SPACE, PLACE, POWER  
Reading Response: Week 2  
Political Economic Readings of Space and Place

Harvey considers the construction of places through spatial practices to be one which exists as interplay between experience, imagination perception and representation. Indeed, “Places, like space and time, are social constructs and have to be read and understood as such” (25) but require a greater understanding of the processes which construct them. His understanding of places is one which creates temporarily permanent things, in which boundaries are constructed through tensions between forms of power, solid nodes to which people attach memories and histories within the annihilation of space and time. Calais, in the British imagination, has shifted over time from a site of national pride and civic heroism through war time remembrance, to a site which is a threat to national sovereignty, occupied by migrants.

Scale for Smith is a socially, politically, economically and culturally produced process of making place. Scale exists from relatedness to other processes of place making within a simultaneous production of space. This relatedness constructs boundaries according to the processes which made it. “Scale offers guideposts in the recovery of space from annihilation” (96). The production of scales and relations between them is enabling to some whilst being disabling to others. He considers ‘jumping scales’ to be a political strategy which challenges an engrained structure of scales. Squatters and homeless activists, in response to mass social eviction, jump scales through subversive practices in public space, by reproducing spaces for their own uses, for example, where the scale of the body, of sleeping and washing enters the wider spatial landscape of the public park.

In reference to the Calais ‘Jungle’, new spaces have emerged as a result of makeshift camps, and through the construction of spaces to control, by means of detention and securitisation. The jungle is considered temporary, though the place making process, constructed by conflicting forms of power. Whilst the occupation of public space that is the Jungle fits snugly into his concept of jumping scales, connected to multiple scales through political action, the rapidly changing space changes the way in which scales can be ‘jumped’. The very physical boundaries of nation state borders as well as racialized social and economic boundaries act as a means of exclusion and simultaneously act as a ‘weapon for expansion’, and impose enlarged identities, through the construction of new communities and a site of knowledge exchange. Currently, the jungle is being reconstructed, police have begun to demarcate borders of the camp, physically delineated by pink graffiti paint. Much of the camp is being torn down and replaced by blocks of shipping containers which has been strongly resisted by residents of the jungle, who fear the destruction of the community, a formalisation of space which subjugates them further to the power of the French authorities, and moreover, an end to knowledge exchange and their strategy to cross the border. This inevitably limits the potential for Calais as a site of imagination.

Is the Jungle not too, an example of “low end globalisation”, albeit one which is far more precarious and less capital laden then Chunking Mansions? It too, is a kind of ‘united nations’ of exchange and hyper connectivity, an island of the developing world. The jungle, too is a “self sufficient eco-system”, both places exist as transit points, as places of dreaming for a more prosperous future, how does they differ as spaces, in which one is trapped ‘in-between’ sovereign powers, the other within a matrix of global capitalism?