Week 2 Response: Space, Place, Power

**Harvey: "From Space to Place and Back Again"**

What does Harvey mean by representations and imaginations? How do they sit with an orthodox Marxism and how do they expand it?

The Expansive Nature of Capitalism:

Representations and imaginations in Harvey’s understanding “are the sites of innumerable differences that have to be understood both in their own right and within the overall logic of capitalist development.” (3) -The understanding of capitalism being “necessarily growth oriented, technologically dynamic, and crisis prone” (5), thus results in the unequal division of labour and interplace competition.

Spaces are made into places through this process:

Thorsten Veblen (1967): “I think he was basically correct, that the whole settlement pattern of the United States should be understood as one vast venture in real estate speculation” (5). Can this be expanded? For example the frontier/ discovery attitude to new medicines or technology, the only way of grounding speculative knowledge in these areas is this active familiarity with (new) spaces and the truningof this into tangible profit.

In opposition to Heidegger, the concept of mediation does not belie inauthenticity:

“The problem, therefore, is to recover a viable homeland in which meaningful roots can be established. Place construction should be about the recovery of roots, the recovery of the art of dwelling” (11)

“In modern society the primary structures creating alienation and domination are bureaucracy and commodification’, it does not follow that all mediated relations are alienating. (15)

Places cannot be distinguished in the realms of discourse ‘by their falsity/ genuineness, but [only] by the style in which they are imagined’ (Anderson, 1983).

Construction of places also implicitly entails temporality, the moment preceding construction. In which ways are they alive in these forms that anticipate physical actuality?

“Marx (1967: 177–8) is right and imagination and representation always precede production, then Heidegger’s view becomes just one possible imagined kind of place awaiting a material embodiment.” (17)

-The agency of the imagination. “Imaginations are not easily manipulated or tamed to specific political-economic purposes” (23). Fictional example of “Thin Cities”, in Marco Polo’s memory, the imagined places overtake the actuality of what he experienced when visiting them. The ultimate significance of the place is largely constructed upon how they are representationally perceived, imagination being a filter of this. These imagined forms are then competed over within the “cultural mass”, Marx’s bourgeoisie.

**Neil Smith: Homeless/global: Scaling Places**

How are scales structured and created?

The meaning of scales as a method through which places become relatable:

-The singularity of the Homeless vehicle, makes the issues of widespread homelessness and insufficient housing immediately personal and therefore relatable.

-Similarly the park and it’s “tight spatial definition is the focus for a much broader struggle over

housing and public space repeated unknowingly the script of 1874, when an Irish immigrant asked on the eve of the first Tompkins Square police riot: ‘Is the Square private, police or public property? Has martial law been declared?’(92) By the personal attributions of places, they can be related to, across a multitude of scale categories (the body, the nation etc).

Scales as created through unconscious and conscious organisation:

Foucault ‘to decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power’ (98). -Social metaphor as an organisational principal, a meaning creator, a translation of this meaning.

But in this translation, meanings are active and competitive. “Scale demarcates the sites of social contest, the object as well as the resolution of contest “(101).

The “Janus faced”(141) aspects of expansion and inclusion signify this contest and completion in attaching identities to spaces, thus translating them into places.

**Ghetto at the Centre of the World:**

Hong Kong- Low end globalization

Chungking Mansions

CM represents a place within which, different perspectives negotiate the climate of social exchange and low-end business. Yet, in addition to these individual perspectives, the representation of CM to outsiders, Hong Kong dwellers and tourists is also differently interpreted.

-Contrarily conceived of due to perspective: “tourists are shocked on arrival, Honk Kong Chinese believing it to be a “dark and evil place” (196) . “Young African traders “success in Chungking Mansions…represents their transition into adulthood”. This imagined palce can then be tangible in the success it brings which can welcome “respect from family and community” (197).

-Yet, none of this is a static process: “if imaginations of Chungkung Mansions are changing, so too are the imaginations of the people who stay there….impact on those who stay a few days and those who stay for decades”(198). Living there “allows and indeed requires a degree of tolerance”(201)

World Systems Analysis:

“CM represents a Grand Central Station in the passage of globalized goods from China to the developing world at large…particular accounts that have filled this book all take place against this worlds economic backdrop” (208). The cosmopolitanism of scales too, defines the production of place.

But this is also set within the **productive** context of Neoliberalism “the ideology emphasizing the market as the ultimate arbiter of value and advocating minimal restriction of the market by state”. The fact that CM “can be so easily entered” (211) and Hong Kong “more free in its visa regime than are almost all other developed world societies” (212).

This produces an alchemy at CM of the “ distinctly bourgeois ghetto and more, a cosmopolitan ghetto…beyond the imaginations of much of the HK world that surrounds it” (214), which is constantly changing and reforming through these contexts: “low-end globalization is not world’s past, it is, in at least some respects, the world’s future” (218).