfaites par un nombre de ripostes qui affirment, essentiellement, qu'il n'y a pas de contradiction entre les points de vue relationnels sur l'espace et les notions d'échelle et de territoire. Cependant, dans les critiques et les réfutations on s'est curieusement refusé à procéder pleinement à des relations sociales concrètes; des relations qui rendent les notions d'échelle et de territoire, tout en respectant les réfutations, des caractéristiques essentielles plutôt que contingentes de l'organisation de l'espace.

Keywords Networks politics power territory mobility fixity scale historical materialism

INTRODUCTION

Geographic scale and territory have a long history in the human sciences though it is only recently that they have been thought of together; as enjoying some sort of necessary connection. As far as scale is concerned, human geographers have always situated their work with respect to it, if not explicitly, certainly implicitly. Dominant understandings, though, have recently been transformed. Historically, geographic scales were thought of apart; each scale was associated with distinctive sorts of processes and they were not brought together in any determining fashion. This is no longer so. The interest in the relationship between the local and the global is the outstanding case of this.

Territory, likewise, has a long history. It was always central to political geography, if largely in a descriptive sense and often only implicitly as in the traditional interest in political boundaries. Like scale, its understanding has also been transformed. From the 1970s on and with the increasing awareness of social theory of a critical sort, territory became something to be theorized. It has also been seen more and more in terms of its relation to questions of geographic scale; as, for example, formed in the relation between the local and the global and given concrete shape in the form of the territorial structures of hierarchical organizations, particularly but not exclusively, those of the state. In turn, the interest in the territorial structure of the state resulted in an engagement with what became known as 'the politics of scale': the way in which local interests might bypass more local branches of the state in favor of more central branches.

In the last decade, there have been a series of critical attacks on this literature. This has been in the name of a relational approach to space (Jones, 2009). The critiques have varied in detail. Furthermore, and since then, there has been something of a reaction aimed at rehabilitating concepts of scale and territory, but these too vary quite substantially in their emphasis. What they all seem to share, though, both the original critiques and the attempt to restore scale and territory to central concepts through which to understand space and particularly the way in which questions of power intersect with it is a curious silence on what I, at least, take to be the crucial structuring role of capitalism.

In retrospect, this is an odd turn of events. The discovery of power by human geographers at the beginning of the 1970s owed much to an interest in the light that historical materialism might shed on geographic understanding. Space and place, the longstanding central concepts of the field, would be re-interpreted through the prism of the accumulation process. This would then entail an exploration of the, always highly politicized, relations between fixity and mobility, between place and space and therefore of territory and scale. The critique of scale and territory is emblematic of

the marginalization of historical materialism in the field. One of the purposes of this paper is to show how crucial it remains and how little sense we can make of human geographies without it.

In what follows I want first to outline the nature, or more accurately natures, of the original attempt to dispense with scale and territory. This is followed by an outline of the different approaches taken by major spokespeople for this view: Ash Amin, John Allen, John Paul Jones, Sally Marston and Keith Woodward, and Doreen Massey. The second part of the paper then takes up some of the voices that have come forward in favor of the continuing importance of scale and territory, notably Martin Jones, Joe Painter and Allan Cochrane. In the concluding section I demonstrate the difference that capitalism makes and why in the capitalist world, territory and scale are necessary features of the political landscape. There are some old lessons here but evidently they bear repeating.

CRITIQUING SCALE AND TERRITORY

The Central Issues

Several, albeit related, issues seem to be at stake. They can be considered in terms of a number of, often overlapping, contrasts. The first opposes relationality to atomism. Things are what they are in virtue of their relation to other things. Given a world of mobility and shifting connections, this means that they are constantly being transformed, new objects coming into being and then acting to transform while being transformed in their turn by those interactions. In consequence, geographies are open to the future and not closed. Advocates of the centrality of territories and scalar hierarchies engage in the impossible dream of imposing closure: of assuming a world in which movements are confined and relations structured in a hierarchical fashion. The positing of separate levels in a scalar hierarchy which then interact is to endow them with a capacity, a power that they cannot have in and of themselves. The same applies to the relation between some state agency and citizens, though this particular positing of limits to power tends to be seen more in terms of horizontal relations of escape than of resisting by structuring things vertically, as in the old literature on the construction of geographic scale.

In other words, relationality is seen in a close relation with horizontality in social relations rather than the verticality expressed by the relations of state hierarchies, capital or of the local to the global. Scalar thinking is to emphasize vertical relations. The image of nested agencies of the state at different levels with those at higher levels constraining, even determining, what those at lower levels do is a common one. This is contrasted with the horizontality of networks which interfere with top-down determination, opening up the possibility of resolutions of a more contingent, open character than those imposed from above.

Verticality, it is further argued, also implies a very centered view of the world: the upper levels of the state are where the important things happen and decisions are then dispersed to lower levels. Networks, on the other hand, serve as vehicles for the decentralization of decision making; more democratic therefore. Similar arguments are made in the case of globalization and *its* politics of scale. Globalization is not necessarily the all-determining frame of life at whatever subordinate scale one wants to consider it. Again, there is a contingency to outcomes; a contingency mediated by relations of a more horizontal sort.

Accordingly, to talk of networks in this approach is to be subversive of territory. Networks, implicitly defined as horizontal, are seen as an agent of de-territorialization: as facilitating the dissolution of local attachments, the intimate local connections that

firms often enter into and other forms of local or place dependence. Territorial action, exclusion, inclusion, locally focused forms of development dissolve away as dependence on the local, both material and affective, is loosened. Firms become multinational; labor markets, at least for some, become continental, even of global proportions. CASTELLS' (1983) space of flows is the most reductive of these arguments. In turn, they have led to new claims about the relation between space and place: how place as a horizon of action in people's lives is being undermined by space.

In some cases, the desire of the critics has been to dissolve these distinctions. Massey's 'global sense of place' is a classic exposition of this view. In others, the critics herald a new world: a world in which one part of the binary—the network side—has triumphed over the other: fluidity over structure, the horizontality of the network over the verticality of scalar relations, network over territory.

Finally, it should be noted how much of this critical literature has drawn impetus from post-structural and post-modern forms of thinking and how this, as such, represents a rejection of the sort of political economy embraced by historical materialists. Scalar thinking is now seen as a particular form of discourse: a discourse for some and to the disadvantage of many; as a positioning for some sort of leverage. It is not, in other words, the way in which capitalist states, in virtue of the limits and possibilities of the capitalist space economy *have* to be organized. So too is it with territory. As ALLEN and COCHRANE remark, 'It would seem that the language of territorial politics is not only stubborn, but equally that it cannot simply be wished away by some conceptual wand, since it is itself a powerful political construction. Assemblies, regional development agencies, and the like, are performed as territorial entities that try to hold down the fluid elements of global life in the general interest of their "regions"—seeking to generate fixity through "processes of government and governance"' (2007, pp. 1162–1163).

Some Representative Thinkers

Ash Amin: In a couple of papers (2002, 2004), ASH AMIN has sought to distinguish between what he calls a 'territorial/scalar imaginary of place' as opposed to a relational understanding 'that works with the ontology of flow, connectivity, and multiple geographical expression' (2004, p. 34.) He is clearly more disposed to the latter. A major line of attack is on notions of hierarchy in understanding space: notions which oppose not only globalization to localities but also the geographer's master concept of space to that of place.

Hierarchical approaches are defined here as scalar or territorial subscribing to a logic that is contrasted with what he calls a topological or relational one. This is important because Amin's dominant concern about scalar or territorial thinking is that in his view, it is not relational. Rather, and, for example, the different levels are viewed as radically separate from one another. The global is conceived independently of any relations it might have with the local and vice versa, and the same applies to space and place. Social relations are specific to each level.[1]

In contrast, what he argues for is a view which erases the boundary between place and space and between the local and the global. He emphasizes that places and localities are formed mutually in the context of relations between them and not through relations of a vertical sort like those emphasized in what he calls scalar or territorial thinking. The latter imposes boundaries on places, boundaries which are denied in reality by the multiplicity of connections formed across them and which mean that places make each other. As a result, space is indistinguishable from place, as indeed is the global from the local.

A significant feature of his approach is how it ends up springing networks loose from any social integument. People make connections over space, but just why they might be doing that, how it is inevitably in terms of socially defined limits and possibilities goes unremarked. This is very apparent in his attempt to deny anything approaching place-specific interests which might make a place less a node in a network and more a base for harnessing more global social relations to their realization. An important theme in human geography has been the presence of place-specific interests; interests in local outcomes, that is, that depend in turn on social relations that are localized and relatively fixed in place and so portable only with difficulty. This has been important in work on new industrial districts, particularly that of Michael Storper. It is something emphasized in HARVEY'S (1985) geopolitics of capitalism and also in this author's arguments about what Andrew Mair and I called local dependence (COX AND MAIR, 1988).[2]

In order to counter this territorial view, Amin works hard to critique the underlying assumption of fixity in social relations. In arguing thus in both papers he is clearly taken by the figure of globalization. In this day and age, he argues, that sort of fixity no longer exists. In place of relations within places, relations that might afford the basis for some common territorial interest, he sees fragmentation. The advantages of agglomeration are qualified by the more far-flung connections firms enjoy in networks of corporate organization. What he calls distanciated communication networks trump propinquity. The same applies to the relations of trust that commonly require physical proximity. Rather 'Intimacy may be achieved through the frequent and regular contacts enabled by the distanciated networks of communication and travel (how else do transnational firms, institutions, and social movements work?) as well as the unbroken interplay between face-to-face and telemediated contact' (AMIN, 2002, pp. 393–394). It is not just a matter of changing modes of communication and transport; the codification of corporate practice also allows relations to be lifted out of those of co-presence.

This, of course, is a crucial argument if he is to negate territorial thinking. Much of what he claims cannot be denied, though interestingly, he offers no explanation for it in terms of, for example, the imperatives of the accumulation process. Corporate relations *have* become more elongated and changes in communication and transport are surely implicated in that. But this is a very selective view. As SCOTT (1982) has emphasized, a good deal of industrial capital exists in the form of smaller, vertically disintegrated firms that carry on most of their business with each other within the confines of particular metropolitan areas. Even for larger firms, the popularity of just-in-time production has resulted in a re-concentration of economic activity (MEYER, 1986). There is also a massive amount of evidence from the USA relating local growth coalitions to various forms of fixity. Moreover, what one may be witnessing in virtue of the sorts of changes he is referring to is less a negation of territoriality than its reconstruction at new scales. The evidence provided by HIRST AND THOMPSON (1996, Chapter 4) suggested that multi-national corporations were much less multi-national than might have been inferred from the label and their assets and markets were far more concentrated in respective home bases.

This is obviously to resort to the empirical and is a move away from that strong theoretical grounding that would make his argument more convincing. Suspicions are further raised when Amin moves from simple statements of relations to drawing out their political implications: 'everyday trans-territorial organization and flow, local advocacy … must be increasingly about *exercising nodal power and aligning networks* at large in one's own interest, *rather than about exercising territorial power … There is no definable regional territory to rule over* (AMIN, 2004, p. 36)' (my emphasis), which sounds awfully like

reintroducing hierarchy through the back door; and where there is centricity, attempts to territorialize are never far away.

John Allen: Consistent in some ways with Amin's arguments have been the writings of ALLEN (2003, 2010, 2011) on the relation between geography and power. Here, the initial focus at least was less that of globalization and more the notion of nested scales within states, each one corresponding to some level in an ascending hierarchy, though more recently he has extended his attention to include the literature on global cities. Allen's arguments are of some subtlety. A particular critical focus are what he defines as centered views of power; this is where power is regarded as an attribute or capacity of some person or organization. To achieve its effects it is transmitted over space. If it fails in its effects, then that is because of the resistance of those over whom one tried to exercise power. Allen regards this view as defective. The notion of transmitting power is the key problem. Rather he argues for considering how power gets *translated* over space. This means that power is constituted by space relations rather than something radiating from a central point. In short, power should be regarded as empowerment and empowerment results from the coming together of various entities though he is cautious about defining the latter in terms of networks. Resources can be moved through networks as in the transfer of taxes via tax collectors to a central government; but by definition, he argues, power cannot be transferred. Rather, what matters is less the downward or upward or sideward *transfer of power* but the interplay of the different institutional authorities involved, 'reaching' into a site, to use his expression, to make themselves present and so determine an outcome (ALLEN, 2011). His emphasis is topological rather than on networks, but it does represent a critique of scalar thinking. Scalar thinking has the sense of transmitting power as in 'scale jumping'. It has also tended to emphasize vertical relations though not exclusively and Allen is indifferent as to the origins of the entities reaching into a site. They may originate 'up there' or 'over there' regardless.[3]

ALLEN's approach is especially evident in the work that he has done with ALLAN COCHRANE on what they call regional assemblages (2007, 2012). This arose in the context of work on local and regional development in the UK; something in which central branches of the state have always been involved as indeed, have local governments. The emphasis is on the way regions get constructed in a manner that calls into question their commonly accepted territorial status. Rather, the governance of regions now works, in their view, through a looser set of political relations forged within the context of—though evidently not reducible to—a network of relations which reach beyond regional boundaries to take in local, regional, national entities and those that are both public and private in character, including the various regional development consulting agencies. To think of regions in territorial terms is, from this viewpoint, flawed. The way in which regions tend to get re-defined or called into question in terms of their boundaries is a reflection of this process; one in which very different interests negotiate over the meaning of regions, as growth regions of a particular sort, as areas of leisure time consumption or whatever, and therefore how they should be delimited. Power should therefore be thought in terms of what they call regional assemblages irreducible to territorial relations either conceived hierarchically as in the standard politics of scale or as purely internal, even while representative agencies of these different levels may well be involved in the negotiations occurring about the future of a region and therefore what it has been and what it should be.

This understanding is echoed in his more recent attempts to address work on global cities and the notions of hierarchy that tend to prevail there: notions of one city

dominating another (ALLEN, 2010). Power is not something held by cities, or more accurately the organizations for which it is a home base—notably the finance houses, the accounting and marketing firms—but is an effect. To get things done that will work to their advantage, networks of relations with firms in other global or world cities have to be constructed. These relations have to be of a collaborative character, offering something to all and so challenging the zero-sum notion of power that often prevails in discussions of global cities and their relations, though those left outside the network, for whatever reason can clearly be net losers. Power here, he wishes to argue, is not something that flows through networks but is an effect of the social interactions holding the network together; it is, therefore, the work of those who broker the relations, who mediate, and who then reproduce the network that gets emphasized. This work is often of a discursive kind: constructing understandings so as to seduce or alternatively dissuade, but always with a view to channeling material relations in a way that will work to the advantage of firms in particular global cities, even while allowing for some sharing of those advantages with others.

Allen therefore provides a heavily nuanced discussion of the relation between scalar views of power and more networked ones. He does not come down on either side, which is where the power of his critique lies, but he is keen to qualify the idea of vertical, hierarchical relations with the necessity of horizontal ones that, in the case of the state, transgress territorial boundaries. The crucial assumption that power is not something that is held, however, has come in for critique, albeit sympathetic, from a critical realist standpoint. In a fascinating review of ALLEN's (2003) book SAYER (2004) has argued why it is that power, *pace* Allen, *should* be regarded as a capacity. This is important since it will bear on later discussion in this paper.

According to Sayer, power is indeed something that is held by agents, but only in virtue of their structures of social relations. Landlords are empowered to extract rent from tenants in virtue of the law of private property; governments can extract resources in the form of taxes in virtue partly of constitutional law but also as a result of the legitimacy accorded them by the citizenry. Local governments have the power to grant development permits. The effects of those different powers when exercised, though, are a contingent matter. Income tax receipts depend on incomes. Whether a development permit for a new housing subdivision is granted by a local government can depend on the degree to which neighbors resist, their ability to call on the services of lawyers or to form coalitions with resident organizations elsewhere confronting similar development requests. This means that entities holding power need to intervene so as to create or maintain conditions that are favorable to producing the effect desired when a power is exercised. If governments are to realize their powers with respect to public education, then the central monitoring of schools by inspectorates and various forms of auditing are a necessity.

This line of argument has a further consequence, though, that brings Sayer more into line with Allen without dropping the assumption that power can be held. Rather, since all objects have causal powers and susceptibilities, they are *everywhere*. They cannot be limited to a few centers though causal capacities can vary across objects generating local concentrations. Again, this is a claim that we will have to revisit, originating as it does in critical realism's pluralistic tendencies; tendencies that are necessarily entailed by its mode of abstraction (COX, 2013).

Sally Marston, John Paul Jones, and David Woodward: In an article that had a major impact in human geography, generating a considerable amount of critical, if often limited[4] comment, MARSTON *et al.* (2005) provide their own critique of the politics of scale, opposing themselves to notions of a top-down verticality in order to argue for,

instead, what they call a flat ontology of space. Unlike Allen, therefore, this is a position which rejects any sense of the top-down even where, as in Allen's writings, it is reaching into a local site in order to influence outcomes there. It also rejects the idea of network, but the affinities with its flat ontology of space are clear.

A major aspect of their agenda, as in the title of their article, is to do away with scale as a concept of space. Scale introduces what they call a centering essentialism—suggesting, quite accurately, that these claims are coming from a very 'post' position. This centering essentialism is rejected on grounds of a spurious representational power. The global/local binary, as with other scalar hierarchies, like those of the state, tends to get lined up with other dualisms like space/place, structure/practice, economy/culture, necessity/contingency, or abstract/concrete. These distinctions can be and are put to political ends as in the way in which more global forces define a sphere of necessity to which people in particular places must, through their practices, albeit contingently conditioned practices, adapt. This recalls Amin's anxieties about ontological separation of levels though with a critique that owes more to deconstruction and the critique of dualisms than to the changing material realities of modes of communication and transportation to which Amin refers. Very similar arguments have been made in anthropology (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002).

Their response is to argue instead for what they call a flat ontology: not, *nota bene* a horizontal one as in the idea of network since 'horizontal' assumes a radiating 'out from here' and is therefore implicitly re-centering.[5] They emphasize flow and mobility, but not to the point of eliminating structure and fixity and therefore, one has to infer, territory altogether for there are what they call blockages and assemblages suggesting that there are social relations through which action is channeled and facilitated: in their words, 'orders that unfold and practices that normativize' (p. 424).

In their flat alternative, localized and non-localized event relations produce what they call event spaces that avoid the predetermination of hierarchy or boundlessness (p. 424). Through these relations, social sites emerge as an outcome of the interactions of human and non-human inhabitants. How things are configured seems to be crucial here, suggesting that what we end up with is a spatial determinism recalling the cul-de-sac of technical determinism in which Amin ended up. The social is certainly there, but it is devoid of specification. What sort of society are we talking about? Could it be a society in which the vertical is a necessary mode of operating, and something essential and not a mere representation?

Doreen Massey: Doreen Massey has long been noted for the imaginative and incisive qualities of her thinking and her ability to understand space in new ways. Her recent work (Massey, 2005), on which I draw here, is no exception. Although for many years her work seemed to fit within a critical realist mode, more recently it has come quite clearly under influences of a post-structural character. This has allowed her to theorize space in a way that unbounds the bounded and calls into question the distinction, around which much of modern geography has been constructed, between space and place.

She wants to understand geographic difference and how it is constructed. The crucial condition for that construction, in her view, is the chance juxtaposition: the coming together of influences of a more or less space-time distanciated nature and of conditions with highly variant historical geographies. Accordingly, every place is hybrid and unique and formative, through the influences that emanate from it and have emanated in the past, of other places. Space is constituted by this multiplicity of relations, therefore. Geographies are constantly evolving in unexpected ways as the mélange of influences and conditions shifts, creating yet further changes. Importantly, this means that the future of any place, any region, town, country, or whatever, is open. It has to resist

description in terms of some irresistible time-dependent tendency whether it is urbanization as we know it, development, the decline of community, democratization, the demographic transition, globalization, or any of the tendencies commonly forming the background of discussion in the social sciences.[6] This in turn has political consequences. This is because the sense of unforeseeable change undermines any claim made by interested parties of an unavoidable future; that to cite a famous case, 'There is no alternative'. Alternatives, rather, are immanent within space-time.

She eschews the vocabulary of the others discussed here: a vocabulary of networks, vertical and horizontal, of scales, but there is a clear convergence both on the form of some of the arguments made elsewhere and the conclusions arrived at. Marston, Jones and Woodward complain of the discursive uses to which arguments about hierarchies of scales are put, particularly the trope of globalization and Massey has drawn critical attention to the way in which the notion of the inexorability of development is deployed. Allen and Cochrane (2007, 2012), through the idea of regional assemblages, seek to deconstruct the power of territorial hierarchy, calling attention to the multiplicity of institutions that reach into a site in order to influence outcomes there, yet always in ways that are contingent in character. Her approach is also de-territorializing in a way that recalls some of Amin's claims but without his technical determinism. She wants to show how communities are not self-referential in their development, do not have some sort of essence of the sort commonly appealed to in territorial arguments, but are composed, de-composed, then re-composed by influences of much wider provenance.

Yet again, as with Amin and Marston, Jones and Woodward, and to a lesser extent John Allen, one is left wondering exactly to what sort of society this all refers. Things come together, things also separate, but one has no sense of the social mechanisms at work: mechanisms which are actively selecting—which *have* to select—pulling in certain influences, transforming them, rejecting others, trying to shut them out. On the other hand, to say that she lacks a sense of power relations would be absurd. Her concern with narratives as narratives that work to the advantage of some rather than all, makes this very clear; likewise her book on London with the title *World City*. But exactly what sort of social relations make possible these power relations, and make it necessary that interests enter into conflict in the first place is, apart from some sense of social stratification in the world, not apparent.

CRITIQUING THE CRITIQUES

There have been three different papers that have targeted this particular literature (Cochrane, 2012; Jones, 2009; Painter, 2010). The authors are all British, which I think is significant, as I will discuss later. There are also overlaps in underlying conceptions of the world and how scale and territory fit into them. The overlaps are particularly apparent in the contributions of Cochrane and Painter. Cochrane is keen to dispel the notion that relational space is contrary to notions of territory. In this way, he builds on his earlier work with John Allen on regional assemblages. As I pointed out, the strength of Allen's work is that he does not entirely discard notions of territory, but is keen to show how it is constructed neither internally nor externally but by a host of connections, relations which can be reduced neither to the vertical nor to the horizontal. Cochrane picks up on this, arguing for territory and territorial identities as constructed, as socially formed and hence as inevitably bearing a relation, as internally related to, social process.[7] His case in point is the way in which England's regions have been, in his words, 'made up as governmental territories'. A British government initiative, the sustainable

communities plan reinforced the status of the South East as a particular region in the government's imaginary. It planned for increased housing provision in the area in support of its view of it as the country's major growth region. This generated home-owner opposition in the area, and attempts to redefine it as an area of consumption, but it left territorial identities as residents of the 'South East' unimpaired. In Cochrane's words, and in conclusion, '… what matters is that territory is not taken as something given, somehow preexisting and waiting to be filled with politics, but rather as something that is actively formed and shaped through the political process' (p. 104).

Painter's argument is very similar though his starting point is different. What he is most anxious to counter is the view that horizontality in the form of networks is necessarily incompatible as a 'principle of spatial organization' with the verticality of territorial structures. Territory, rather, is the result of what he calls 'networked socio-technical practices'. Following Timothy Mitchell, the territory is seen as a structural effect of practices; practices that are the result of networked relations. Without those practices it could not exist. His example is the discourse that supports the idea of 'regional economy'. If it is to be an object of public policy, then it needs to be identified, given some concrete reference and coherence. Discursive practices of this sort include the development of regional statistics and regional economic development policies. Again, as in Cochrane, in arguing for the social constructedness of territory, there is the emphasis on top-down discursive formation with the state taking the lead.

Martin Jones has a rather different argument that points in new if complementary directions. The focus now is the movement and flux that is emphasized in relational thinking as it has been picked up by the contributions discussed earlier. What this omits, he argues, is attention to inertia, to the fact of 'permanences' as defined by Harvey (1996): those transient, yet seemingly permanent condensations of relations and conditions that exist in a necessary complementarity to flow and flux. Among these 'permanences' he would include those social structures which condition movements and relations over space for otherwise one risks what he calls a 'spatial voluntarism'. More crucially for the present argument recognition of fixity and inertia compels him to recuperate territory as a central concept in the understanding of space relations while recognizing networks of relations as a crucial complement:

> Contrary to the beliefs of relational approaches to space, then, mobility and fluidity should not be seen as standing in opposition to territories and we should, therefore, *not* be forced to adopt a 'networks versus territories' scenario. On the one hand, networks should not be seen as non-spatial and without 'geographical anchors' … and on the other hand, territories and scales should not be viewed as closed and static. (p. 494)

Yet useful as his argument is, it remains unsatisfying. Despite his recognition of the limits and possibilities inscribed in social relations, like Massey he has trouble moving beyond that to what happens under specific ensembles of social relations; moving beyond, therefore, what is essentially the contentless abstraction of social relations in general. This lack of specification is also a problem with Cochrane and Painter; states act, but one wants to know exactly *why* they act; what is the structure of relations that provides the necessary condition for regionalizing and identifying 'governmental territories'? Which for me is another way of asking: 'what difference does capitalism make?'

THE DIFFERENCE THAT CAPITALISM MAKES

The point of departure here is capital: capital first as a circuit in which it assumes different forms—money, means of production, finished products and back to money; and second

as a spiral in which the necessity to accumulate creates contradictions and transformations and the subordination of the sphere of circulation to that of production. Already one can see the ambiguous nature of the beast that is globalization which has so tormented the critics of the politics of scale: a sphere of circulation which seems to exercise a dominance over the world of production, but which production through capitals and through the states mobilized by them at the same time seeks to master and turn to their own advantage and with uneven results: the triumph of some nodes of production and bottom-up initiatives over others.

Given these formal characteristics of a circuit and of a contradiction-ridden trajectory of accumulation, capital cannot help but construct those spatial fixes which again have been the target of the network school: capital necessarily territorializes; it necessarily centralizes. It territorializes because it has to be fixed if production is to occur and that fixity will inevitably be challenged by shifting patterns of circulation. Production requires fixed capital infrastructures: transport networks, housing for workers, its own facilities, industrial estates, and water and sewer provision. It requires social infrastructures which, while not absolutely fixed and immoveable, are relatively so: the educational structures through which new generations of labor power are reproduced; the health systems through which existing ones are reproduced; relations with other firms as suppliers or clients. Capital also centralizes. Capital is channeled through particular points from which money power radiates out pulling in raw-materials, workers, other businesses via takeovers, investing in new points of production elsewhere, reorganizing a more diffuse and decentralized space economy.

There are clearly counter-tendencies of the sort argued for by the critics of scalar, territorial thinking. De-territorialization reduces dependence on conditions in particular places; it mitigates what HARVEY (1985) described as the contradiction between fixity and mobility. Firms spread their geographic risks. This is at least one of the attractions of entering new markets and establishing production there. They may also shift their dependence on to others. Part of the risk of fixed investments of long life is shared with the banks that put up the money. Firms sell their plants to others and lease them back. De-territorialization also proceeds through an increasing locational substitutability: a consequence of the deskilling of workers and the modularization of facilities.

Equally, decentralization is a fact of life in a number of different but related senses: the multiplication of new centers of production and sites of urbanization; the creation of phalanxes of branch plants; the 'leapfrogging' identified by STORPER AND WALKER (1989); the emergence of new nodes in the circulation of capital at a global scale as the geography of uneven development assumes new forms. As capital over-accumulates, so it seeks new outlets: not just new locations with cheaper workers and more cost-effective objects of labor but also new products which may also entail the diffusion and decentering of production. As corporate organizations move to larger geographic scales, so an administrative decentralization may be warranted in order to cope more effectively with conditions that require site-specific adaptations and therefore hands-on responses (MAIR, 1997).

But, and an important 'but', these tendencies are never unopposed. There are always and concomitantly, processes of *re*-territorialization and *re*-centralization, and it cannot be otherwise if accumulation is to be facilitated and capitals are to suspend the contradictions that stand in the way of that accumulation. As it works out at present, VELTZ (1996) has described the process well. It is not just that decentralization of production units requires centralization elsewhere; a point of coordination and orchestration from which finance can be arranged, discounts in purchases negotiated, information

centralized and used as the basis for reorganizing production across those units. Rather, the process of deskilling implies a crisis of markets, an increasingly savage competition given the way in which it widens access to particular sectors. Product differentiation and altogether new products have become the new corporate imperative across large swathes of production. This places new emphasis on research and development. This, in turn, is a matter of cooperation, not just among the members of the firm's research team but also with other firms: collaborating on the development of new prototypes, recruiting new research team members as firm priorities shift, and exploiting connections with local banks that are *au fait* with the changing product horizons of local firms. This locks crucial parts of firms, headquarters and R&D, into particular places, narrowing the space of locational substitutability: in short it re-territorializes. This sheds some light at least on the surprising conclusion of Hirst and Thompson some years back that MNCs were considerably less multi-national than their label suggested and that home bases remained extremely important in production (HIRST AND THOMPSON, 1996, Chapter 4).

This, of course, is to abstract capital from other moments of the accumulation process; in particular, the state. New state forms are created or existing ones mobilized, reworked, in order to structure the circulation of capital; to give certain centers of accumulation, centers in the geographic sense or otherwise, an advantage. The state becomes a *new* center intervening both globally and nationally, but always in response to the bottom-up pressures of capital, or at least some of them rather than others and laying the basis for new forms of regional or national hegemony: so many new hierarchical, centered structures, therefore. It is well-known that London and the Southeast have, in the language of ALLEN *et al.* (1998), achieved 'pole position' among all the other regions commonly thought of as making up the UK. The region's ascent has been going on for a long time; at least as long ago as the struggle over tariff reform at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Thatcherite revolution further cemented its dominance. WADE and VENEROSO (1998) have shown how, in similar fashion, American capital or what they called, after the economist Jagdish Bhagwati the Wall Street-Treasury-IMF complex was able to mobilize an emergent global financial architecture of mobile capital to their advantage. This is because it allowed newly industrializing countries of East Asia to take out short-term loans. With the economic crisis of the late 1990s, this then placed their very different model of state-directed capitalist development at risk and allowed American capital to expand their ownership of assets there in exchange for IMF loans.

What I want to suggest here is that the 'global', whether conceived absolutely or relatively, comprises a sphere of circulation. As such, it is subordinated to production which is fixed in particular places. It can certainly assume the form of an autonomous power, a spatialized version of the autonomous power of capital. Yet it is just as clearly formed bottom-up by the competitive strategies of capitals, technical, institutional, political. It is also something that capitals in particular places or centered on particular places seek to master and turn to their advantage; as in the instances briefly alluded to above. It is an aspect of production, a necessary aspect, since everything entering into production enters from the sphere of circulation and the same applies to everything that is produced. But it is an aspect that constantly threatens to get out of the control of individual capitals so that intervention in the sphere is an ongoing necessity. States, as part of capital's division of labor, of British or American capital, are part of this process. It is a circulation not just of capital, therefore, but of pressures and incitements on the part of state agents and of the information that structures both the circulation of capital and of those pressures and incitements. Like capitals, states centralize and territorialize. But, and again like

capitals, and for the same fundamental reasons of advancing the accumulation process, they also de-centralize and de-territorialize, though the latter can sometimes go awfully wrong, as seems to have been the case with the EU.

With this as background, we should now consider some of the claims of the people whose work was briefly reviewed above. One of the attractions of thinking of the socio-spatial in terms of networks or connections is that, seemingly at least, it allows an escape from more vertical, hierarchical forms of thinking; from a world of reified, top-down effects. Instead networks can be thought of in relational terms; the nodes in a network as emphasized by Amin and recognized at least implicitly in Massey produce each other. There is a strong sense of this in Allen also; power is an effect of networked relations. Marston *et al.* are also keen to identify the assignment of powers-in-themselves in their critique of scalar thinking and to put things on a level in the form of their 'flat ontology' without acceding to the power of networks.

On the other hand, there is no necessary connection between scalar thinking and the reification of scales, as Cochrane (2012) and Painter (2010) make clear. The major critical point of the early work on the social construction of scales was that scales were to be viewed in relational terms: as produced. In this production territorial anxieties are centrally implicated and even when new structures of relations are created at larger, more all-embracing scales, those anxieties persist. *Inter alia*, they receive expression in bottom-up pressures exercised on governments. One does not have to think in terms of the highly fragmented American state where local pressures are taken for granted to recognize the validity of this. In an important sense, national political parties in Western Europe can be conceived as coalitions of those with place-specific interests: to limit development, to stimulate local job markets, to alter the balance of advantage between school districts, and so on. Even so, and parenthetically, one is inclined to think that this debate about scale and territory is a very British one and that it could not have happened in the USA. In contrast to Great Britain, the significance of local dependence and how the locally dependent work from the bottom up is very apparent. This is particularly the case in the enhanced role played by local growth coalitions in the politics of local economic development, but also in the way those pressures are translated upwards to the highest levels of the state (Weiss, 1980, 1987).

The critique of centeredness also needs reconsideration. Centeredness is an explicit focus in some instances; Allen is notable here. In others it is more implicit.[8] We should also note how centralization is entailed by territorialization. If one accepts the relevance of territorialization to the organization of capitalist space economies, then it seems hard to avoid the competitive channeling of value through particular cities, regions or countries that occurs as place-specific alliances of capitals, state agencies and perhaps fractions of labor seek to advance their equally place-specific interests; the centralization of value flows, in other words.

Allen's point about centeredness is more subtle than I am implying here though. It has also tended to shift since he first set out his arguments almost 10 years ago (2003) in *Lost Geographies of Power*. What he is still keen to displace are arguments about power as a capacity held by agents, whether government officials or firms. Rather he has argued for power as a networked effect resulting from mediation, negotiation, and of discourse that takes shape in the course of negotiations. As he puts it recently in a paper on global cities, 'Do cities "run" the networks through their concentration of resources or do networks themselves "generate" cities as sites of power?' (2010, p. 2896). His answer is clearly the latter.

One can certainly acknowledge that resources are not directly equivalent to power; that throwing money at something does not always work to the advantage of the

thrower so that in consequence they do indeed appear impotent. But having those resources is a crucial means to the end of power as an effect. In this regard, one is reminded of Sayer's injunctions regarding the contingency of the effects of power when exercised. In his discussion of global cities, Allen emphasizes the role of the mediators and brokers who are employees of, or contractors to, investment banks, accounting, legal, marketing and financial service firms, but is it naïve to assume that these are services that go to the highest bidder and that the social power of money is therefore reaffirmed?

CONCLUSIONS

As JOSEPH (2010) has argued, what stands out about the recent round of network thinking in the social sciences, and I believe that this also applies to human geography, is the silence about social structure. What is being flattened out is society; a denial of the presence and efficacy of underlying social structures. It is as if, as he says, networks stand above social relations and create their own reality. There is, as a result, an emphasis on contingency, plurality and fragmentation. Mutually supportive individuals working together have replaced the compulsions of capitalism. In some versions, capitalism has been transformed into a blissful cooperation of commodity-owning agents, even while the commodity that the vast majority own is simply their own labor power. Capitalism has become 'disorganized' and flexible and its promise for all rehabilitated through the application of neo-liberal mantra of a new individualism.

Capitalism should be taken seriously. It is very serious business. Hierarchy is central to accomplishing its goals but, as Marx argued, it is built from the bottom-up. The power of money expands because of the exploitation of the masses. In the centeredness of capital, people fail to recognize the product of their own labors just as the state can assume that reified form so easily and uncritically accepted by network theorists. Territory is similarly unavoidable. Given the fixity of production people inevitably have interests in particular places at some geographic scale or other and under capital and the imperatives of accumulation, these interests are especially intense.

This is far from arguing that the contributions reviewed above are futile and that our understanding of the world has not improved as a result of them. Reified notions of scale *are* used to discursive effect. There is no direct connection between resources and power and John Allen's arguments are an important corrective. Likewise, Massey is not wrong to draw attention to the significance of the complex geographies of flows and connections in understanding difference. Applications of network thinking as in Michael Peter Smith's *Transnational Urbanism* and Timothy Mitchell's *The Rule of Experts* provide important insights. But they are, of necessity, partial, and they are partial because they fail to acknowledge the central significance of capital and the capital accumulation process in the world in which we live. *Pace* John Allen, it cannot be merely accidental that those with the access to money capital seem to get their way far more often than not. Likewise, not every chance juxtaposition of movements and relations makes a difference; rather it is what seems to work, what can be put together and reworked so as to work at a particular time and in a particular place in advancing the accumulation process or, to be sure, in challenging it.

NOTES

1. I say 'in his view' intentionally, since it is far from clear that he has understood the arguments of all those who have drawn on scalar concepts in their work, this author included.

2. The latter is particularly relevant to Amin since, in his view, I seem to have committed the ultimate sin of harnessing it to an argument about the politics of scale in which the different levels are ontologically separate. The original argument quite simply was that in a context of hierarchically distributed state powers, those whose interests were of a very local sort and who found their agendas blocked for different reasons at the local level might mobilize higher levels in order to realize them. In this way I postulated a relation between what I called the spaces of dependence of firms, residents, workers and a larger scale space of engagement in which alliances were forged in order to bring pressure to bear on more central branches of the state. Unfortunately this was interpreted as positing ontologically separate levels. But in no way did I suggest that those local interests could be understood purely in terms of the local; rather I was referring to more global categories of the social like homeowners or workers who just happened to be, as I put it, locally dependent.
3. In a discussion of British regional policy he has written, along with Allan Cochrane: '… the apparatus of state authority is not so much "up there" or indeed "over there", as (it is) part of a spatial power arrangement within which different elements of government, as well as private agencies, exercise *powers of reach* that enable them to be more or less present within and across the United Kingdom's urban and regional political structures' (2012, p. 1074).
4. I say 'limited' because the critical responses rarely got beyond the appearances of things: the fact of scalar processes, of scalar strategies, and of scalar discourse, without a critical interrogation of their social structuring.
5. This, though, overlooks the possibility that 'radiating out from here' might reverse power relations. The 'radiating out' that was overseas British investment during the first globalization and which was protected by the British state was a contributor to the decline of British global hegemony.
6. Concrete applications of Massey's arguments can be found elsewhere in the social sciences. In Smith's (2001) *Transnational Urbanism*, the influence is explicit. Mitchell's (2002) explorations and applications seem more independent.
7. It is odd that this should need repeating since it was a central point in the earlier literature on the construction of scale (Delaney and Leitner, 1997).
8. Massey is the exception. As she notes in *World City*, '… different places are formed of *distinct* nodes of relationships, distinct positionings, within the wider global spaces. Each place is a different articulation of relations and connections, in some of which it will be in a position of relative control, influence and power, and in others of which it will be comparatively powerless and subordinated' (2007, p. 168).

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