

**U.S.G.**

**NEWSLETTER**

**Union of Socialist Geographers**

MAY, 1980

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## ABOUT THE U.S.G.

The Union of Socialist Geographers was organised in Toronto in May 1974. The consensus of those gathered in Toronto was that an organisation - the USG - be formed to improve communication among those geographers who agree with the principles in the organisation's aims:

The purpose of our union is to work for the radical restructuring of our societies in accord with the principles of social justice. As geographers and as people we will contribute to this process in two complementary ways:

1. organising and working for radical change in our communities, and
2. developing geographic theory to contribute to revolutionary struggle.

Thus we subscribe to the principle: from each according to ability, to each according to need. We declare that the development of a humane, non-alienating society requires, as its most fundamental step, socialization of the ownership of the means of production.

The USG currently has members in Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America as well as North America. Several active groups exist in both Canada and the United States, including academic and non-academic geographers, and non-geographers. An active section of the USG in Britain and Ireland plans to hold annual meetings at the time and place of the IBG annual meetings. The USG publishes a Newsletter several times a year and holds an annual meeting (in North America) in April or May each year.

The USG welcomes inquiries and new members. For further information, and the names of people to contact in your vicinity, write to:

John Bradbury  
Department of Geography  
McGill University  
805 Rue Sherbrooke Ouest  
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or write to one of the regional contact persons listed with the AGM minutes in this issue of the Newsletter.

To become a member (except if you're in Britain or Ireland) send your name, address and \$6 to:

Bryan Higgins  
Department of Geography  
University of Minnesota  
414 Social Science Building  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA

Membership includes receipt of the Newsletter. Individual Newsletter subscriptions are \$6; institutional subscriptions, \$12 per year.

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## A REPRODUCTIVE COMMENT

We apologize to all our readers for the lateness of this issue of the U.S.G. Newsletter. For a number of reasons the London branch of the U.S.G., whose turn it was to edit the newsletter, was unable to send us their material until late April. Their tardiness was matched, however, by the greater than average number of articles (44pp) that they included. As a consequence we intend to make this issue of the newsletter a double issue, i.e., Vol. 5:2 and 5:3. The Queens edition of the newsletter, Vol. 5:4, will also be late. John Holmes has indicated that Minnesota should receive it by early July. Subsequently, we ask that those who volunteer to edit a newsletter in the future, try to get their contributions here at Minnesota by the deadline specified in the publication schedule.

Since the newsletter was transformed into a rotating editorship, it has slowly evolved into local editions emphasizing the recent work of individuals in that area. This has placed a heavy burden on those locals willing to take on the editorial task. This was not the intention of that transformation. In that light we wish to put out a general call for news items, bibliographies, course syllabuses, reviews, short essays, etc. to be submitted to the appropriate editor of the forthcoming issue.

As of this issue we are putting the expiration date of your subscription next to your name on the address label. Please note that dues are payable in May of each year for the following year. Thus, dues paid in May 1980 would get you Volume 6 of the newsletter, and would read: NAME, YOUR MAY 81. When one year's worth of dues arrives, we update your membership/subscription one year. However, this may still leave you less than current. At present, rates of renewal are looking pretty shabby: less than 35% are paid through May 1980 and fewer than 5% through May 1981. Life in general would be made easier with mass action: everyone paying in full in May.

In Stuggle,  
The Minnesota Collective

### A Special Issue on Praxis and Humor

In the past year numerous people have suggested a special topic for a U.S.G. Newsletter should be the praxis of socialist geography. In this regard a call is here made to all U.S.G. members for newsletter items which express the practical issues you are involved with or see unfolding. The Minnesota Collective will coordinate, edit and contribute items to this topic but the issue depends on others to forward their work on contemporary praxis. Possible topics we envision include descriptions of contemporary approaches to community development, issues of union organizing, multi-media approaches and the range of perspectives, role playing and practical classroom exercises, and oral history, people's history and herstory.

At the same time, in the same issue, we also hope to map some of the more unusual contours of humor. For this spatial analysis we also ask that you forward any cartoons, slips of the tongue, jokes, riddles, satire, practical jokes, stories, lies, or imagined encounters which have never before been offered as possible geographical explanations. For the more exclusively serious scholars we note that all humorous items will be coded and retained for the long hoped for, future, international, data bank of humor.

Please send any contributions for either or both topics to:

Bryan R. Higgins  
Department of Geography  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

This is the second Newsletter to have been produced by the British section of the USG -- this time by the London Group. Unfortunately it has been a struggle to produce and hence is somewhat later than scheduled. The London USG branch has not formally met for just about a year now and despite some attempts (still being made see p.7) to revive it, the beast remains dormant. This Newsletter cannot therefore be said to represent the London Branch rather it has been produced thanks to the efforts of a small group of USG members still active (USG-wise) out in the wilds of Leytonstone. Thanks therefore to Mel Evans and Jo Foerd who helped with typing and proof-reading. Thanks are also due to the contributors from all over the U.K. and apologies to them for the delayed reproduction of their work.

It is a sad comment that the USG in the U.K. should have ebbed so low at such a crucial period of heightened class struggle worldwide. At the time of writing a number of struggles are taking place in the U.K. -- against cuts in public expenditure being forced through by the Thatcher government; in the steel industry against forced redundancy and real cuts in wages; against reactionary proposals to restrict abortion; and against a whole host of anti-working class legislation at present on its way to the statute book. Ironically this may be the first time that this sort of struggle may be directly affecting many academic geographers. Cuts in grants to colleges and universities, increases in fees especially to overseas students and more central government control over the types of courses offered are a number of the areas where academic geographers and planners should be actively involved. In London many of the polytechnics have had severe cuts in their funding. Kingston Poly has had to close down its planning department and Northeast London Poly has 'lost' some 18% of its budget this year (the average cut nationwide is about 9%) What is happening at NELP is especially important since it involves a selective imposition of cuts on the Social and Human Sciences - well known for their radical teaching methods and course content - while the Poly Director has arranged funding for a 'War Studies' course through NATO. Such survival programmes are being prepared in many institutions where their ability to survive will depend on the number of first class degrees they produce and the relevancy of the subject to the productive needs of industry. Geographers, in a period of increasing militarism, may be tempted to find relevancy in the strategic studies familiar in the subjects' past under the MacKinder School. Socialist geographers must resist and fight the reactionary tendency of Geography.

This may be an uphill struggle without the help a group such as USG offers to isolated socialist geographers and planners. The USG's 'multinational' character could also be an asset not shared by a number of other socialist conferences etc now well established in the U.K. As the world capitalist system staggers towards deeper recession its true world nature has never been more obvious. More and more national governments, vainly searching for national solutions

to an international crisis, are now turning away from Keynesian Economic Management towards the promises of Milton Friedman and 'Monetarism'. Thatcher in the U.K. and Carter in the U.S. have both announced similar austerity budgets while massively increasing defence spending. Other 'western' governments are moving in the same direction and even the so-called socialist countries are not immune from the effects of world 'stagflation'. Their economies have slowed down, they have massive foreign debts, they are unable to satisfy growing internal demand for consumer goods and high technology. Recent moves towards 'market socialism' in Hungary for example is one of the responses to the crisis in the socialist countries. It is not too dissimilar to the 'monetarist' demands in the West. But monetarism contains many contradictions especially when set in the context of nation states interacting with national and multinational capital operating in a world market. Perhaps the study of those contradictions underlying the emerging 'monetarist' policies of our ruling classes could be a relevant area of study for socialist geographers. Certainly we need to look more closely at this 'new' solution to capitalist crisis.

Briefly, the proponents of monetarism postulate that the present crisis is due to the familiar 'too much money chasing too few goods' hence causing inflation, while unemployment and productivity are kept at an unnaturally low level, stifled by monopolistic trade unions and government intervention funded by the printing of more paper money. Not a new argument. It was formally well known as the 'quantity theory of money' which Marx demolished in Capital Vol III. However the monetarist solution is to cut back on government intervention and restrict the money supply, squeezing out inflation and allowing unemployment to reach its 'natural' level in a free competitive situation. The result is to deepen the depression and 'flush out the system' - a sort of blood-letting in the hope that the patient (capitalism) will get better. Like blood-letting a monetarist solution is more likely to hasten the patient's demise than cure the disease. For this reason the contradictions of a pure monetarist policy are likely to force governments into some form of intervention in the long run - probably protectionist policies. These in turn embody their own contradictions, particularly the 'beggar-thy-neighbour' aspect of protection. And so the search for a solution to capitalism's ills (in fact its inherent nature) goes on.

While monetarism and protectionism both have their adverse effects on certain sections of capital, the only consistent sufferers from the ills of capitalism are the working classes and, in the Third World especially, the peasantry. None of the 'solutions' put to us by our ruling classes will change that, indeed they will almost certainly try to increase the level of exploitation. Now more than ever the radical restructuring of our societies is long overdue. The aims of an organisation like USG are laudable and surely in the present heightened situation indispensable. I hope this Newsletter can go some way to reviving interest in the U.K. and that USG can help organise resistance on the level of practice as well as theory.

Malcolm Forbes

## NEWS FROM LONDON USG

### LONDON USG DEVELOPMENT GEOGRAPHY GROUP

The London USG Development Group ran a series of seminars over the last year in which the members read and discussed Lenin's book 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia'. This book was chosen for discussion as it is perhaps the marxist classic, most relevant to geographers interested in the 'Third World'; certainly the exercise proved to be a useful one as it raised many current issues in the political economy of 'Third World' development.

The Development of Capitalism in Russia was written as part of a polemic between Lenin and the Narodnik economists in late 19th Century Russia. The Narodnik's understanding of the development of capitalism led them to argue that a home market for capital had failed to develop in Russia and that, in the absence of a foreign market, capitalism could not therefore develop the nation. The reader quickly becomes familiar with Lenin's political purpose. His objective is to systematically counter the Narodnik's views by proving, with a careful use of empirical data, that, on the contrary, the home market in Russia was growing. Also, by demonstrating the increasing differentiation of the Russian peasantry into two classes of capitalist farmers and agricultural wage workers; the migration of peasants to towns in search of industrial employment and; the growth of capitalist enterprise in both industry and agriculture. Finally, he argues, again in opposition to the Narodniks, that capitalism is historically progressive in that it alone has enabled the development of Russia, out of its feudal stagnation into a more modern society with a more advanced economy.

The current relevance of this work lies, of course, in the fact that it represents a political-economic analysis of Russia at a time when its level of economic development had close parallels with that of many 'Third World' countries today. Although it is apparent that not all aspects of Russia's late 19th Century development experience remain true in the contemporary 'Third World', Lenin's very detailed description of the development of capitalist enterprise in Russia is of fairly general applicability and the lessons to be learnt from this text are numerous. He describes the changes in agricultural organisation; the gradual introduction of wage labour; the growth of commercial farming; the various transitional forms and contradictions that appear during this process of change; the introduction of technological improvements and from this the connection between agriculture and industry. He also gives a very detailed analysis of the evolution of industry in Russia-- from its basic

form of domestic industry through artisan, simple commodity and handicraft production to simple capitalist cooperation, manufacturing and finally large scale factory production. His description presents a marxist model of development which is dynamic and evolutionary rather than a more rigid, step by step, structural conceptualisation. Its flexibility and the numerous transitional forms of economic organisation that it allows has many obvious parallels in today's 'Third World' development experience.

The book is also worth studying from a purely methodological point of view as it is a sophisticated empirical case study with data and information drawn from numerous sources. Lenin's use of statistics is admirable in the way he adapts statistical material, collected for bourgeois administration and research, to back up his own argument. Frequently his interpretation of this data leads to totally opposite conclusions from those drawn by the bourgeois economists to whom he refers.

There are, of course, weaknesses to Lenin's argument. Of particular <sup>relevance</sup> to the applicability of his work to 'Third World' political economy is his failure to deal with the influence of foreign capital on Russia. This severely limits the contemporary relevance of his work given the global nature of modern capitalism. But it also highlights the historically different circumstances in which capitalism developed in Russia from those in which the 'Third World' is developing today. Further criticism can be made of Lenin's characterisation of the different forms of economic organisation in the progression of capitalist development from domestic industry to large scale factory industry. The criteria he uses to define these different forms are not strictly adhered to from one form to another, leading to a certain confusion over the precise differences he sees between them. Some are defined in terms of social relations of production and the level of technological development while with others the difference appears to be merely a question of scale in the amounts of constant and variable capital involved.

Given the auspices under which our group and this newsletter are organised, it is perhaps worth mentioning one or two examples of the book's references to topics traditionally of interest to geographers.

In the field of urbanisation, Lenin notes the rapid growth of towns in Russia, demonstrating how this is caused by the development of a capitalist economy and he points to the much more rapid growth of important industrial and commercial centres as well as to employment statistics to reach the conclusion that the industrial population of Russia is increasing much faster than the urban population; another difference with contemporary 'Third World' development. Lenin argues that, although industry tends to concentrate in specific centres due to capitalism's tendency to encourage specialisation and thus creating a territorial division of labour, this does not preclude capitalism from extending its influence deep into rural areas as well. Thus the industrialisation of the urban



areas and the commercialisation of agriculture should be seen as two parts of a single integrated process of capitalist development. Lenin further demonstrates their interdependence by describing their interaction in the growing home market which he supports with statistics on the growth of trade in Russia and the development of the road and, especially rail networks.

Lenin also goes into a fairly detailed analysis of migration statistics in order to quantify and support his views on the differentiation of the peasantry. He demonstrates the process by which rich peasants tend to become the capitalist farmers while the poorest peasants become a proletarian class of agricultural wage workers, leaving between them the middle peasantry, who persist longest in their self-sufficient subsistence farming and are the last to turn to commodity production. Once they too become integrated into the capitalist economy it can be either as capitalist farmers or as agricultural workers although many of them tend to migrate to urban areas. It is in fact this latter group who provide the bulk of migrants to the city as they are often the most enterprising amongst the poorer peasants and the least likely to be tied to the land by various surviving forms of labour service. This extraction of the middle peasantry to the towns naturally further increases the differentiation of the peasantry into two distinct groups of capitalists and workers.

Obviously many of these points appear familiar to us now, but one must remember that Lenin was writing his book over 80 years ago when such ideas were not common. But of course this observation does nothing to increase the book's seeming lack of novel arguments today. What is more important from our contemporary view is that Lenin's very detailed, (marxist), empirical case study of the early stages of the development of capitalism although it is, quite naturally, not directly applicable to the modern 'Third World', nevertheless remains of general relevance for marxist 'geographers' both as an example of how such work can be carried out and as a sophisticated guidebook to an extremely complex theoretical field of enquiry. A final commendation from our own experience is the book's value as the object of discussion for a group interested in the political economy of the 'Third World'.

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#### LONDON USG - NEWS

This time last year there was a lot of enthusiasm amongst the USG members in London. The new contacts made at the IBG in Manchester inspired us to action in the realisation that we were not alone within the reactionary quagmire of British Geography. At an introductory meeting in January 1979, four activities were suggested and further group meetings organised. Attendance at these meetings was good and things looked hopeful. Alas the ambitious hopes of each group have subsequently proved too great and all are now temporarily, (hopefully) out of action. However

some of us are still in contact and live in hope of a revival.

The four groups originally constituted were; a Capital Reading group, an Urban Political Economy group, a Development Geography group and a General Theory group. The first three were study groups and met independently, the latter was to be a forum for general discussion and business of the London USG group as a whole. Three general meetings on theory (on Nature, Ideology, and Women and Space) proved successful although attendance dwindled from 30 at the first to 10 at the last. The Development Geography study group also had several successful meetings as their report above testifies. Similarly the Urban Political Economy group began with an ambitious plan to update James Anderson's, now out of print, Bibliography. Neither group has now met for several months and the latter plan never really got off the ground. So if anyone in London is looking for a project we have a few to spare!

The most successful and longest running group was the Capital Reading group. We held together until last October, but when people didn't return after the summer break and one core member went off to India for a year it was disbanded. However, several members of this group are still in touch (and producing this newsletter) -- so discussion goes on informally.

This category of slow rundown is the major reason for the lateness of this Newsletter. The London USG group took on production of the second British Newsletter during the euphoria of last January (1979) but articles have proven hard to come by and the whole thing has struggled into existence built on remarkable lack of communication between members in London. Our failure in London - (despite largest concentration of members in the British Isles) - has stemmed from lack of commitment to USG through overcommitment elsewhere. As pointed out at the 1979 AGM in Manchester, most members in the British Isles (unlike their US counterparts) are already heavily involved in the CSE or CSP or other socialist organisations. It is hoped that USG will continue to function in the British Isles. On paper there are still a large number of members in London so perhaps in this period of heightened crisis interest will revive. We hope to restart the Capital Reading group in the near future. Whatever happens at the local level of practice, the USG should remain as a contact organisation via the Newsletter and the annual meetings at the IBG. For further information on London USG contact:

Malcolm Forbes or Joanna Foord at,  
26 Teesdale Road  
Leytonstone  
London E11

GEOGRAPHY AND FEMINISM

A meeting was held at the Annual Conference at Lancaster this year of those interested in forming a feminist group within the IBG. The initiative for the meeting stemmed from an earlier session at the Annual Conference at Manchester in 1979 and from the debate which has begun in recent issues of Area about the study of women by geographers, the status of women in the profession and the general neglect of feminist perspectives in geography. Despite being held on the final morning in probably the coldest room in Lancaster University, about twenty people came to the meeting and a similar number expressed interest and support although they could not attend on that day. After a wide-ranging discussion about the general aims of a feminist group, whether it should be open to both sexes, whether to restrict ourselves to setting up a network of contacts and information about similar groups and feminist research, whether to constitute a separate study group or work within the existing groups, we decided, as a first step, to form an open Working Party within the IBG to work along two parallel lines:

1. To encourage the academic study of the position of women by geographers, whether from a feminist or alternative perspective.
2. To investigate and work to improve the status of women in the profession.

For whatever reasons, women are represented in increasingly smaller proportions at the higher levels of the profession. The women attending the meeting at Lancaster, indeed the conference as a whole, seemed to be mainly concentrated in research rather than in teaching and insecurity of employment emerged as a major problem. This aim united people from all areas of geography, whereas the first aim was of more immediate interest to the urban, social, human and historical geographers amongst us.

Our immediate plans are threefold. First, to publicise the aims of the group and to expand our constituency to a wider audience, both women and men; secondly, to develop a list of similar groups and to publicise relevant meetings and conferences; thirdly, to plan a one day meeting early in the autumn with sessions on both the study and the status of women.

All those interested in the Working Party should contact  
Linda McDowell at: Faculty of Social Sciences,  
The Open University,  
Walton Hall,  
Milton Keynes,  
Bucks. U.K.

## W.R.R.C. CONFERENCE REPORT

SUZANNE MACKENZIE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Geographic research on women has been one of the few reliable growth areas in North America in the last five years, and there is a growing British interest in such research. This should hardly come as a surprise. Changes in the labour process and in the family and community which have radically altered women's social position are also the basis of some of the most theoretically contentious and politically compelling issues facing geography. These changes have been politically and theoretically expressed by the women's movement as feminist demands, 'deserving' of specific research.

What is perhaps surprising, given the scope and importance of these issues and of the feminist struggle around them, is the speed with which what Bonnie Loyd called "a quiet revolution in geography" (U.S.G. Newsletter, 3(3), 30) is circumscribing itself into a sterile special interest field. In the concern to prove its legitimacy, much of our research has squeezed the complex and changing social relations of women's position into the concept of an empirically defined spatial 'population subgroup'. Consequently we have tailored questions about women to fit into spatial frameworks. In our "struggle to identify a distinctive geographic perspective" (Loyd, *ibid*), this research has lost sight of the issues which motivated it in the first place.

But this 'spatial fetish' is neither inherent in work on women in the environment (although it is probably inherent in the field of a 'geography of women'). The issues and struggles which form the basis of our research are becoming more compelling daily. A recent meeting on the theme of 'Women and the Environment' at the Feminist Summer School at the University of Bradford (September 6-9) indicated that women in many different fields are working toward ways of conceptualising and struggling with these issues.

Having spent the last five years grappling with the myriad difficulties of developing a perspective and practice which is both sensitive to human/environmental relations and anchored in the struggles women are engaged in, it was heartening to spend four days with 35 other women who are concerned with similar problems. The School as a whole was organised by the Women's Research and Resources Centre (1) and the University of Bradford Women's Group. Participants thus came to the 'Women and Environment' stream from a wide variety of political perspectives- radical, revolutionary and socialist feminism- united through their common work in fields related to the theme and by their common desire for discussion of the theoretical and strategic problems they faced in their work.

In their introduction to the stream, the organisers- Gail Chester, Elizabeth Lebas and Renate Prince- pointed out the 'surprise' and difficulties inherent in discussing women and the environment, adding that "the juxtaposition of 'women' and 'environment' can also symbolise the non-appropriation by women of their environment." The aim of the workshop was to undertake discussion of this

non-appropriation, and to "introduce the various ways we can think about and describe how differing categories of women...relate to the environment and also rebel against it."(2)

Jo Foord and Suzanne Mackenzie followed with a general discussion on feminism and urbanisation, providing a critical overview of work on the 'geography of women' and arguing that women's environmental relations must be examined in terms of their historical role in production and reproduction of labour. Through an examination of some of the problems of women in Tottenham, North London, they made some suggestions about the political implications of this perspective.

The following morning, Irene Breugel and Elizabeth Lebas expanded on this theme, looking at the "main British and American writers on urban geography and at the French Marxist school as two conflicting ways of looking at capitalist urbanisation, stressing that although most of the literature is centred around state intervention in social reproduction, none looks specifically at the feminine role. The feminist literature, on the other hand, fails to conceptualise a sense of space and locality..." Their discussion "set out the problem in a new way, in terms of the issue of mobility in relation to women's role in the family and the economy." The afternoon discussions concentrated on more specific studies, illustrating and developing the theoretical issues raised. Jacky Tivers developed a modified space-time constraints framework in a discussion of mobility restraints on women with young children in suburban London. She argued that the struggle to eliminate social and ideological constraints interacted with environmental modification and raised the question of how we understand and control this interaction. Alexi Marmot took up this question in a discussion of how ideologies of spatial use are imposed and practiced through urban design and architecture, illustrating "the oppressive and divisive nature of urban structures and segregation."

The next day's meetings re-examined these questions in discussions of specific environmental issues and struggles. In the context of the historical development of the split between public and private life in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Lenore Davidoff discussed the "division between 'inside' and 'outside' and the development of gardens as these related to 'women's sphere'". Discussion then focussed on contemporary housing questions and struggles. Jane Darke examined housing policies, re-examining state intervention from the perspective of its effect on women. Ann Holmes led a discussion on tenants movements, examining "the relationship between women and property and their role in the home" relative to women's participation in struggles, raising the question of the development and effectiveness of current struggles. Noting that the relation between capitalism and the oppression of women in their domestic role had emerged as a key issue in the 'Environment' and 'Employment' streams of the school, Damaris Rose suggested that our approach to housing struggles, especially in their relationship to wage workplace struggles, should be informed by analyses of the complex ways in which the dominant processes of capitalist structure the aspirations of family members with respect to 'life at home'. Mika Dandini and four women from the Feminist Design Co-Op focussed discussion on the specific constraints and emerging alternatives within architectural education and practice.

The last day's session expanded on themes raised on previous days in the discussion of self-help and community action. Nilofar Siddiqui, a community worker on Moss Side, Manchester, who is involved in trying to set up a workers co-op for Asian women homeworkers, discussed the position of women in this community and the difficulties in this project. Sue Olley, a solicitor, opened a discussion on the position of women with regard to property law, and of the struggle to change legal constraints on women in the community. The workshop was concluded with a wide-ranging discussion of women in the environmental movement, led by Pia Koppel and Jill Sutcliffe. Participants agreed that women have a crucial and specific role in defending and creating the environment. Feminist ways of organising, and the political priorities of feminists constitute a challenge to "an environmentally detrimental society".

The feeling expressed at the beginning by many participants- that the theme of women and the environment was unexplored- was not borne out. Over the course of the meeting it became increasingly evident that women in a wide variety of contexts were consciously struggling with this question. The eclecticism of the approaches, and the enthusiasm of discussion indicated problems, and emerging struggles around these problems, that went far beyond the self-circumscribed concerns of the academic 'geography of women'. The very fact that it was seen as possible and necessary to address the problem of human/environmental relations as feminists is politically significant- indicating that feminism has gone beyond considerations of isolated 'women's problems' toward a feminist informed politics, in which the relations of people and the environment are seen as theoretically and politically fundamental.

In this and in the emphasis on struggles to eliminate conditions of women's non-appropriation of the environment, the meeting provided a genuine and constructive challenge to socialist feminist geographers.

The participants in the session agreed to continue meeting from time to time, focussing their different perspective and practices around questions arising from the theme. Jane Darke organised a follow-up meeting in London during the first week of January 1980. Although not many of the original group could attend, those that did discussed a possible future role in writing and publishing the group's work. However the main role at present appears to be in maintaining a contact network. Anyone who is interested in joining discussions on 'women and the environment' or in corresponding with any of the participants should contact Jane at 173 Rustings Road, Sheffield, S11 7AD or Suzanne Mackenzie, Grad P/H, Arts Building D, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9QN. Some of the papers and transcripts of discussions from the School may be made available through the WRRRC as time and funds permit. When (and if) these appear I will include a note in the Newsletter.

#### NOTES

1. The WRRRC was founded in 1975 as a "service facility and a network focus within the WLM". Its facilities include seminars, a library, a bi-monthly newsletter, a research index and information on women's studies. Further information on the WRRRC can be obtained by writing to 190 Upper Street, London N1.
2. All quotes in this section are taken from the Summer School Handbook.

## WHAT IS GEOGRAPHY?

### DISCUSSION PAPER

ROD BURGESS

PLANNING DEPARTMENT ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION LONDON

This paper tries to offer some tentative reasons as to why there has been such an appalling lack of interest, within the discipline of Geography, in two fundamental questions: What are the limits of geographical enquiry? and; what is the relationship between current developments in geographical theory and the history of geographical thought?

Though I am aware of the present scale of research that more or less addresses itself (through the epistemological critique), to the question what is geography?, I am trying to argue in this paper that this enquiry has not fully accommodated the significance a history of geographical thought has in the effectiveness of the critique that epistemology offers. However, the research will not be able to undertake this task as long as it fails to acquire a materialist basis.

I am not trying to argue a case for the maintenance of the disciplinary boundaries of Geography - that would be a bit like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic! Marxism subsumes Geography, and not Geography marxism. I am in fact arguing the opposite position - no matter which way Geography tries or has tried to define itself, it fails to come to terms with its object of study. What I have attempted to do, is merely to look at the way Geography defines and has defined itself. As we shall see, the question of disciplines cannot be understood outside of the whole issue of the social division of intellectual labour that is a limitation to, and structural characteristic of bourgeois theory and practice.

At one time the most common answer to the question 'what is Geography?' was: "Geography is what geographers do." However a glance at the literature of the last fifteen years or so, would show that the one thing that geographers no longer do frequently is answer questions such as 'what is Geography'? The situation is further aggravated by the marginal role given to the History of Geographical Thought both within the discipline and the university curriculum. Indeed, there are several Departments of Geography in the U.K. which have no courses in this vital area of geographical enquiry. I say vital deliberately because it would seem to me gross insanity for a discipline to cut itself off from its roots in such a cavalier fashion. Not only does it become impossible to undertake the constant and critical appraisal of theory and method that the history of knowledge provides and demands, but it also becomes virtually impossible to understand the continuity of enquiry that underpins contemporary currents of geographical research. Given this institutional and intellectual indifference to the history of geographical thought, it is hardly surprising

that the undergraduate experiences only confusion and chaos when confronted by the endless array, and cheap intellectual glitter, of contemporary geographical fashions. Logical positivism, empiricism, behaviouralism, phenomenology, structuralism, quantification, bear down on him/her from all angles and not a day passes by without somebody inventing a new branch of the discipline! I believe we are now to have a Humanist Geography, and I wouldn't be surprised if the formation of a new branch of Geography based on the principles of the Anabaptist Heresy was announced tomorrow! This chaos has been made more severe by a rampant eclecticism that not only celebrates the espousal of mutually contradictory theories as a virtue but also sees this as a necessary pre-condition for 'objectivity'. Thus the position of many geographers is rather akin to that of the Aborigine who after having bought a new boomerang, experiences great difficulty in throwing away the old one!

Of course there is order beneath all this chaos - after all geographers (or some of them at least), are rational beings. However, this fundamental order will not be perceived, by student and teacher alike, if the history of geographical knowledge and the questioning of the limits of geographical enquiry, are not accommodated within the discipline as part of the day to day theoretical practise of the geographer. This lack of familiarity with the history of its thought, is not emulated in the other human and social sciences - for example, disciplines such as sociology show an intense and constant appraisal of their intellectual traditions. Moreover, the absence of this interest has done much to isolate Geography from recent developments in the philosophy of the human sciences. I am thinking here of the epistemological critique, and the inability of Geography to identify those ideological elements in its current and past pre-occupations.

But let us return to the basic question: What is Geography? A constant examination of the limits of its endeavours is equally as important a symptom of the general health of a discipline as the significance attached by that discipline to a history of these endeavours. The reluctance to push the debate on the nature of geographical enquiry into the centre of Geography's pre-occupations speaks volumes about its general condition. It is therefore somewhat instructive, to look at the origin of this demise of interest in these two central issues. They can be traced quite clearly to the triumph of the 'Quantitative Revolution' in the Sixties.

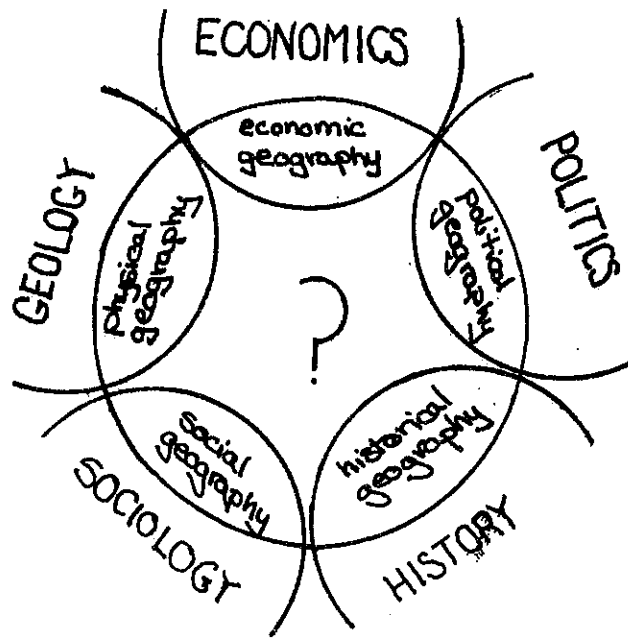
Despite the often sophisticated levels of abstraction associated with the methods and techniques of the 'Quantitative Revolution', the continued attempt to elevate these methods to the level of theory inevitably led to the expulsion of historical elements from the study of geography, and consequently to the diminished attention paid to the discipline's own history. The reduction of geographical phenomena to the level of quantitative relations, and the use of empirically determined 'pure' facts, in



effect involved a refusal to consider the historical character of these facts, and an acceptance of the notion that social facts are 'things'. It involved a theoretical reification of the real world, being based upon the use of those alienated categories of thought characteristic of bourgeois ideology. These categories mirrored the alienated and abstract appearance of the world quite faithfully, and it is therefore hardly surprising that despite, or rather because of their sophisticated degree of abstraction, the knowledge that these methods produced remained essentially descriptive. The reasons for this are quite clear; no matter how ingenious was the attempt to place quantitative methods on the level of theory, the movement proved incapable of reconciling the polarities of a fundamental dialectic: Are the mathematical relations that can be identified within and between geographical phenomena inherent properties of these phenomena, or are they properties of man's rational faculties? (i.e. do they exist in the 'real' world or are they imposed on it by man?).

In effect the fetish for measurement put the question of the nature of geographical enquiry quite firmly into the background of the discipline's concerns. The reduction of historically and socially determined facts to the level of quantities, and the failure to reproduce the interpenetration of the subject and object of the geographical process at a theoretical level, meant that the Quantitative Revolution lurched strongly in the direction of defining Geography as a branch of the natural sciences. The partial and one-sided concept of man's relationship to Nature that saw the former as a predicate of the latter re-emerged. The geographical process could only be understood in terms of natural laws, and the long tradition of Determinism once again found its representatives in Geography rallying as always under the banner of 'scientism'. That which was not yet known about this process derived ultimately from an inability to effectively measure and quantify its components, which continued to remain governed by these laws irrespective of efforts to isolate them. This failure was explained as a function of the 'youth' of the 'science' - the limits of Geography were thus to be determined in the search for the perfection of techniques and methods rather than by a questioning of the fundamental assumptions that inform them.

Having recognised the urgency of attempting to answer the question: 'What is Geography?', and having recognised the necessity of situating this answer in the context of the history of geographical enquiry, how then are we to proceed? Most geographers are familiar with the classical graphic representation of the character and scope of geographical enquiry shown below. This diagram is only useful insofar as it expresses the relationship of Geography to the other disciplines, and the articulation (or lack of it), of its sub-disciplines. However, it says nothing about the nature of these limits nor does it establish the character of the central area of Geography, that lies outside the sub-disciplines. (Incidentally, it is interesting to speculate on what happens to this central area when there is a proliferation of



sub-disciplines, resulting from the continued division of intellectual labour that is characteristic of late capitalism, and the existing sub-disciplines expand their relative influence within the body of the discipline). Traditionally there have been two criteria used to define the nature of these boundaries, and to characterise the quality of this central area.

The first of these, and probably the least successful from Geography's point of view, has been the attempt to define itself in terms of a distinct method. Geography can be identified as a valid area of study and differentiated from other disciplines precisely because it is characterised by a distinctly geographical method, (as opposed to a distinctly sociological or historical method and so on). Geography has made this claim several times in its history - perhaps the most vaunted and least valid of which was that Geography could be defined in terms of a unique capacity for synthesis. This notion was the central pillar of regional analysis, about which there has been much discussion in the recent past. Though one can be appreciative of the quaint charm of the 'lyrical' empiricism of regional geography, it must be said that its unacceptable levels of intuition and subjectivity, combined with the fundamental misunderstanding of the dialectical nature of synthesis, have largely been responsible for its failure to provide a rigorous and universal methodology for the discipline. The open justification of Geography as an art rather than a science was merely a recognition of the fact that the methods employed lacked such a potentiality. Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to outline the overwhelming strength of the epistemological and ideological arguments against such attempts to define disciplines in terms of distinct methodologies.

Secondly, it has also been claimed that the boundaries of a discipline can be established by recognising a distinct object

of study - i.e. Geography can be defined by the content of its own interest. There would certainly seem to be more ground for optimism here, and it is at this point that an answer to the question: What is Geography?, can be attempted by demonstrating, albeit in a very rapid and schematic way, that Geography has claimed for itself a distinct object of study and that the history of geographical thought illustrates the continuity and cohesiveness of interest in this object of study. I would not, however, like to maintain that this object of study can in any way be encompassed within the disciplinary boundaries determined by the bourgeois division of intellectual labour. Indeed, as we shall see Geography as a discipline has never been fully able to come to terms with its object of study.

The history of geographical thought shows us quite clearly that Geography has attempted to define and unify itself as a discipline by its concern for three essential concepts of three essential relationships - those between man and nature, man and space and man and place. Let us concentrate on the first of these and look at the way in which Geography has treated it as a central object of its study. The relationship between man and nature has been, and continues to be, conceptualised by Geography in terms of two distinct approaches, the conflict and development of which have constituted the history of geographical theory. These two ideologies are the result of Bourgeois Geography's attempts to understand the dialectical nature of the man/nature relationship through the evolution of partial, one-sided and falsely polarised categories, and through the theoretical reconstruction of this reality in terms of the domination of one or the other of these false polarities. In this way Bourgeois Philosophy's futile attempts to reconcile the subject and object without slipping into the quagmires of metaphysics have also become Bourgeois Geography's labour of Sisyphus. Thus we had, on the one hand, a crude materialism (which in Geography took the form of Determinism), that postulated the domination of man by nature, and, on the other hand, a subjective idealism (Possibilism), that saw nature as the predicate of human endeavour. The naturalisation of man versus the humanisation of nature. The merits and defects of these two central ideologies have been traced elsewhere, but suffice it to say that they still constitute the intellectual structure of the discipline and are the key to making sense of the apparent chaos that rules it at present. The thread of continuity can easily be traced from the crude environmental determinists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to the human ecologists and social darwinists of the late nineteenth century, to the geography of fascism, reaction and imperialism of the early twentieth century, and to the present day manifestations of determinism in recent ecological thinking, positivism and quantitative empiricism. The possibilist tradition in its turn began a lengthy and progressively imploding trajectory through existentialism and behaviourism, and is currently grazing on the somewhat sterile pastures of Phenomenology and environmental perception.

A similar argument can be used in tracing Geography's treatment of man/space and man/place relationships, where even more serious difficulties have arisen in the attempt to work out the materialism/idealism dichotomy. There is insufficient space here to explore the nature of these difficulties other than to pass a quick comment on the current mystification of the relationship between space and place. Traditionally this problem has been framed in terms of the 'uniqueness' of place, but more recently there have been even more implausible attempts by phenomenologists to differentiate space from place in such blatantly idealistic terms as the concept of freedom! In this matter Bourgeois Geography has proved itself completely incapable of conceptualising the relationship of space to place largely because crude materialism and subjective idealism both fail to recognise the dialectical nature of the relationship between the abstract and the concrete, i.e. space exists in the abstract only insofar as it can be posited in the concrete (place). It follows from this that the uniqueness of place derives from its concrete quality, whilst the universality of space derives from its abstract nature - place is space specified, tout court.

To conclude; there have been continuous attempts to legitimate geographical enquiry by isolating a discrete method, or identifying a distinct object of study, and current developments in geographical thought can be seen as equally geared to that purpose. I have not dealt at length with the theoretical inadequacy of much that has been produced in this attempt, but this inadequacy ultimately derives from the ideological nature of Geography's conceptions and the bourgeois division of intellectual labour which justifies and compensates for these inadequacies. The history of geographical thought cannot be effectively conceptualised as the history of different answers to one and the same question. Indeed we have already shown that geographical theory comes up with a fundamentally similar range of answers to a more or less unchanging set of questions. In this sense Geography is very much like disco music - the endless repetition of one theme! The truth of the matter is that the history of geographical theory and the nature of geographical enquiry can best be understood as the history of a problem that is more or less constantly changing, and whose solution is changing with it. All history after all, as Marx pointed out, is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature, and it has been the task of man not to rediscover nature but to make a new one - to reconstruct it. Insofar as Geography is informed by a theory that is unable to capture the dialectical nature of the transformation of the subject and object in the geographical process, the immense gap between theory and practice, and between the problem and its solution, will remain. Thus it would be a mistake to claim that Geography's status as a discipline can only be understood 'in and for itself', or that the ideological nature of geographical enquiry and the pragmatism of the bourgeois division of intellectual labour can be transcended merely in the realm of thought (the conclusion of a recent popular book on the subject). It must be added that Geography's institutionalised amnesia about its own past and its retreat from fundamental questions

of its own identity have compounded this confusion. It is true that the growing interest in epistemology has stimulated some research into the immediate past of geographical thought, yet, somewhat curiously, recent contributions seem to have found the origin of the geographical malaise in distinctly sociological areas - such as in the writings of Durkheim, Comte and Weber.

James Anderson's article goes on to show how geographical thought and practice can only be effectively understood within the theoretical and practical frameworks offered by marxism. Of course there are many within the discipline who think that this is nothing more than another intellectual fashion. In this they are very mistaken - the revival of marxism in the universities of the advanced capitalist societies since the Sixties cannot be understood as a result of the intellectual whims of shell-shocked liberals looking for mental straightjackets. Change in the real world of course has a lot to do with it. It is only through the categories of understanding offered by dialectical and historical materialism that the nature of geographical enquiry can be identified in the context of man's real relationships to nature, space and place. Though it is not the function of marxism to play the role of Fairy-Godmother to Geography's Cinderella, marxists do stand in opposition to the current sado-masochistic acceptance by geographers, of the inherent intellectual inferiority of their efforts. Within the marxist framework the very issues to which geographers address themselves, become some of the most profound and intellectually intriguing of all the problems that the human sciences study; the relationship between man and nature; the ontological status of space; the relationship between natural development and social development; the relationship between spatial structures and modes of production; the relationship between conceptions of nature and space and the organisation of nature and space; the nature and significance of territorial ideologies; the relationship between notions of historical specificity and spatial specificity and so on. In other words, the intellectual status of the discipline is not limited by the object of study but by the 'poverty of vision' of a geographical theory inserted into the bourgeois division of intellectual labour.

Marxism insists on continuous re-appraisal of intellectual traditions and is deeply concerned with these fundamental questions about the nature of geographical enquiry, that Geography today painfully ignores. It is only by learning from marxism that Geography can move out of its current antiquated and rather comic posture as the faithful, elderly and redundant servant of British imperialism, and can put itself at the service of progressive and humanitarian values rather than those of a decadent and corrupt society.

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# HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND GEOGRAPHY

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For a discipline with traditional pretensions to be 'the integrating science' it is ironic that Geography lacks a conceptual framework capable of integrating even its own concerns. It has traditionally had three main concerns - with Nature, Place and Space. But the conscious adoption of a positivist epistemology which was supposedly applicable to all areas of science in fact led to unprecedented fragmentation, into a plethora of separate sub-disciplines and incompatible approaches. Not surprisingly this eclectic mish-mash has defied attempts to find a coherent synthesis, whether through a common 'scientific methodology', 'general systems theory', 'time-space geography', a focus on 'policy issues', or other means.

The reasons are bound up with the history of the discipline; with its varying epistemological and ontological bases; its oscillation between subjective idealism and mechanical materialism; its differing conceptions of space and methods of abstraction. They involve Geography's dependence on other social science disciplines, the fragmentary nature of much of their theory, and indeed the counterproductive nature of arbitrary disciplinary boundaries. Attempts to find a satisfactory synthesis were confined by 'Geographical' blinkers. They failed because they were trapped in a disciplinary straitjacket and because Geography lacks a coherent theory of society and its relationship with nature.

The 'materialist conception of history', developed by Marx, constitutes such a theory, and it incorporates a conception of geography. This short paper<sup>1</sup> argues, schematically in the space available, that it provides a fruitful perspective on the relationships between 'Man' and 'Nature', and between the uniqueness of 'Place' and the generality of 'Space'. It is not presented as an automatic or unproblematical answer to Geography's problems, simply as the best available conceptual framework within which geographers can tackle particular problems, relate our concerns to other areas of social inquiry, and use the partial insights of other disciplines and paradigms without lapsing into eclecticism. With this non-disciplinary framework, the traditional aspirations of geographers to practise 'integrating science' could become a reality.

## Nature and Historical Materialism

The 'Nature-Man' debate between Environmental Determinism and Possibilism disappeared up a philosophical cul-de-sac in the 1950's because both sides shared a simplistic conception of Nature. Determinists practised a crude materialism from which the

Possibilists made only a partial and essentially idealist escape. 'Man' could choose from among the 'possibilities' presented by the physical environment, but it was 'Man' in the abstract, and the conception of societal constraints on his actions was woefully inadequate. True, there were many rich studies of pre-capitalist rural societies. However, the preoccupation with use values, fruitful when dealing with a "natural economy", was insufficient for societies where goods are produced for sale and profitability is the intervening (exchange value) criterion of what is produced (or not produced, as for instance in an economic crisis).<sup>2</sup>

Ideologies have the conservative effect of hampering the recognition of new problems.<sup>3</sup> Environmentalism was particularly out-dated, stuck in the era of "natural economy" where economic crises arose mainly from 'natural disasters' rather than structural features of society. It recognised that 'Man' changed the natural environment but it did not appreciate the historical processes of change in his own social nature which this involved. In capitalist contexts it did not appreciate the transformation of nature into physical commodities, nor recognise fixed capital in the landscape as capital. Its limited conception of Nature was not easily extendable to modern society. This helps to explain both the relative neglect of Urban Geography (long after the majority of the British population was urbanised), and the subsequent distortions of its development, first in an environmentalist direction,<sup>4</sup> later in spatial determinism and the abstract world of Spatial Analysis. Rather than find a viable replacement for a conception that had failed, mainstream Geography dropped its explicit concern with the ontology of Nature.

Just how impoverished Geography therefore remained can be seen from the perspective of Historical Materialism. In its dialectical conception, Man (and Woman) is part of Nature but is capable of consciously transforming through productive labour. In this historical process of transforming external Nature, and increasing his control over it, Man transformed his own human nature and forms of social organisation.<sup>5</sup> Nature, human and non-human, is not fixed but interacts continuously. The unity of 'Man' and 'Nature' is thus mediated by human consciousness and social class structure. It changes through history and over geographic space.<sup>6</sup> In class divided societies, Man is alienated from Nature and his own human nature. In capitalism, for instance, nature is transformed for profit, not directly according to human needs; the products are alienated from their immediate producers who, in most cases, do not control their own labour processes;<sup>7</sup> workers, white collar as well as blue, are treated as a commodity, labour-power, which is bought and sold in the 'labour market' - or increasingly consigned to unemployment as in the present world crisis of profitability which 'dictates' a massive under-utilisation of existing capital and human resources despite an increase in human needs.

We have moved a long way from the mechanical materialism of the Environmental Determinists, and from abstract 'Man' choosing from the 'possibilities' presented by natural environment. Marx developed his 'materialist conception of history' through a materialist critique of Hegel's idealist view of history and by fusing materialist and idealist strands in previous philosophies. It can be summed up by two quotations:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"<sup>8</sup>

and

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to mechanical materialisms (environmentalism or its modern equivalents, technological and spatial determinism, or a fixed 'human nature' account of social processes), Historical Materialism sees ideas - human and class consciousness - as central to the historical process, but ideas placed in their historical context. Marx himself wrote;

"The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating."<sup>10</sup>

And Engels replied to the charge of 'economic determinism' by saying:

"The economic situation is the basis but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results... even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogma - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form."<sup>11</sup>

The essence of Historical Materialism was also clearly expressed by Plekhanov, the 'father of Russian marxism':



"Social relationships have their inherent logic ... But if I know in what direction social relations are changing... I am able to influence it... Hence, in a certain sense, I can make history, and there is no need for me to wait while "it is being made"... change never takes place "by itself"; it always needs the intervention of men..." (his emphasis).<sup>12</sup>

Marx's materialism, therefore, does not pretend to be 'predictive'. It is not a determinism. It tries to analyse the possibilities latent in past and present social processes - their 'inherent logic'; but the future always rests finally with the future 'makers of history' and the unpredictable outcomes of struggles between them. As already mentioned, however, it is not unproblematical: There are problems ~~of~~ for instance, the 'base-superstructure' metaphor is interpreted too literally; the relationships between 'the logic of capital accumulation' and other historical and political factors are the subject of serious disagreements and debates between marxists; friend and foe alike have often seriously misrepresented Marx's ideas.<sup>13</sup>

That said, Geography has much to learn from these ideas and debates, not least on questions of method and the relationships between Place and Space.

### Historical Materialism and Geographic Space

The Regional Differentiation school in Geography emphasised the uniqueness of Place and failed to relate 'the particular' to 'the general' because it also lacked a coherent social theory - a lack sometimes proclaimed as a virtue! An influential paper by Sauer,<sup>14</sup> for example, advocated "the repression of a priori theories" when analysing the content of landscape. Such empiricist attitudes resulted in an 'imaginary concreteness', ~~even~~ or perhaps especially, in the study of particular Places or regions. The surface appearance of landscape, 'the facts' of Place, were often inadequately related to underlying social processes within and beyond the Place being studied. Despite subsequent developments in Spatial Analysis, the 'imaginary concreteness' of empiricism is still a widespread characteristic of Geography.

At issue here is the appropriate method of analysis and abstraction. Marx's discussion of an inappropriate method in Political Economy will have a familiar ring to geographers:

"When examining a given country...it seems correct to start with the real and concrete elements...with its population, the division of the population into classes, town and country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import...etc..... However, on closer examination, this proves false. Population is an abstraction if, for instance, one disregards the classes of which it is composed... classes... remain empty

terms if one does not know the factors on which they depend, e.g., wage-labour, capital and so on. These presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. ... Thus, if one were to take population as the point of departure, it would be a chaotic conception of a complex whole...<sup>15</sup>

The resemblance with Regional Geography is striking (except that it often started with natural environment and did not progress as far as 'classes!'). Marx describes it as the method of the early economists of the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> He goes on to show how economic theory was developed by moving analytically from the 'imaginary concrete' starting point of population "towards ever more simple concepts... ever thinner abstractions until one discovered a few decisive abstract, general relations such as... labour, division of labour, need, value, etc. ...", and he pays tribute to the "immense step forward" made by Adam Smith when he cut through all the particular forms of wealth-creating activity to discover the abstract, universal concept of labour, and the universality of the products of labour as embodying past objectified (or materialised) labour.<sup>17</sup> Using these abstract analytical concepts;

"the journey has to be retraced in the opposite direction until one arrives at the population again, which is this time not<sup>a</sup> chaotic conception of the whole, but a rich totality of many determinations and relations... The latter is obviously the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration (or synthesis) of many determinations..."<sup>15</sup>

Mainstream Geography has still considerable ground to make up in completing this 'journey' - indeed it is still travelling in both directions at once.

There was an advance in the use of abstraction in Spatial Analysis from the 1950's, but it was applied one-sidedly only to 'spatial' concepts. Nystuen<sup>18</sup> identified three; distance, direction, and connection (or relative position). Arguing that other concepts such as 'neighbourhood' or 'accessibility' are simply "compounds" of them, he considered his three basic concepts "sufficient to employ the geographical point of view ... in all branches of the discipline... physiography, cultural... economic ... (etc)". This appeared to integrate Physical and Human Geography as a unified 'spatial science', without the need for a theory of nature or society. However, this is an idealist use - or rather misuse - of abstraction; it abstracts some of the 'bathwater' and loses most of the 'baby'. Concepts applicable equally to physical or social processes are so abstract that on their own they have no necessary connection with either. They cannot be applied to

particular processes, or built up into useful "compounds", without employing additional concepts which relate specifically to those processes. But if three spatial concepts were "sufficient", these additional concepts could be left unexamined, and in Spatial Analysis they generally were.

The highly abstract concepts of Spatial Analysis were based on formal geometry, and their 'content' was often supplied by adding concepts from other disciplines whose bases, certainly in the case of Social Sciences, were also idealist in many instances.<sup>9</sup> The basic geometry emphasised only a 'relative' conception of Space, and could not satisfactorily encompass an 'absolute' conception of the specificity of Place.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Spatial Analysis developed by counterposing the two conceptions rather than integrating them. Bunge,<sup>21</sup> an imaginative and forthright pioneer, rejected as 'unscientific' Geography's concern with the uniqueness of Place. Generalisations were to be sought - but in an abstract geometry of relative spaces. He dispensed with the problem of the relationship between the 'general' and the 'unique' by insisting that Regional Geography should deal only with "generic" rather than "unique facts". However, the theories which define and classify certain facts as "generic" were not examined, and the absolute location of events in time and space was not recognised as one of their defining characteristics. Geography was the loser.

The earlier emphasis on the ontological primacy of natural environment was replaced by the epistemological primacy of Natural Science,<sup>22</sup> or, perhaps more accurately, by the primacy of 'philosophers of science' such as Popper who based their epistemological procedures on an essentially ahistorical conception of Physics (how do physicists 'refute' their theories of the universe, by repeated 'experiments'? of what was, presumably, a unique event?). The ontological issues were ignored<sup>23</sup> and environmentalism was replaced by spatial determinism. Instead of being unified by a positivist methodology supposedly applicable to all science, irrespective of content, Geography fragmented and sub-disciplines mushroomed. A wide range of other disciplines were ransacked to put flesh on the bare bones of geometrical concepts. It was fun being a geographer, you could keep 'your options open' to go in all sorts of different directions! This was often beneficial, such as in the increased contact with various parts of Social Science, but it did not provide a coherent theory of society. (Social Science also suffers from fragmentation into separate disciplines and sub-disciplines; from arbitrary administrative divisions typically based on idealist forms of abstraction).<sup>24</sup> In addition, the oscillation between crude materialism and subjective idealism, between an overemphasis on either material conditions or people's subjective thoughts, took on renewed force. The mechanical materialism of early Spatial Analysis, despite its idealist basis in Neo-classical Economics,<sup>19</sup> brought an idealist reaction, first from 'behavioural' studies of individual perceptions, later from a 'phenomenological' stratosphere of subjectivity. The

separation of such competing 'schools' into sub-disciplines obscured their inherent contradictions,<sup>25</sup> as the inadequacies of Geography were reinforced by its administrative 'unity' as a separate 'discipline'. The fragmentation, and the incompatibility of many of the 'fragments', was increasingly seen as a 'problem' by geographers, but attempts to find a synthesis from within the discipline failed. Hagerstrand, one of the most creative thinkers in Spatial Analysis, noted in 1973; "our geography is too incomplete to be able to catch the conditions which circumscribe man's actions". But his answer, to add a very abstract concept of 'power' and 'conflict' to his 'time-space geography', pulled him back into the abstract world of Spatial Analysis (and, in his particular case, the materialist world of Neurath's 'physicalist' sociology which tried to systematically exclude subjectivity),<sup>26</sup> hoping to find the solution in a "combination of geometry and accounting procedures". Geographers, searching single-mindedly for the 'spatial' factor (or even the 'temporal-spatial' factor), have, paradoxically, missed much that is socially significant in geographic space.

Historical Materialism provides a framework for resolving the false polarities of Geography. It is a fruitful stimulus to geographical research which is systematically related to other areas of social inquiry, and which realises that 'social' as well as 'spatial' concepts are problematical and have to be critically examined.<sup>27</sup> Its 'non-disciplinary' integrating power has its ontological basis in the central dynamic of society; in capitalist society - the compulsion on capital to accumulate more capital, or risk going under to competing capitals; the attendant, though contradictory, need to reproduce the labour-power that produces the surplus (e.g., through wages, and state-provided services); and finally, the need to reproduce capitalist relations of production (e.g., defend property rights, prevent the direct producers appropriating their 'own' surplus, and legitimate the status-quo by ideological and political means, and in the last resort, by physical force).

This ontology enables us to relate Space and Place dialectically, seeing the 'general' manifested in the 'particular', and vice-versa. This can only be done by using a theory of society which is constructed using concepts that have been derived in a materialist way, in accordance with material reality. It involves moving from the highly abstract level of the 'mode of production', through lower levels of abstraction, to the more concrete level of particular 'social formations' which are place and time specific (e.g., Britain, or one of its regions, in the 1970's).<sup>28</sup> 'Social formations' are the main focus of Geography, but they cannot be properly analysed without using higher level abstractions including 'mode of production'. The problem with Spatial Analysis theories was they generally remained stuck at or above a level appropriate to analysing 'modes of production' without being aware of the fact! But even when aware of it, it is not yet clear just how far a materialist analysis of geographic space can usefully proceed at such an abstract

level. Some of the contemporary debates between different variants of marxism, on questions of method and the substantive interpretation of historical and contemporary reality for example,<sup>29</sup> have a direct bearing on theoretical issues that arise in Geography.

The 'materialist conception of history' includes a conception of geography. Social forces do not exist independently of time and space; their location in time-space is one of their inherent material aspects. This is often lost sight of in modes of analysis which are idealist or which remain at a high level of abstraction as in much Social Science. But it was not lost sight of by Marx and other marxists.<sup>30</sup> Social phenomena such as 'the division of labour' or 'the balance of class forces' vary from Place to Place as well as through time, and thus the 'logic of capital accumulation' expresses itself very unevenly over Space. Indeed, the 'balance of forces' at particular Places can be decisive at particular points in the history of an entire 'social formation', if unique events come to be generalised over Space (e.g., those in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1917, which spread across the Russian Empire, and beyond). In the last (concrete) analysis, social processes cannot be abstracted from their historical and geographical setting.

Misquoting, but not I think misinterpreting, Marx, we might add that,

'men make their own geography... but in geographical circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'.

What is needed for Geography to overcome its fragmentation and begin to realise its potential, is not just a Geography "without adjectives"<sup>31</sup> but geographical studies without the blinkers of a big "G".

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It develops some themes in two earlier papers: 'Notes on Geography and Historical Materialism', 'Social Geography and the City' Seminar Series, SSRC, March 1979; and 'Historical Materialism and Explanation in Urban Geography', Joint Meeting of Urban and Social IBG Study Groups, London, September, 1979.
2. J. Harrison Marxist Economics for Socialists: A critique of reformism, Pluto Press, London, 1978, pp. 20-31.
3. J. Anderson "Ideology in Geography", *Antipode*, 5,3, 1973, p.5.
4. For a particularly ludicrous, though influential, example, see G. Taylor Urban Geography, Methuen, London, 1949.
5. "The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure... the manner

- in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged." F. Engels 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' (1880) in Marx and Engels: Selected Works, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1968, p.411.
6. R. Burgess "The Concept of Nature in Geography and Marxism", Antipode, 10,2, 1978. Also: N. Smith "Geography, Marx and the Concept of Nature" ms., Geography Dept., Johns Hopkins University, 1978; and A. Sayer "Epistemology and Conceptions of People and Nature in Geography", ms. Sussex University 1979.
  7. H. Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital, Monthly Review Press, 1974.
  8. Marx and Engels: Selected Works, op.cit., 'The Communist Manifesto' (1848), p.35.
  9. Marx and Engels op.cit., K. Marx 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' (1859), p.96.
  10. Marx and Engels op.cit., K. Marx 'Theses on Feuerbach' (1854) p. 28.
  11. Marx and Engels op.cit., F. Engels 'Letter to J. Bloch' (1890), p.682.
  12. G.V. Plekhanov The role of the Individual in History, Lawrence and Wishart, 1940.  
He continues (pp.57,58): "... men who do more than others... are called great men... every man is great who, to use the Biblical phrase, 'lays down his life for his friend'".
  13. E.g., Lukacs reviewing N. Bukharin's Historical Materialism criticises his Natural Science bias which leads him to the false conclusion that in principle prediction is as possible in Social as in Natural Science, and towards technological determinism - "a somewhat refined version of the 'environmental' theories of the 18th and 19th centuries" (which, we can add, lived on in Geography up to the mid-20th century):  
G. Lukacs Tactics and Ethics: Political Essays 1919-29, Harper, 1975, pp.134-142.  
As for the smears of "guilt by association" from such as Muir who "saw the true face of Marxism" in Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia, or Wagstaff for whom it "not only closes the mind" but leads to "the psychiatric ward, the labour camp and the gas chamber" one can only reply; capitalism has led in that direction, Hitler was a fervent anti-marxist, and many people, including many 'dissidents' in labour camps and psychiatric wards, do not accept Russia's self-image as 'socialist' just because its official state ideology of 'marxism' says so. This is not the place to discuss it, but I would argue that Russia for quite specific historical reasons was transferred into a particularly nasty state-capitalist dictatorship, but the majority of the world's dictatorships remain good old-fashioned capitalist. As I mentioned in a debate with Richard Muir, just because Al Capone claimed his operations were strictly capitalist and 'all American' is not sufficient grounds for rejecting America or capitalism. An 'open mind' is a fine thing, but not so 'open' that it will accept any old rubbish.

13. cont. R. Muir "Radical geography and Marxism" Area 11,2, 1979, pp. 126-7; J.M. Wagstaff "Dialectical materialism, geography, and catastrophe theory" Area, 11, 4, 1979, pp. 326-332.
14. C. Sauer The Morphology of Landscape, University of California Publications in Geography, Vol. 2,2, 1925.
15. K. Marx Grundrisse (1857-8) 'The Method of Political Economy'. Paraphrased for brevity from: the Pelican Edition, 1973, pp. 100-108, and The German Ideology (Supplementary Texts), (ed.) C.J. Arthur, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, pp.140-148. See also: B. Fine and L. Harris Rereading Capital, Macmillan, 1979, pp.6-15: Marx's method was to construct increasingly complex and more concrete concepts from his 'few decisive abstract general relations' until the complexity of material reality was reproduced in thought. "The important point is that this process is neither purely idealist, existing in thought independent of reality, nor arbitrary... the concepts produced and their logical order are in accordance with material reality" (p.7) - in contrast to a system of abstractions based on idealist concepts (e.g., Neo-classical Economics' subjective theory of value) and the formal procedure of combining properties common to a whole variety of different processes (e.g., their spatial form) or building abstractions out of analogies (e.g., General Systems Theory).
16. They started with "the population, the nation, the state, several states, etc." In 1949, G. Taylor op.cit. p.3 started with environment, race, nation, and city!
17. "How difficult and immense a transition this was is demonstrated by the fact that Adam Smith himself occasionally relapses back into the Physiocratic system".
18. J.D. Nystuen "Identification of Some Fundamental Spatial Concepts" (1963) in Spatial Analysis (eds) B.J.L. Berry and D.F. Marble, Prentice Hall, 1968, pp.35-41.
19. E.g., Neo-classical Economics (see note 16, above) and its extension in Location Theory; see: D. Massey "Towards a Critique of Industrial Location Theory" Antipode 5,3, 1973, pp.33-39.
20. Which may explain why Nystuen added a fourth concept, boundary, almost as an after thought, without relating it to his 'basic' concepts.
21. W. Bunge Theoretical Geography, Lund Studies in Geography, 1966, pp.8-13.
22. D. Gregory Ideology, Science and Human Geography, Hutchinson, 1978, p.19.
23. D. Harvey Explanation in Geography, Arnold, 1969, p.9 : "... the interpretation to be given to experience is itself ignored".
24. See note 19, above. Increased reliance on idealist Social Sciences also helped move Geography even further away from a coherent conception of Nature. Disciplinary and sub-disciplinary divisions have the effect of 'deskilling' social scientists in ways analogous to those described by Braverman op. cit., 1974, for production-line and routine white-collar workers, who through the fragmentation of production processes have

- lost overall knowledge and control of them.
25. E.g., the idealism of 'cultural geography' such as M. Heslinga's The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide, Assen, 1962, which overemphasises 'spiritual' at the expense of 'economic' factors and fails to relate them; it has its crudely materialist counterpart in an 'economic geography' which can discuss regional industrial policy in Northern Ireland without reference to religious distributions, associated features of the labour market, and attendant political factors; (e.g., G. Steed and M. Thomas "Regional Industrial Change: Northern Ireland" Annals, Assoc. Amer. Geog., 61,2, 1971, pp.344-360.
  26. T. Hagerstrand "The Domain of Human Geography" in Directions in Geography, (ed.) R.J. Chorley, Methuen, 1973, pp.67-87. See also: J. Anderson "Space-time Budgets and Activity Studies in Urban Geography and Planning", Environment and Planning, 3, 1971, pp.353-368 - which exhibits somewhat similar limitations and others besides.
  27. E.g., D. Massey and A. Catalano Capital and Land: Landownership by Capital in Great Britain, Arnold, 1978.
  28. See Fine and Harris op. cit. (note 15), for a clear exposition of levels of abstraction, and their application in analysing modern capitalism.
  29. E.g., Thompson's polemic against the 'theoreticism' of Althusser's 'structuralist marxism' which involves the relationships between social 'structures', conscious human beings and historical change (with Thompson open to, but not I think fully guilty of, the countercharge of 'empiricism'): E.P. Thompson The Poverty of Theory, Merlin, 1978, pp.193-406; on the role of the towns in the rise of capitalism: The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (ed.) R. Hilton, Verso, 1978; on conceptions of the contemporary western state - important in relation to 'policy issues' - see, e.g., State and Capital: A Marxist Debate (eds.) J. Holloway and S. Picciotto, Arnold, 1978.
  30. Marx's Capital, though analysing the capitalist 'mode of production', contains interesting material on the geographic space of the 'social formation' of early industrial Britain - summarised in S. Holland Capital versus the Regions, Macmillan, 1976, pp.36-47; and used in J. Anderson "Engels' Manchester: Industrialisation, Workers Housing and Urban Ideologies", AA Political Economy of Cities and Regions 1, Architectural Association Planning School, 1977, partly to highlight the inadequacies of 'structuralist marxism' in contemporary Urban Sociology. Two other examples of 'geography in marxism' are: L. Trotsky The History of the Russian Revolution (1930), Pluto, 1977, Chapter 1 'The Peculiarities of Russia's Development', with its theory of 'uneven and combined developed'; and G.V. Plekhanov Fundamental Problems of Marxism, (1908), Lawrence and Wishart, pp.38-46, which draws on Ratzel to emphasise the variable importance of natural environment in conditioning, through the medium of the social relations of production, the development of the forces of production. Much work remains to be done in excavating and



critically evaluating the geographical content of such marxist classics by these and other writers such as Lenin and Gramsci.

31. V.A. Anuchin "Theory of Geography" in Chorley 1973 op.cit., p.62.

Jim Anderson's and Rod Burgess' papers were given at a joint session of the USG at the IBG conference at Lancaster University, January, 1980.

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# SOME ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL LENDING PATTERNS IN THE BELFAST URBAN AREA, 1971-1978: AN INTRODUCTION

TOMMY McLOUGHLIN      BELFAST POLYTECHNIC

For most people, buying a house is the single most important financial decision which they may take during their lives. In Britain over 53% of all households in 1976 were in the owner-occupied sector, the corresponding figure for Northern Ireland being 49%. The total private housing stock of the city with all its varying characteristics, such as age, type and location, is part of the housing market system. Buying or selling property involves several institutions, such as estate agents, solicitors, the local authority and building societies, who operate within the market. Building societies currently provide nearly 90% of mortgage finance in Britain and their allocation policies probably constitute the most important single factor in the operation of the housing market.

The Belfast Urban Area, hereafter referred to as the B.U.A., has the largest and most important housing market in Northern Ireland, containing over 40% of the province's population and almost all the built-up urban area of greater Belfast. Belfast exhibits unique characteristics not found in other British cities. These features include widespread highly segregated residential areas based on religious affiliation, the occurrence of frequent and severe civil disorder and a single centralised authority in charge of public housing and mortgage schemes, namely, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Up to 1977 the Housing Executive mortgage scheme was funded by public money only, since then building societies have contributed. This building society finance is fully guaranteed a 'proper' investment return by the Government.

For this preliminary discussion three housing sub-markets are identified; these are North Belfast, West Belfast, and South and East Belfast. Housing Executive mortgage allocations and building society refusals to mortgage properties have been analysed for the period 1972 to 1978. Applicants for Housing Executive mortgages must already have been refused mortgage facilities from building societies. It becomes obvious that the Belfast housing market operates on a very definite spatial basis. Several lending patterns can be observed.

### East and South Belfast

This sub-market exhibits the classic characteristics of institutional finance allocation which could be found in many British or North American cities. The Housing Executive operates totally within an inner band or crescent of housing, consisting of typically older type properties, many of which are terraces without forecourts or have three storeys. Building societies have tended to avoid this inner band of housing and instead concentrate their investments in the more fashionable, modern and expensive properties which are to be found in areas of suburban housing to the north, east and south of inner East and South Belfast. Concentrations of building society refusals, based mostly on property type and age, are to be found in this inner band of housing.

### West Belfast

The predominant feature of the housing market in the West Belfast sub-market is that the areas where the Housing Executive operate and the building societies generally do not, are no longer confined to inner city locations. Although the crescent of Housing Executive mortgages, seen clearly in East and South Belfast continues into inner West Belfast, another spatial aspect is apparent. Perhaps 50% or more of Housing Executive mortgage allocations within this sub-area, are located in suburban areas where properties are of the type which building societies usually mortgage, that is, modern and new semi-detached, detached and bungalow properties. Many Housing Executive mortgage holders in West Belfast have been refused facilities by building societies, mostly on the grounds that the locations of the property is unsuitable. When refusing mortgages for properties in this area, building societies often mention the occurrence of civil disturbances in the area. This concentration of Housing Executive mortgages in suburban locations can only be explained by building societies viewing this area as too 'risky' for investment because of the 'troubles'. Building society refusals in the inner part of this sub-market on the other hand, are mostly based on type and age of property being unsuitable. Of the three sub-markets in the B.U.A. under consideration here, West Belfast has the lowest proportion of owner-occupiers. The effects of building society reluctance to lend in this area will therefore, be even more severely felt by potential and existing owner-occupiers.

### North Belfast

This final segment of the B.U.A. housing market again exhibits classic institutional lending patterns in the inner city sector, with a concentration of Housing Executive mortgages there. Unlike West Belfast, the North Belfast sub-market has a

higher proportion of owner-occupied property and less public authority housing. However a large proportion of owner-occupied North Belfast appears to have Housing Executive mortgages. This apparent lack of building society investment in a large tract of North Belfast can be explained by a number of factors. In the recent past North Belfast has suffered as a result of widespread sectarian civil disturbance. This in turn has resulted in large scale population movements. The area is made up of a patch-work of differing regions based on religion - a pattern which has contributed to the areas 'troubled' nature. The area also has a more varied ethnic composition than the other two sub-areas and the level of civil strife almost parallels that in West Belfast, but is of a more sectarian nature. During the period 1970 to 1973, a large section of the population moved out of the area as a result of intimidation and sectarian violence. Through mortgage default and destruction of property many building societies lost money on properties in the area during this period. These experiences have, no doubt, helped to make building societies extremely cautious and concentrate their finance in the new and less troublesome private housing estates of Newtonabbey. This policy can be confirmed by the reasons building societies give for mortgage refusals in areas such as North Belfast.

### Conclusions

The operation of the Belfast housing market has two main driving forces, serving two very different areas of B.U.A. space. These two forces are the building societies and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive mortgage scheme. In addition the housing market has two main modes of operation, working in again, two very different sections of B.U.A. space. The first of these modes is the operation of classic redlining<sup>1</sup> policies by building societies in older inner city locations and the second is 'local' redlining of many suburban areas, on account of their 'troubled' location. Undoubtedly, building societies are the dominant force in the market with the Housing Executive acting as a stop-gap measure. However, unlike most British cities, where local authority stop-gap mortgage lending is on a very small scale, the Housing Executive acts as a centralised body in Northern Ireland, responsible for the entire province. The relatively important role of Housing Executive mortgage lending in some areas of the B.U.A. indicates the extent to which building societies have tended to concentrate their finance on certain types of property and in certain areas of the city. Areas where their investment is most likely to be safe and therefore 'profitable', leaving the Housing Executive to take the risk in other areas.

The Housing Executive Home Loan Scheme was set up in 1972 when many people agreed that there was a crisis in the Belfast housing market due to the increasing 'troubles'. Increasing building society reluctance to lend in large areas of the city, meant that 'the bottom-half was falling out of the

housing market', to quote one Belfast estate agent. Housing has always been an emotive and highly political issue in Northern Ireland, nowhere more so than in Belfast, and the introduction and continuation of widespread local public mortgaging is seen by many people as political expedience in a highly sensitive and explosive atmosphere.

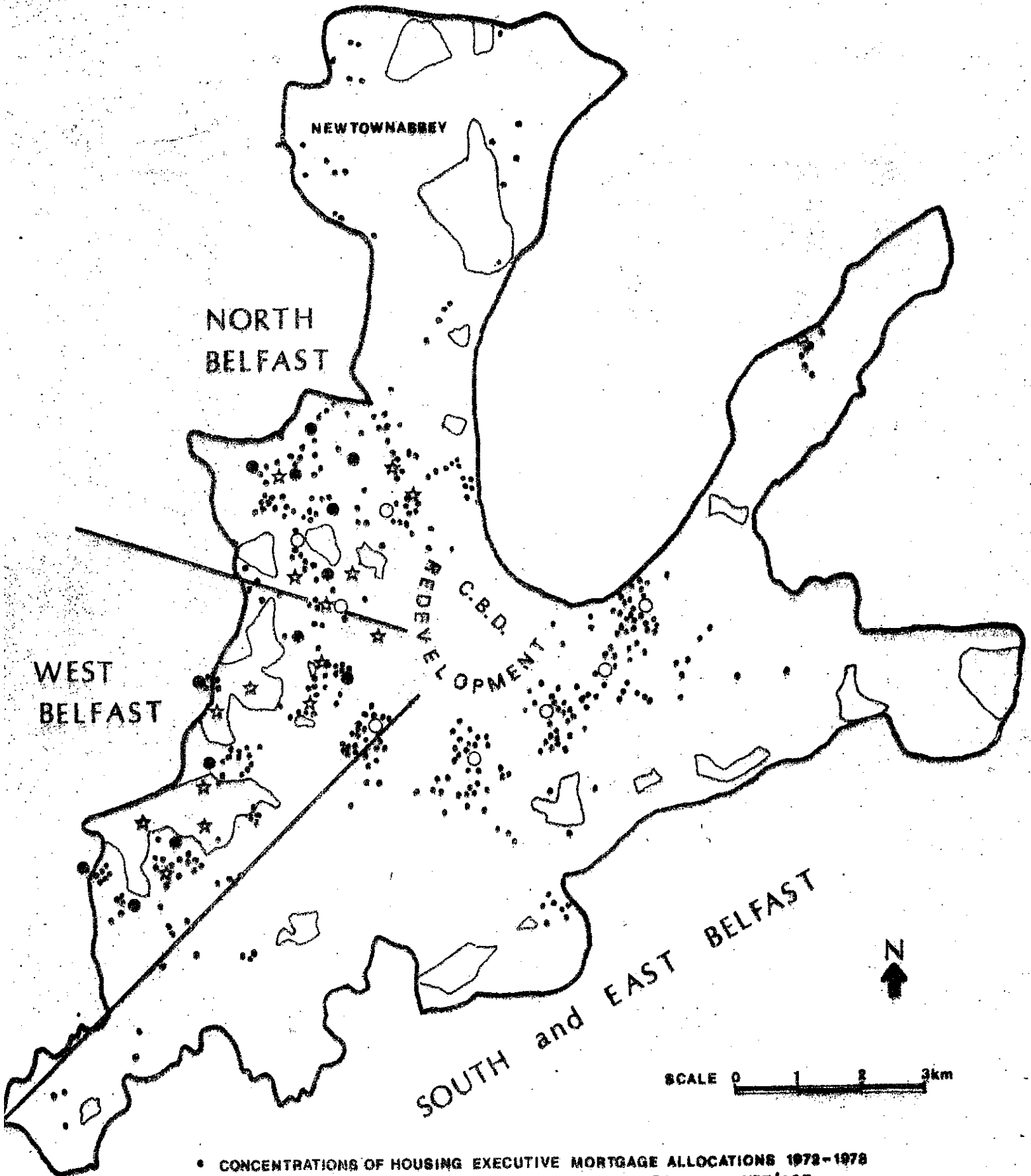
Building societies, in Belfast, are practising classic redlining in the whole of the inner city by refusing to lend on older properties, back-to-backs, terraces without forecourts and less expensive properties. Again, by refusing to lend on these and on modern and more expensive properties in the 'troublesome' suburbs, they have forced the Housing Executive to provide mortgage facilities in these areas., leaving large areas of the Belfast housing market excluded, for the most part, from the major source of mortgage facilities.

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# THE BELFAST URBAN AREA HOUSING MARKET



- CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSING EXECUTIVE MORTGAGE ALLOCATIONS 1972-1978
- BUILDING SOCIETY MORTGAGE REFUSALS DUE TO PROPERTY TYPE/AGE
- BUILDING SOCIETY MORTGAGE REFUSALS DUE TO PROPERTY LOCATION
- ★ FREQUENT CIVIL DISTURBANCES
- ▭ PUBLIC HOUSING

# COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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There seems to be a view prevailing which disapproves of what may be termed 'community consciousness', upon the premiss that territorial identification as opposed to class identification, cuts across common class interests over space. This criticism is perhaps most elaborately displayed in an article by Westergaard(1), who dislikes the fashion to deplore the dilution of working class 'culture'; a fashion which he justifiably sees as curiously centred upon images of insecurity, local seclusion and crude deprivation. He goes on to point out that-

"this is an assumption that the kind of working class unity which finds expression in industrial, or more especially political, action draws its nourishment from the simpler and more intimate loyalties of neighbourhood and kin...(implying that)...the solidarity of class- which is societal in its sweep and draws no nice distinctions between men of this place and that, this name and that, this dialect and that- is rooted in the kind of parochial solidarity which is its very antithesis."(2)

To disagree with Westergaard is not to dispute the primacy of industrial action, or the importance of the ultimate universality of a working class unity which is societal in its sweep. Indeed, to be fair to Westergaard he is considering community only in terms of the support it may or may not lend to industrial action; but the question remains- is industrial action the only road to class consciousness? Sartre once said that many marxists treat man as if he were born at the time of applying for his first job. It is also a point contested by practice; the proliferation of urban social movements in Spain, Latin America and elsewhere (see Rod Burgess's book review in this issue) belie the autonomy of industrial action. Furthermore, is industrial action itself always devoid of a parochial character (the current steel strike in the UK is an interesting case here)? Or does the emergence of a strong umbrella organisation such as the TUC totally negate such effects? There is a supposition that to encourage community consciousness is to encourage blinkering and self-centredness on the part of particular communities. This assumes that community groups see their problems as particularistic and are never to achieve an understanding of their problems as universal under a capitalist system. More importantly, are we to deny that to attempt to tackle our urban problems within a community framework is preferable to solitary brooding over our miseries until such day as we are transformed in consciousness by whatever means proposed? In short, to assert that community consciousness is a-

"culture of consolation which is not readily transformed into effective practice"(3)

is to deny that consciousness is transformed by praxis, proposing as an alternative the presentation of an elaborate, scientifically sound (by the standards of bourgeois science of course) Marxist-Leninist theory to a

working class fragmented under the hegemony of a bourgeois society, who will be immediately taken by this appeal to their rationality; rationality of course being the 'natural' form of everyday consciousness of the working class under bourgeois rule.

There is of course also the touchy problem of reformism. Cockburn cites the pitfalls of the incorporation of local community action by local authorities, that is the institutionalisation and defusing of radicalism. But this is to assume that local groups will receive satisfaction of their problems in this way. Experience tells us that they often do not; struggles against poor housing conditions, lack of community facilities etc. are continual under capitalist rule. But while these struggles are continual the experience gained by those involved serves as education and promotes organisation, to both heighten consciousness and direct those involved to the reality of the solutions to their problems. As Marx said-

"The real fruit of the battle lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle."(4)

The union of the proletariat in terms of workplace, which overcame parochiality, is extended elsewhere (Co-Ops, Tenants Associations, Working Men's Clubs, the WEA) and is one that needs further extension within the sphere of reproduction.

In many respects what is termed community consciousness is to be seen as an embryo form of class consciousness. Marx pointed out that-

"consciousness is at first, of course, merely an awareness of the immediate sensible environment and of the limited connexion with other persons and things outside the individual who is becoming self-conscious."(5)

If we take it that 'life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life' then we have a stance whereby the-

"premisses are men, not in some imaginary condition of fulfillment or stability, but in their actual, empirically observable process of development under determinate conditions."(6)

It is above all 'process' and 'development' that are important. What is the point of admonishing appearances for not being a suitable starting point for class consciousness, when the means by which those are altered is by the very experiencing of them? It is an improvement when we realise that life under capitalism is not only responsible for our beliefs, the ideas of which we are conscious, but also for our related unconscious attitudes. In this perhaps the work of Reich is a progression, adding a psychological dimension to Marx's notion of ideology: emotions as well as ideas are socially determined. This leads to the realisation that there are conceivably two kinds of class consciousness; that of the leadership and that of the masses, and these two must be brought into harmony- the 'crisis' of marxism of which Reich had much



to say. Reich was once told (by a revolutionary leader) that as he starts from consumption, and the marxist starts from production, he was therefore not a marxist. In the words of Reich himself -

"A revolutionary party is not only formed by working out a set of ideas and a practice corresponding to reality, but also, in the first place, by dealing with problems of interest to various strata of the population. Then and only then will the broad masses supply the active members whom the party needs".(7)

In theory then, the spatial fetishism with which community consciousness is criticised is quite founded, but when the criticism is allowed to maintain in practice then it takes the form of a static elitism. The real problem lies in the ideological tendency of categorisation in theory which is allowed to guide our practice. When seen theoretically community consciousness is doubtlessly ideological and serves the interests of capitalist society, as Westergaard observes, by a process of divide and rule. But how else is a consciousness of the reproductive processes to be truly obtained other than by fighting through the phenomenal appearances they take as 'urban problems'? We must not allow the tendency of bourgeois science which threatens to divide our theory, to also divide our practice; I leave the final words with Reich-

"Everything that contradicts the bourgeois order, everything that contains a germ of rebellion, can be regarded as an element of class consciousness; everything that creates or maintains a bond with the bourgeois order, that supports and reinforces it, is an impediment to class consciousness."(8)

#### NOTES

- (1) J.H.Westergaard (1972) &(1975)
- (2) *ibid* p.147. (1972).
- (3) G.Stedman-Jones quoted in D.Gregory (1978) p.166.
- (4) K.Marx "The Communist Manifesto"
- (5) K.Marx "The German Ideology"
- (6) *ibid*
- (7) W.Reich p.333.
- (8) *ibid* p. 295.

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J.H.Westergaard "The Myth of Classlessness" in R.Blackburn "Ideology in Social Science" (1972)  
J.H.Westergaard "Radical Class Consciousness" in M.Bulmer "Working Class Images of Society" (1975)

# A POLITICAL-ECONOMIC AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CREDIT EXPANSION IN RURAL INDIA<sup>1</sup>

Research Report

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If the 1970's can be characterized as the decade when 'basic needs' became the high minded goal of development agencies and their Third World clients, the 1960's were marked by a less sophisticated ideal. Population growth was identified as the problem, and a pincer movement was aimed at the masses of the underdeveloped countries. One part was population control, the other the 'Green Revolution' in food production to meet still inevitable population growth. It has become clear that the strategy was as much to prevent revolutionary upsurge by the dispossessed as it was to genuinely cater for their needs.

Despite widespread criticism of both aspects in this 'condom and con them' strategy, both are continuing if in modified forms. The shift to 'basic needs' has come not so much out of these criticisms as from a recognition of their failure. This latter strategy has recognised that there is more to slowing birth rate than dishing out free pills, and that the poor do not get their share of the greater amount of gain which is produced around them and by them, but which they cannot afford. 'Basic needs' means changing the socio-economic conditions which encourage parents to have large families, as well as the usual birth control programmes. It also seems to include some attempts at spreading the HYV (High Yielding Variety) seed technology to new areas and to classes of peasants previously untouched by the Green Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

At least, this is what seems to be happening in India. The strategy for rural development indicates a fairly consistent policy which can be traced back to 1969, the year of nationalization of the major banks. This consistency overlays the two major upheavals of the 1970's: Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency (1975-77) - which has however tainted the prospects of population control programmes, and the three years of Janata rule (1977-79).

During a four-month visit in 1979, I researched the question of rural transformation and agricultural change. Specifically, it was an attempt to understand the systems of credit operating in rural India, and to observe and analyse their working in two very different states, Haryana (adjoining Delhi and Punjab) and West Bengal. It was my assumption that rural credit systems would be a useful indicator and possibly measure of the kind of changes desired by the Government or occurring autonomously. The basic hypothesis is that the Indian State is attempting to promote a transition in the countryside from feudal-type to capitalist relations of production.<sup>3</sup> In this task, they are

supported by Western capital and aid agencies.<sup>4</sup> The accomplishment of such a transition ('from above') is by no means simple, principally because the dominant 'feudal' classes and the existing rural social relations present a great deal of resistance to being transformed. This is compounded by the limited resources available to the Government (in terms of its cadres and finance.<sup>5</sup>) The 'feudal' system in India is eminently capable of twisting State initiatives such that their intention is inverted in the interests of the 'feudal' ruling classes. For instance, credit made available by Banks may be borrowed by landlords who then relend at usurious rates of interest to poor farmers and artisans.

This principle hypothesis is supported by a series of others which propose the reasons for the State to attempt such a transition. These can be tested by using data and information gathered for two very different states, Haryana and West Bengal. In addition, it is necessary to analyse the many Government and Reserve Bank of India reports and proposals on rural credit and banking.

These further hypotheses with comments are as follows:

- (i) The most chronic and pressing problem for the Government of India is (in its own terms) to confront the rapid rate of population growth with an increase in food (especially grain) output, while trying to reduce birth rate (the classic 'pincer' strategy).

This appears obvious enough, except for the rather embarrassing situation that the Government has claimed grain surpluses in several recent years (1976-78) while clearly the number of malnourished people has not decreased. This disjuncture is seen as a problem not of the relations of production (ownership of the land, and other means of production, and the appropriation of surplus by a minority), but in terms of problems of 'supply and demand'. Hence the 'pincer strategy' is amended and improved by the "Basic needs" programme. This is designed to include credit to a) provide production inputs for farmers (even small farmers) to produce more and also sell more and b) to provide rural employment for others unable to produce for want of land. (The other components of "Basic Needs" include housing, clean water, basic health care, cheap cloth etc. - these are also related to (ii).)

- (ii) The Government has recognised the need to 'stabilise' rural India politically and socially, and that poverty and exploitation lead to breakdown of law and order, which have included widespread and fairly large scale armed uprisings by peasants in some areas (of which Naxalbari in the late 1960's is only the most famous).

Allied to this is the hypothesis that peasant resistance and rebellion has been provoked much more in areas where certain forms of tenancy and other social relations of a feudal type are strongest. The corollary, that other 'backward' areas are likely to be the side of fresh revolts might present an interesting correlation with the Government strategies outlined here.

This comment is not intended as a denial of acute class conflict,

involving armed clashes, having occurred in other more 'advanced' areas where feudal-type relations of production are weaker, and which are described by many as having 'capitalist agriculture' or being in a state of transition to capitalist agriculture, by means of the 'Green Revolution'. The forms of class struggle in these areas (eg Haryana, Punjab) are different - for instance the farmers boycotting labourers who are united to demand better wages. (Nor would I want to imply that the transition to capitalism is complete in these areas, nor that the forms of class struggle are clearly 'capital versus labour'. The ideological remnants of feudalism distort them still, for instance along caste lines of untouchables (the majority of labourers) against caste Hindus (though there have been signs of the latter unity, which brings together a very wide range of landholding groups from poor to very rich breaking down).

(iii) The Green Revolution strategy has taken hold (been 'successful') only in a few areas of the country, even in terms of the limited number of Districts in which it was initiated in any case.<sup>6</sup> This spatial limitation is only partly explained by the variations in production conditions (especially water supply, so crucial for the high yielding varieties (HYV) of seeds). Since all the Districts chosen were supposed to have adequate production conditions other factors must be important. It is proposed that the principal one is the presence or absence of social relations which are amenable to the introduction of HYV technology. It is necessary to understand the role of peasant proprietors ('owner occupier farmers') as providing the necessary social basis for Green Revolution, in contrast with other areas where feudal-type tenancy relations dominate.

(iv) Dependent on the analysis resulting from the above hypotheses, it is possible to assess the role of Rural Credit. It is proposed that Rural Credit policies have tried to combine aspects of a policy of expanding food production (a 'Green Revolution' component) and of social reform (a 'counter revolution' component).

What this involves is an encouragement of a transition from feudal-type to capitalist relations of production. To increase food output, this requires the promotion/creation of a class of peasant proprietors. To prevent revolution, it involves i) restricting the most blatant and harshest forms of feudal exploitation, oppression and repression,<sup>7</sup> ii) provision of basic needs, and iii) implementation of Social and legal reforms.

(v) It is contended that a crucial conjuncture in the development of Rural Credit strategies occurred in 1969 and focussed on the question of nationalization of the major banks. The end of the 1960's had shown up only some of the weaknesses of the Green Revolution strategy, and the failure of birth control programmes.<sup>8</sup> Armed uprisings had broken out in parts of rural India. Close analysis of this conjuncture is needed, and the links between bank nationalization and rural credit policies established. It is proposed that nationalization at that particular stage was necessary and possible because of the recognition

of the need to combine 'Green Revolution' and 'counter revolution' components in rural credit strategy.<sup>9</sup> Spatially, this has been expressed in the rapid expansion of rural branches of the major banks since 1970. The pattern of this diffusion required analysis.

The 1970's constitute a period of experiment by the credit agencies involved in finding methods for pursuing the two components of the strategy, which are not by any means in harmony. For instance, the 'Green Revolution' component, while ostensibly aimed at a wide range of land-holding farmers is implemented by banks whose criteria for lending are largely the normal ones of feasibility and viability (i.e. guaranteed returns with interest). This may lead to a severe restriction of funds for small and marginal farmers, labourers and artisans, all of whose 'basic needs' are crucial to the 'counter revolution' function of rural credit.

In this context there is therefore a contradiction between the State and the Banks whose duty it is to act as agents of the State in pursuing this strategy. Hence it is necessary also to analyse the modes of implementing policy, the experiments conducted in the 1970's, and especially the Emergency as a phase during which the State was able to dictate to the banks much more. (Witness the creation of Regional Rural Banks exclusively for loans to poorer classes and the enforced rise in number of rural branches.) It is proposed to concentrate on the role of the commercial banks as the tool of State policy.

NOTES

1. Comments very welcome. Please do not quote without consultation. The research project was supported by the Social Science Research Council and Thames Polytechnic.
2. c.f. E. Feder 'McNamara's Little Green Revolution' Economic and Political Weekly (Bombay) 11,14. 1976.  
It is worth noting that World Bank lending for agricultural projects in India is conditional on 50% of the benefit going to 'small and marginal' farmers.
3. I say 'feudal-type' to avoid a dogmatic assumption that what exists in many areas of India is what is known as the feudal mode of production, or a replica of other societies normally labelled as feudal. The whole question of the various modes of production in India has to be begged at this stage, although I hope the study will cover and contribute to it.
4. The relationship of Russian and Eastern European penetration to agrarian policy also needs investigation which cannot be undertaken in this project. Superficially, it appears that their involvement is very little.
5. The revenue problems of the Government are themselves a product of their weak relationship to the rural ruling classes and the States. Taxes and revenues from the agricultural sector are legislated by the individual States, and these are often dominated by landowning interests.
6. The States are divided into Districts numbering about 500 in all. In 1960 sixteen of them were identified as targets for a Green Revolution style approach, the Intensive Agriculture District Programme (IADP). These are still the 'core' areas of HYV development.
7. These include inter alia: moneylending and usury; sharecropping and other feudal types of tenancy relations; bonded labour; control of artisan production and marketing by merchants; distortion of labour markets by caste discrimination; distortions of land markets and land reforms by caste and class discrimination.
8. The object was to expand the Green Revolution. In 1966-67, a 'New Strategy for Agriculture' was adopted in the face of low foodgrain outputs and famine in 1965 and 1966. It was basically an extension of the IADP strategy. Adequate credit provision was seen as essential to fill the 'credit gap' between what would be needed for the HYV technology and what was available through savings and existing credit facilities.
9. This required a degree of compulsion on the banks to establish branches and facilities in rural areas. The conventional capitalist outlook of their directors made them unwilling to risk money in unknown financial and geographic realms, and their staff were unwilling to work and live in the backward countryside.

# RESEARCH NOTE ON WOMEN AND SPACE<sup>1</sup>

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In most discussions of the relationship people have with the environment it is commonly assumed that generalisations can be made across sex, class and race boundaries. 'Man' is substituted for all sections of the total population and the historical reasons for its use have been adequately discussed elsewhere (Morgan, 1972). However I am more interested in showing how these sexist generalisations have led to ignorance of the specific relationship women have with the environment and how subsequent planning and design decisions often militate against their needs. A central argument postulates that the relationship women have with the environment is not only different from men's but that it reflects their oppressed position within society.

All people, it could be argued, 'interact with space according to their historical role in reproduction and production' - this is especially true for specific racial groups, classes and indeed children. But within each of these groups there is a further sexual division of activity and from this a division in use and perception of the surrounding environment. These differing uses of space have long since been recognised by geographers and social scientists on both sides of the Atlantic. Many studies can be quoted on the mapping of differential behaviour patterns (IBG, 1979; Loyd, 1977). These studies have indirectly led to the boom in 'Geography of Women' courses in North American colleges and universities. But critiques of the underlying assumptions on which such research is based have exposed the narrow descriptive nature of this work (Mackenzie, 1978; Foord & Mackenzie, 1980). Without explanation of the reasons why behaviour patterns are different, the 'Geography of Women' will remain incomplete.

In an attempt to move towards explanation in this brief article I will first look historically at women in the family and at work. The mode of explanation I employ is Marxist based on the tenets of historical materialism. Out of such an analysis some of the links between women's dual role in society and their specific relationship with the environment may be drawn. Much of the analysis by reason of space, is limited and developed from my experience in the U.K. but it forms the basis for further work.

## Production, Reproduction and Space - Historical Background

The spatial organisation of the environment has changed over time. That is obvious. It should also be obvious that these changes reflect the continuing development of human productive capacity. For example, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the evolution of the factory system with machinery and steam

power transformed much of Britain. The once rural landscape was rapidly criss-crossed by road, canal and rail networks and dotted with rapidly expanding noisy and dirty industrial towns. Likewise today the spatial impact of technological change is visible in the decline of the older industrial centres and the blossoming of new ones based on the 'new technology' industries (Massey, 1977).

Hand in hand with these changes in technology and associated spatial arrangement of the physical environment, changes occur in the social relations of production; i.e. class relations. Prior to the industrial revolution and the advent of industrial capitalism the feudal system of landlord and peasant predominated. The basic unit of production was the patriarchal family tied to the land. Even with the growth of merchant capitalism, from the 16th century onwards, the family by and large remained as the unit of production. Merchant capitalism primarily reorganised collection of raw materials and the redistribution of finished commodities (for example, in the wool trade which remained dependent on 'cottage weavers' until the early 19th century).

On the other hand the factory system and industrial capitalism separated the home and the workplace and removed ownership and control of the means of production (machinery, tools etc) away from the family production unit as well as breaking the connection with the land. This move, generally into an urban environment, brought about the development of a proletarian class society. Within this urban working class an individual's existence became dependent on an ability to sell their labour power, rather than the 'self-sufficiency' (albeit at a low level of subsistence and high level of landlord control) of the pre-industrial society.

These upheavals in the social relations of production necessarily introduced changes in the social relations of reproduction, which, because they are located inside the family structure, tend to be ignored in histories of society's productive development (Rowbotham, 1973a). However, as Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe have stressed, it is time for a change in emphasis - the family, and women's overall position in society, should be seen as fundamental and no longer relegated to peripheral analysis (Kuhn & Wolpe, 1978).

The sexual division of labour predates capitalist development and the division of labour that takes place in the factory. (Although that too has a sexual component.) Since the beginning of human evolution woman's place in the social structure has taken detrimental account of her biological role in childbirth. In the pre-industrial patriarchal family, the male authority not only controlled female productive capacity but also her body (reproductive capacity) to ensure reliable patrilineal inheritance (Rowbotham, 1973b). The close relationship between property ownership and control of the female body forced women into a subordinate position.

The development of industrial capitalism and the spatial



separation of home and workplace increased tensions within the patriarchal family. Contradictions emerged. The male head of household lost control over the productive capacity of other members of the family although a certain amount of social control was maintained. These contradictions were a product of the changing social relations of production. The early 19th century factory system required a mass of cheap labour - i.e. women and children. This frequently created a reversal in the traditional breadwinner threatening the stability of the patriarchal family. Indeed within many areas of the working class it lost its meaning altogether (Rowbotham, 1973b). However other forces were at work.

### Ideological Countertendencies

Despite the above developments in the working class family, it is important to recognise that the changing social relations of production affected the growing number of middle class women differently. Here the spatial distinction of work and home served to strengthen the patriarchal family and the dependence of bourgeois women on the male head of the household. The 'idleness' of the female members of the family was seen as a sign of status and position. Thus the new middle class ideology and morality of 'a woman's place is in the home' was born.

The new middle class ethics gained increasing influence as the position of working class women in social production became a threat to patriarchy and to the efficient reproduction of the labour force. Reproduction is therefore interpreted not only in the sense of generations of workers but also, in terms of the daily replacement of the potential to work - the creation of stable social conditions of production. The intervention of reformers such as Owen, Salt and Cadbury emanated, in some respect,<sup>2</sup> from concern for the health of the working class in general. (And moral well-being, especially in Owen's case). A healthy environment in which to live and work lent itself to increased productivity. But the State's regulation of hours and conditions of work for women and children was done not only to improve their health but also to re-establish the family, and thus create a more favourable environment for long term accumulation.

Yet as middle class morality began to affect working class women the contradictions of the latter's dual position were increased. The new ideology forced them into the home to rear children, wash and cook, but their economic position and capital's continuing need for cheap labour supply forced them to maintain their position in social production.

Women's dual role in the home and at work has largely arisen out of this contradiction - i.e. capitalism's need for a profitable labour supply as well as its healthy reproduction and stability. But this contradiction has a spatial element and it is on this that I wish to concentrate further research. For the

vast majority of women the separation of workplace from the home has meant, and continues to mean, the pressure of requiring to be in two places doing two different jobs at the same time. The number of women who find themselves in this position is increasing as many middle class women return to work after child-birth due to frustration, boredom, or more likely, economic pressure. In addition the changing structure of production processes in modern capitalist societies has increased the demand for cheap female labour. In short, women are increasingly in a contradictory position straddling reproduction and production and this has a strong spatial as well as social expression.

### The Situation Today

In today's increasingly urban environment of advanced capitalist production these social and spatial contradictions are maintained, predominantly through the perpetuation of family role ideology.

Family role ideology<sup>3</sup> permeates all levels of present day society. It has progressed from the Victorian ethic of empty headed idleness but even with the gloss of legal equality, to many people the first and foremost sacred duty of women remains motherhood. Motherhood (under present conditions) implies a dependence on a family structure or where this is lacking the paternalistic State welfare system. From the cradle female children are schooled for this role (Belotti, 1975). If women can not maintain the delicate balance of home and work one of the two must suffer - either reproduction or areas of social production which have been defined as 'women's work' (mostly menial and domestic related jobs in catering, health and child-care, clothing and assembly industries (Mackie & Patullo, 1977).)

We can show that the space in which women live and work should be viewed differently from men. For women, the home is not a haven of rest and recreation, it is a never ceasing area of labour. The workplace too, rarely holds more than a monotonous dead end job: career prospects and promotion are not often within the grasp of a woman with the burdens of a family or potential child-bearing.

Thus women are in a position of dual responsibility in which only the reproductive side is given recognition by the Capitalist State and sometimes allowed for in the built environment (except in periods of extreme crisis such as wars).

The spatial structure of the urban environment today adheres closely to family role ideology. Housing is overwhelmingly constructed in single nuclear family units. (Alternative co-operatives, hostels or institutions are generally for the unattached young or old.) Suburban estates, whether private or public, are often separated by conscious planning practice from work opportunities. For women who also have family 'responsibil-

ities' this can drastically limit their choice of employment. Provision of shopping facilities in large developments which require a car or bus journey to get to are often not readily accessible to women who only have use of a car at weekends, if at all, or have the additional burden of children and push-chairs. For working women there is always the problem of who will look after the children during working hours. Nurseries and play groups are frequently located in residential areas, likewise with recognised child-minders. Thus women are usually prevented from seeing their children in breaks from work (which would be possible if the accepted location for child-care units was at the factory or office and not in residential areas). The same is true of school age children - primary schools are generally near to home. In the New Towns and suburbs careful planning of school catchment areas keeps children away from main roads and within the residential district. However this assumes that mother will be home in the lunch hour and at 3.30pm when school comes out. Transport routes are also least efficient in residential zones, outside journey to work times - this further isolates women and does not aid the vital journeys women make between shops, schools and work. Medical centres and other public service offices are similarly often located away from the most convenient position for working women, with opening hours like shops which presume women's role in reproduction as their only one.

Therefore, despite the dual role carried out by women, the over-riding expectation for them to be child-minders and housekeepers constrains not only their own perceptions and uses of space but also of those concerned with altering and 'improving' the urban environment. So long as the contradiction remains unrecognised these spatial limitations will continue to further oppress women.

### Conclusion

By placing women's dual role in its historical context of the development of production within society I have tried to show that a specific relationship to the environment was created. Traditional descriptive studies of the 'Geography of Women' fail to grasp the contradictory nature of this relationship as they attempt to place the 'women question' in already established categories of analysis. This is not sufficient as, like the planners and urban designers, they tend to reinforce the expected role of women as housewife and mother.

Work in the family differs from that outside it, in social production. Bourgeois ideology has taught us to believe that reproduction is women's duty and therefore not 'work' in its productive sense. This undermines resistance to the dual role and the oppressive relationship with the environment. However if there is to be true equality between the sexes and freedom from the restrictions of an environment constructed out of a contra-

dictory ideology, we must first recognise the contradictions and then destroy the ideology. This then forms the base of my future research. I would be very pleased to hear any comments or suggestions.

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Notes:

1. A version of this paper was first published in Horizon, Vol. 28 1980, the Journal of the Joint Geographical Association of LSE and Kings College London.
2. However, as Peter Hall points out in Urban and Regional Planning (1973) their motives were not always entirely philanthropic. The change in industrial location was also inspired by cheap rural land as opposed to expensive urban sites. The workforce therefore needed to be housed outside the city and there was some return for investment in the form of rents. (p45).
3. Jackie Tivers ('How the other half lives', 1978, Area 10) has extended the thesis of gender role ideology (i.e. of expected roles within the family and society) to look at how this constrains the general activity patterns and use of space by women - especially those with pre-school age children. She uses Hägerstrand's 'time-space budget' framework of analysis.

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# THE LOCAL STATE : A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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It is the purpose of this article to present a brief review of Cynthia Cockburn's book "The Local State: Management of Cities and People," Pluto Press, London, 1977, and then develop a critique of the concept of the local state, illustrating that it is a more complex phenomenon than Cockburn maintains.

Although this article adopts a critical perspective, Cockburn's work nonetheless represents a welcome contribution to the theory of the state in that it focuses upon a neglected area, namely local government as a microcosm of and extension to the state. In particular she illustrates how the state intervened to stimulate the reorganisation of local government in Britain in the late 1960's and early 70's. The thrust for larger, more 'efficient' structures run on the basis of corporate management principles came from central government and local government officers rather than from elected members, and served to distance the new units from the 'consumers' within their boundaries.

The reasoning behind the corporatist approach lies, as she describes, in the relationships between the state and capital. In her analysis, drawing from the early writings of Marx, three basic ideas are crucial for an understanding of the state and thus local government: 1. that the state is specific to the mode of production, 2. that it is an instrument of class domination, 3. that its characteristic function is repression. The local state functions to aid the state to reproduce the conditions within which capitalist accumulation takes place, especially via the reproduction of labour power which is enhanced by expenditure on housing, education and so on. In the 1960's the twin problems of inflation, with its effect upon state finance, coupled with the 'discovery' of urban poverty (and increasing militancy among those affected by it) required that the local state be made efficient in order that (a) it became more responsive to the centre, and financial changes directed from it, and (b) that its urban policy making process be improved in order to find a solution to urban poverty.

Cockburn graphically illustrates the failure of the latter to cope with the problems of the borough of Lambeth in London, which was badly affected by the property boom, decline in manufacturing and increase in unemployment, redevelopment and so on. Squatting became widespread and the Labour administration failed to deal adequately with this, partly because of the new remoteness between governed and government. She uses cybernetic theory to portray the inward-looking nature of the corporate system which requires better channels and flows of information to work effectively.

This creates a contradiction in the corporate system in local government for it needs more rather than less information from the 'consumers' and thus there developed a desire to encourage the growth of 'neighbourhood councils'

to amplify 'deficient feedback' from the governed population. Central government too was interested in community development for it served to enhance the legitimation of the state by improving the democratic process. Cockburn is particularly useful in her illustration of the linkages and contradictions between corporate planning and community development, showing that the latter makes communities easier rather than more difficult to manage. In Lambeth, for example, "Most neighbourhood councils were, by 1974, satisfying the council's expectations. They kept the council on its toes without treading on them too often." (Cockburn, p.142). Certain problems arose, however, when these toes were trodden upon, and officers exerted pressure to reduce the ability of the neighbourhood councils to 'interfere' in council policy.

Finally, Cockburn argues in her final chapter for the importance of the point of reproduction as "the new terrain of class struggle" and suggests that struggle here is as useful as that at the point of production. It is seen as crucial for it involves not only the workers employed by the state, workers who are becoming increasingly unionised, but also women in the home involved in privatised reproduction. Therefore, struggles concerning local authority services, housing and so on are regarded as being highly germane to the broader struggle against capital, even though these give rise to contradictions of the type to which she refers in her conclusion.

Cockburn's analysis has received considerable publicity, and the concept "local state" is now widely used by geographers and social scientists in discussions concerning the behaviour, internal mechanics and role of local government (Dear and Clark, 1978; Paris and Lambert, 1979; Saunders, 1980), and is indicative of a general trend in structuralist theoretical positions regarding the state in capitalist society. Earlier and subsequent work in this area supports many of Cockburn's conclusions despite theoretical differences. A number of commentators postulate that local government is dominated by the national, and is subordinate to central decisions. Cockburn, for example, writes:-

"The misapprehension lies in the belief that local councils spring from some ancient right of grass roots self-government. This is not the case. They are, and under capitalism have always been, subject to central government." (p.46)

Support for this position can be found in Green (1959) and Robson (1969) who posit that the advent of the welfare state and the growth of centralised planning deprived local government of significance and changed its character to a mere administrative agent of the centre.

Since the mid-nineteenth century the role of the state in the provision and management of welfare has expanded considerably and as Fraser notes paradoxically,

"... the very age of individualism apparently saw the birth of the central administrative state" (73,p.102)

Subsequently the trend towards centralisation has continued and is expressed in a nationally organised system of welfare and social services

supported by statutory responsibilities which governs the provision and consumption of goods and services locally.

However, growth of the Welfare State, while it stimulates the reproduction of labour power and is thus beneficial to capital, also: "poses grave problems to capitalism as a society that exists in contradiction. As Andre Gorz has pointed out, public services are generally a deficit sector of the economy and run counter to the logic of capitalist profitability - and public services which provide for 'collective need' are ideologically opposed to the capitalist mode of individual appropriation." (Spragg and Black, 1978, p.3). Further, neither capital nor the state are monolithic entities: capital exists in various fractions which may be in conflict with each other, while the state is subject to pressures from various interest groups, and the working classes, for example, can obviously exert some pressure upon the government via its elected officials and the T.U.C.

Cockburn's position, we contend, neglects and dismisses too readily local autonomy and underestimates the latitude local government has to interpret national legislation, policy, allocate resources and the overall effect this has on the socio-spatial structure of local administrative areas. The continual growth of the public sector means that the state has had, and is having an increasing impact on the socio-economic well-being/ill-being of the populace and is allocating resources which are distributed through locally administered structures to a consuming clientele. The work of Klein, (1974) Jackson (1976), Prest (1978), Saunders (1980), provides enough evidence to support the increasingly important role of local government expenditure during the post-war period and axiomatically the importance of decision-making and policy interpretation. Further, local variations in the political complexion of councils, managerial attitudes and decisions, and socio-demographic circumstances have been shown to be influential in affecting not only the level and quality of provision, but also the access to, and distribution of indirect wages locally.

A theoretical position which reduces the role of local government to one of a subordinate microcosm of the national fails to recognise the importance of elected officials and officers working within the "local state" and that they are able to articulate inequalities through the distribution of goods and services, particularly collectively consumed resources such as education and housing. Necessarily this must be qualified by what Kirby has termed "the ultimate constraint of the state" (1979, p.35) broad guidelines, such as legislation, circulars, planning programmes and specific limitations in the form of financial controls and the imposition of cost yardsticks. Yet it remains, as Williams (1975, p.117) has pointed out, such constraints affect the scope of decision making rather than determine it. Cockburn's work is important but is too rigidly formulated because of the qualitative and quantitative differences which separate the national from the local.

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## ON THEORISING THE INNER-CITY ECONOMY

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REVIEW/DISCUSSION: Community Development Project Political Economy Collective (1979), The State and the Local Economy. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: CDPPEC in association with Publications Distribution Co-operative.

The National Community Development Project was set up by the Home Office of the British Government in the late 1960s. Based on a 'social pathology' approach to 'urban problems', teams of researchers were dispatched to twelve of Britain's most run-down inner-urban areas and mandated to find "new ways of meeting the needs of people living in areas of high social deprivation" (GDP (1977), Gilding the Ghetto, 4). They were to encourage 'community self-help' schemes and furnish local and central government with detailed 'policy-oriented' research.

But as the project workers tried to carry out their briefs it became increasingly clear that the 'deprived' were not themselves the cause of 'community decay' but were ordinary working-class people living in areas that had long been subject to economic decline and characterised by low wage and high unemployment levels; 'Self-help' schemes mushroomed into active fights by local people against local authority housing, welfare, and - increasingly - employment policies; while at the national level, project workers were getting together, comparing notes and starting to "proclaim that the problems of urban poverty with which they were confronted were the consequence of fundamental inequalities in the economic and political system" (*op. cit.*, 5). A series of 'national' reports was issued by the CDP Information Unit, and it was shortly after the publication of their strident critique of the Labour Government's public expenditure cuts in 1976 (Cutting the Welfare State - Who Profits?) that the Home Office announced the premature closure of the Information Unit 'for financial reasons.'

The local projects were by now coming to an end but continued to issue a stream of reports and to engage in collective inter-project work, of which the most theoretically coherent and influential product was The Costs of Industrial Change (1977). Written explicitly from a marxist perspective, the report presented an historical analysis of industrial capitalist development in five of the project areas, demonstrating that their present economic decline was no aberration but an aspect of uneven development symptomatic of the 'normal' processes of capitalist production/accumulation as a whole.

Meanwhile, the massive rise in unemployment and its visible concentration in inner-city areas - not only among those with now-redundant skills but also among many of the young and black - made it impossible for the state to deny that economic change and the 'problems of the inner city' were inextricably linked. But its responses - injections of cash; subsidies to industry; 'partnership' schemes between developers and different levels of government; job creation schemes etc. - were indicative of a treatment of the older industrial areas as 'special cases', meriting a sympathetic ear for 'special pleading', although this was a trap which the later CDP reports had taken care to avoid (North Tyneside GDP (1978), North Shields: Living with Industrial Change. Final Report no. 2).

The newly-discovered 'economic analysis of urban problems' paid lip-service to the significance of structural change but still located the source of the problem in the process of urban development. The finger of blame was now pointed at planning policy; it was said that the new towns programme of decentralisation had drained skilled jobs away from the inner city, while urban renewal and rigid zoning controls were held responsible for the decline of inner-city small businesses (CDPPEC (1979), The State and the Local Economy).

The regeneration of the 'inner-city economy' was thus acclaimed as a priority at central and local government levels, and the cause of the small businessman taken up enthusiastically in a rhetoric transcending party politics, "so much so that it is almost seen as a social policy" (op. cit., 42). Small business has even been awarded the ultimate accolade of left-trendy acceptability - a weekly page in The Guardian newspaper. A recent article on this page indicates its skilful projection of the 'small firms ideology':

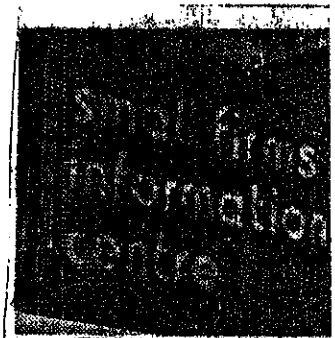
It's now generally recognised that the comprehensive approach to slum clearance and urban redevelopment practised through the 60s and early 70s swept away thousands of small businesses along with their premises.... There has since been a sincere desire on the part of the authorities to undo the damage. Small businesses (or light industry) are by and large allowed to co-exist with housing and shops in a way thought unthinkable only ten years ago. There could be no better time for the small capitalist, with the approval and often assistance of the state, to set himself up (Guardian, Oct. 5th 1979).

# SMALL BUSINESS GUARDIAN

THE GUARDIAN Friday October 5, 1979

## The right place

PREMISES



The 'small firms' policy has brought to the surface some of the confusions of left-wing analysis of economic change and its implication for urban and regional development. For 'core/periphery'-type approaches, focusing with moral fervour on the de-industrialisation of older urban areas and regions as 'caused' by the decisions of trans- and multinational capitals, and bemoaning the attendant loss of 'local control' over employment, lend themselves admirably to the rallying-cry for 'locally-run free enterprise.' Yet, 'realistically', it is argued in other quarters, it is inconceivable that small firms could significantly aid Britain's economic recovery, and there has thus been a lack of serious attention in left-academic circles to recent developments in this area.

The publication of The State and the Local Economy (hereinafter referred to as SALE - an apt acronym) by the newly-formed CDP Political economy Collective is thus particularly welcome. Fortunately the Home Office has been unsuccessful in 'shutting up' the CDPs; this is the first in a series of reports revising, updating and extending their analyses, published in

association with the Publications Distribution Co-operative and thus at last independent of Home Office finance or distribution channels. To quote from the 'blurb' of SALE:

The seven papers presented in this collection look at industrial decline from a variety of standpoints and raise important questions about the nature and restructuring of British industry, and the role of the state, both at national and local levels, in relation to it. The papers also identify a number of problems for the labour movement as unemployment rates continue to rise and the traditional industries of the older urban areas are replaced by low-wage non-unionised workplaces.

Two of the papers provide fascinating case studies of specific 'local state' interventions aimed at reversing industrial decline in London's Wandsworth Borough and the Docklands; a third discusses the prospects for locally-based research networks to assist workers in confronting these developments. The other four papers, while they also draw on locally-gathered material - particularly from Tyneside and East London - are more general and analytical.

In the remainder of this article I shall not attempt a comprehensive review of all the papers in the report - which, I would say without hesitation, deserve to be widely read, and make an important contribution to the job of probing behind the current ideological barrage surrounding the 'inner city economy'. I shall rather concentrate on what seem to be some of the most interesting issues and questions raised in the report and will try to suggest their implications for some by-now-commonly-accepted ways of theorising in marxist urban and regional analysis.<sup>2</sup>

The detailed empirical evidence on inner-city industrial change in the last ten years gathered by the CDPs and summarised in SALE makes quite clear that, far from initiating a new development, the 'small firms' policy is only acknowledging and facilitating changes which have been proceeding apace in the inner-city for some time. Warehousing and other distributional activities - often branches of large companies - have been moving en masse into old engineering works, mills and other sites vacated by older manufacturing concerns, creating small amounts of unskilled and low-wage employment (see e.g. Benwell CDP (1978) Storing up Trouble - West Newcastle. Final Report no. 1). And while capital-intensive high-technology plants locate in 'growth areas', small labour-intensive manufacturing plants have been steadily moving into run-down inner-urban areas. Wages are low, conditions poor and union organisation minimal or non-existent.

How may these developments be understood? If 'advanced monopoly capitalism' is characterised in terms of a linear trend toward the concentration of ownership and control with an extension of capital-intensive technologies into all areas of the economy, the persistence of labour-intensive sectors can only be viewed as anachronistic - backward, inefficient firms (just) surviving by tapping local pools of cheap labour rather than 'modernising' their production. But since these sectors seem to be expanding once more, this conceptualisation clearly won't do. So then, as SALE suggests, "this process could be seen as the development of a 'dual economy' - an approach fostered by the 'space fetishism' of established wisdom on 'the urban' - "except that the two sectors thus distinguished are essentially and symbiotically linked" (SALE, 42).

Several of the papers try to identify these links and their implications. The appearance of a discrete sector of small-scale independent producers struggling bravely to maintain a competitive spirit in the face of pressures by giant monopolies provides a powerful ideological boost for policies to give 'special encouragement' or meet out 'more lenient treatment' to this 'sector' by tax reductions, the relaxation of employment protection and health and safety legislation and planning controls. But this 'sector' is in reality closely integrated with large-scale trans- and multi-national enterprise. While the small firms concerned may not be owned by the giants, their production processes are often completely tied by contract to, for instance, Coca-Cola, I.T.T., Marks & Spencers or I.C.I. The actual labour process of workers in a small textile firm operating in an Asian district of Manchester may be technologically backward, while that of women taking work home may seem 'pre-capitalist', but if the garments thus produced have to be made to a schedule and for a price determined by a major retailer, this is scarcely a 'dual economy'. From the point of view of large corporations such firms can potentially be very valuable in reducing labour costs and cutting out expensive labour disputes.... The more a company is able to diversify its supply, the less vulnerable it becomes to industrial action by its workforce. Furthermore, by indirectly tapping through its small firm partners the supply of cheap labour in the inner city, the big corporation can effectively undermine minimum wage rates negotiated internally with its own unions. The potential scope for developments of this kind is immense, for even the most capital-intensive industries involve processes where only unskilled labour is required" (SALE, 14).

Theoretically, as the paper by Green, Murray and Davis ('The New Sweatshops', SALE, 36-47) argues, it seems to make sense to view these developments from a 'combined and uneven development' perspective. Reaching up for an appropriate set of concepts with which to examine this 'new variant' of spatial unevenness produced by advanced capitalism, it may be tempting to refer to the 'articulation of different modes (or stages of modes) of production'. Indeed, 'freezing' the picture for purposes of analysis, we may see a correspondence between particular spaces and particular modes (or stages of modes) of production, and specifically we may wish to interpret the inner city today as a 'subordinate sphere' containing subordinate modes or stages of modes. At first sight such a conceptualisation seems most attractive and highly appropriate in the light of Tory proposals to create 'free enterprise zones' within inner areas of major cities, which would no longer receive state cash handouts but would be subject to the waiving of all but minimal planning and health and safety regulations, in the hope of encouraging "Hong-Kong-style prosperity" (sic!) (Guardian, August 27th 1979). †

Yet, on closer examination, the 'articulation' perspective - at least in this context - lends itself to a new form of fetishism of (urban) space. The 'inner city' once again becomes a fixed spatial box, the subject of analysis. We take its existence as a 'subordinate sphere' as given; and, by pushing this static description into motion in order to generate theory about processes and tendencies, we arrive at the conclusion which Green, Murray and Davis (loc. cit.) reach (by a slightly different route - a 'development of underdevelopment' perspective), namely that

(t)he creation and perpetuation of 'colonies' of low-wage labour inside Britain will ensure a ready supply of cheap labour for the small capital sector: (SALE, 44). ‡

# Ministers revive Howe plans for free enterprise zones

Aug 24<sup>L</sup> 1979  
Canadian

## Thatcher rules out cash for inner cities

Guardian, Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 1979

# Rolling back the frontiers of government

Canadian, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> 1979

David Hencke assesses the impact spending cuts could have on Ministries, with services taken for granted by the public no longer considered Government business

But while unemployment levels may be highest in inner-urban areas at present, and the reserve army at its most visible there, this fact provides no basis for theorising that the present pattern of spatial concentration will continue. Indeed, there are strong suggestions to the contrary as high levels of unemployment become far more generalised and large corporations open new branches in rural areas or new towns, only to close them within a few years as part of their process of 'rationalising' plants geographically and functionally (see e.g. Community Action, 45, 1979 for a case study of Courtaulds (textiles) activities in this respect). Nor should we assume that the inner areas of cities will remain viable as 'labour reserves' as they <sup>receive</sup> declining levels of state support in the form of social security payments and services of various kinds.

My criticisms of this theoretical perspective should not be taken as relying on pejorative 'labelling' or a pedantic rather than pragmatic approach to theory. It seems to me that, by distracting from the processes which both create and dissolve particular 'subordinate spheres' and instead focusing only on conditions within the 'spheres' themselves at present and projecting these same conditions and spheres into analysis of the future, such a perspective might inhibit the scope of the strategies to be considered viable in confronting developments like 'free enterprise zones.'

Yet despite these problems, Green, Murray and Davis use Raphael Samuel's discussion of uneven economic development in the 19th century ('Workshop of the World', History Workshop Journal, Spring 1977, 6-73) together with some of Marx's comments on "modern domestic industry" (Capital Volume 1, ch. 15, sec. 8) to point the analyses in SALE in some very interesting directions:

Capitalist growth was not synonymous with mechanisation, both because small producers also expanded their production in many sectors, and because big firms were involved in various forms small-scale and labour-intensive production as well as in factory industry (SALE, 43).

They point to empirical similarities between these 19th century developments and "tendencies observable today" - but while they then go on to characterise these tendencies in terms of the structural development of underdevelopment, I would suggest, in the light of preceding comments, that it may prove more illuminating to refer to some of Marx's own discussions. In the 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production' (Capital Volume 1, Appendix), Marx distinguishes between the formal subsumption of labour under capital - "where the labour process becomes the instrument of the valorisation process... of capital" (op. cit., 1019) but where the "actual mode of working" was "developed by different and more archaic modes of production" (op. cit., 1021) - and the real subsumption of labour under capital, in which the introduction of machinery brings "a complete (and constantly repeated) revolution ... in the mode of production, in the productivity of the workers and in the relations between workers and capitalists" (op. cit., 1035); "the entire real form of production is altered and a specifically capitalist form of production comes into being" (op. cit., 1025). Whereas formal subsumption necessitates lengthening of the working day in order to create surplus value in its absolute form, in real subsumption "the process of production has become the process of capital itself" (op. cit., 1020), i.e. the whole process of production itself both produces relative surplus value and separates producers from their products.

Far from establishing a structural tendency for the development of underdevelopment, Marx's analysis here suggests a general tendency toward the real subsumption of labour under capital, as the "merely formal subsumption begins to become differentiated within itself... in terms of the scale of production (op. cit., 1022), while "an economic relationship of supremacy and subordination develops, and "labour becomes far more continuous and intensive, and the conditions of labour are employed far more economically, since every effort is made to ensure that no more (or rather even less) socially-necessary labour-time is consumed in making the product." (op. cit., 1026). Where a 'backward sector' is maintained, "for the most part it is based on small capitalists who differ only slightly from the workers in their education and activities" (op. cit., 1027). Alternatively, the direct producers may be nominally independent but dependent on merchants for the sale of their products and money-lenders for access to the means of production:

Where this relation repeats itself within the bourgeois economy, it does so in the backward branches of industry, or in such branches as still struggle against their extinction and absorption into the modern mode of production. The most odious exploitation of labour still takes place within them, but without the relation of capital and labour carrying within itself any basis whatever for the development of new forces of production... (C) capital still appears materially subsumed under the individual workers or the family of workers... What takes place is exploitation by capital without the mode of production of capital" (Grundrisse, 853).

Without doubt, 'backward sectors' embodying these processes exist in the inner city today, the products not of 'immanent tendencies' of capitalist development but of historically-specific circumstances. Examples of the first instance which spring to mind include small businesses run by Asian immigrants in what have become predominantly Asian districts; of the second case, family businesses struggling to survive by borrowing money for new equipment or larger premises, or - more controversially -

'new wave' petty-producers, even workers' co-ops, forced into collective self-exploitation of labour in order to remain viable. But, as The State and the Local Economy demonstrates, these are no longer the 'dominant' forms of production in inner-city areas. It could perhaps be said that the valorisation processes which drive them or control them are subordinated to the 'specifically capitalist valorisation process.'<sup>9</sup> The latter, which is the driving force behind, the motivation for the behaviour of large corporations today, can still institute and 'rule' labour processes where labour is subsumed only formally. Again, Marx is helpful:

To the two forms of surplus value there correspond two separate forms of the subsumption of labour under capital, or two distinct forms of capitalist production. And here too one form always precedes the other, although the second form, the more highly developed one, can provide the foundations for the introduction of the first in new branches of industry" ('Results...', Capital Volume 1, 1025).

If we bear in mind additionally that capitalist development also entails an increasing specialisation of function through greater division of labour within and between labour processes in production and circulation, this may perhaps help us to develop a more ~~more~~ adequate theorisation of current developments in the inner city. We may characterise the (apparently) renewed expansion of homeworking and the development of zones dominated by labour-intensive activities with minutely-divided labour-processes not as separate 'backward spheres' but in terms of their intimate connections to the capitalist production/accumulation process as a whole. Such links are suggested empirically in SALE, but unless they are theoretically integrated into the rest of the analysis, we may lose sight of their significance. For the 'new sweatshops' and domestic industries are not regressions to a 19th century style of production. They are assembling, in minutely-divided labour-processes, some performed in the home, components for (to take one instance mentioned to me) the most sophisticated technologies, like radar at Plessey International. These labour processes themselves, and therefore those people who engage in them, are not marginal or peripheral but central to the development of advanced capitalism.

*Guardian, Feb. 6th 1979*  
**Major firms to aid the small man**  
**STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS**

24  
*Guardian Oct 31st 1979*  
**Look after the workers**  
**EMPLOYEES**

**Prior's backward move**

**ROBERT TAYLOR**, our Labour Correspondent, analyses the Government's new proposals on labour law. *Observer, Sept 30th 1979*

Taking now the case of homeworking and small workshop production, the way this is conceptualised vitally affects what we may consider to be 'appropriate political responses.' If we see these forms merely in terms of 'backwardness' it would make sense to direct all struggles toward their incorporation into the 'factory system' to reduce the isolation of workers and facilitate trade union organisation to improve their wages and working conditions. And we would be very pessimistic about the renewed invasion of home and 'community' by the valorisation process of capital, since this takes particular advantage, as SALE points out, of the many women who are forced into accepting poor wages and conditions in return for the flexible hours and home-working that such firms often provide, and which allow a woman worker to combine a paid job with her family commitments" (SALE, 46).<sup>10</sup>

But the analysis which I have suggested here points to other possibilities as well. We are no longer talking about an undifferentiated 19th century 'factory system'. Would the shift of homeworkers and those in small workshops into larger Hong-Kong style sweatshops necessarily provide greater prospects of organisation? More to the point, perhaps, what kinds of organisation could be developed? On the other hand, while the 'freedom' from direct or total control over the actual labour process experienced by those not subject to the rhythms of factory life is accompanied by multiple levels of exploitation and oppression of workers - at considerable savings to capitalists - this situation may also yield the real possibility of organising the labour process itself in a different way, not just in its form but in its purpose. The setting-up of a textile homeworkers' co-operative among Asian women in Manchester<sup>11</sup> marks a small but not insignificant step in this direction.

If such developments are to become more than isolated islands, vulnerable to engulfment by the 'rule of capital', the nets of organisation must obviously cast wider. For instance, the organisation of women workers into community co-operatives necessitates the provision of neighbourhood child-care facilities and the re-organisation of the division of time spent in domestic labour among family members. As the report puts it:

[t]he new forms of organisation that develop must be able to encompass such apparently 'non-work' issues, which themselves underline the weaknesses of many workers in their work situation. (SALE, 46).

But the erosion of the geographical and functional separations of home and wage-workplace for some groups of workers may perhaps work in favour of the creation of stronger links between home- and community-based and wage-workplace-based struggles in a wider sense, by forcing some serious re-evaluations of the breadth and scope of issues around which trade unions organise and to which they give active support. Admittedly it is more difficult to see how workers who make micro-electronics components in inner-city areas could organise into viable co-operatives.... while, for instance, there are counter-pressures to the progressive possibilities brought by the encouragement of self-help housing and the legalising of the 'informal' sector of the construction industry, such as Tory plans to subvert the principles of housing co-ops by allowing outright ownership by individual members....

Yet the purpose of these speculations is not to suggest here and now that we can work out an all-embracing 'programme' for confronting the latest developments as they appear in inner-urban areas. I have merely tried to suggest the limitations of attempting to squeeze such developments



into theoretical packages taken from shelves labelled 'Marxist geography' or 'urban and regional political economy' or 'development', and of uncritically seeking to apply the political strategies implied by these theories (which, <sup>associated</sup> may have been developed in an entirely different political climate). We may perhaps get a more useful 'feel' for how to not only respond to but also to reshape these trends by developing our theoretical perspectives along the more fluid paths which I have very roughly mapped out here. The greatest value of The State and the Local Economy may then be that, on careful reading, it highlights the gulf between the processes of careful documentation of empirical developments and the capacity of 'established' theories to explain and to actively confront them in a way that it is impossible to ignore.

### Footnotes

1. Stuart Holland, whose book Capital versus the Regions (1976) is the most sophisticated among such analyses, was an economic adviser to the Labour Government, and is now a Labour MP.
2. My comments and ideas here substantially - in some places almost entirely - owe their existence to discussions with a number of people, at varying levels of abstraction, in recent months, although I take full responsibility for the flaws and limitations of these notes. I would be very happy to hear from anyone else with whom they might strike some kind of chord.
3. For a good discussion of such conceptualisations see Foster-Carter, A. (1978), The Modes of Production Controversy, New Left Review, 107, 47-77.
4. Far from being one of the wilder excesses of 'Thatcherism', this proposal, and the <sup>associated</sup> idea of legalisation the so-called 'informal economy' in the construction business in conjunction with the encouragement of 'self-help' schemes of various kinds, is attracting serious interest in the current Social Science Research Council Workshop on Employment/Unemployment.
5. Note that this argument also leads back into an analytically separate consideration of the 'small-capital sector' and thus slides toward a 'dual economy' perspective again.
6. All references to Capital Volume 1 refer to the Penguin (1976) edition.
7. Cf. Marx's comments on merchants' and users' capital in Capital Vol. III.
8. For an excellent discussion both of the pitfalls and the prospects of workers' coops, see Conference of Socialist Planners Newsletter, April 1978, which also contains some interesting notes on small firms. (This may still be available from Box CSP, 100 Whitechapel, LIVERPOOL L1 6EN).
9. Compare e.g. Marx's discussions of valorisation, Capital 1, 302-4; 425, with the discussion of subordinate processes quoted above, Grundrisse, 853-4. I have borrowed the term 'specifically capitalist valorisation process' directly from an as-yet unpublished paper by Alan Mabin.
10. Tory plans to exempt firms employing less than 20 workers from employ-



# NOTES ON THEORY AND OBSERVATION IN MARXISM

## A CRITICAL REVIEW OF 'CAPITAL AND LAND: LANDOWNERSHIP BY CAPITAL IN GREAT BRITAIN' BY DOREEN MASSEY AND ALEJANDRIA CATALANO 1978

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There has been considerable criticism recently over the failure of marxists working in planning and related fields to undertake substantive empirical research. Undoubtedly part of the problem has arisen from confusion over what the relationship should be between theory and observation in a marxist analysis. Massey and Catalano's (M&C hereafter) book is one of the most rigorous and systematic recent attempts at a theoretical and empirical analysis in the field to have been carried out from a marxist perspective. As such it is a mine of information on the problems of carrying out empirical research from within a marxist theoretical framework. In fact the care and clarity with which the authors have defined the relation between theory and observation in the book, (the second chapter, for instance, is a clear attempt at outlining the theoretical framework to be used in their analysis), particularly lends itself to the purposes of mining this information.

The aim of these notes is to examine this relationship as it exists in the book. They will attempt to answer several questions; what are M&C's beliefs as to the nature and role of their theory in their analysis? What are the consequences of those beliefs for their analysis? Have they successfully related their framework to the substantive empirical content of their book? What can we learn from their experience as to the nature of marxist theory and its use in empirical analysis? In answering these questions the relationship between theory and observation in M&C's book will be contrasted with E.P.Thompson's views on the nature of marxist theory expressed in his essay "The Poverty of Theory" (Thompson 1978). No discussion of these questions can take place before we have understood the purpose and context of the book, for it is these that form and determine the content of the analysis.

### Purpose and Context

The book arose out of the recognition of a lack of understanding, and of misunderstanding on the 'left', of the land and property question, made painfully evident by the affective absence of appropriate political action during the property boom years of the early 70's. The book is thus an attempt to provide, from a marxist perspective, a general understanding of the significance of the 'land problem', and to account historically for the various forms it takes. From this theoretical standpoint it must also have as its ultimate objective the informing and enabling of appropriate political strategy on the 'left'. Both the theory of Marxism and the interdependent objective of informing political strategy must have been critical determinants of the form and content of the book. It is important in attempting to answer the questions posed, to understand the particular nature of M&C's theory and its relation to their empirical analysis. We must be careful in developing this

understanding to avoid making assumptions about this relationship from the way in which the book is physically organised. Thus it would be false to assume that because the theoretical chapters in the book precede the empirical research that theory somehow precedes observation in the authors understanding of the land question. It is more accurate to conceive of their understanding as being based on the development over many years of a mutually reciprocating dialogue between theory and observation, within which, nevertheless, each of these do play particular roles. Partly we may discern these roles from the statements the authors make about them, partly by examining the contents of the various chapters of the book to distinguish the determining and the determined ideas.

#### Relation between Theory and Observation

To explain their choice of theory M&C assert at the beginning of chapter two that:

"It is clear, even from the descriptive discussion so far, that what is needed is a theoretical framework which will allow the analysis of private landownership in its structural and historical context." (M&C 1978 p.22)

From this statement M&C go on to argue for Marxism as the appropriate theory. There is no critical evaluation of the basic tenets of Marxism, nor does the purpose of their subsequent empirical analysis ever appear as the validation of these tenets. On the contrary they are accepted 'a priori'. Indeed, insofar as they shaped the content of the 'descriptive discussion so far' (i.e. chapter 1 of the book) by, for instance, the use of the concept of 'structures', M&C also shaped the decision over the choice of theory. Given that Marxism offers a specifically socialist tool of analysis which helps place the land question in its structural and historical context, the choice involved an assessment of Marxism's value, as a very general tool for political economic enquiry, for the more specific task of analysing one element of its object of concern - the land question.

This 'a priori' adoption of Marxism as a general theory is valid insofar as it is impossible for every book which adopts a theoretical construct to spell out the full ontological and epistemological presuppositions and justifications of that construct. Yet if we accept Keat & Urry's (1975) characterisation of Marxism as a realism which shares with Positivism a conception of science as empirically based, the imposition of that theoretical construct on a particular field of concern imposes on the analyst the major responsibility of diligently and explicitly avoiding the trappings of theoreticism - of letting theory determine observation. The relation between theory and observation must be clearly and correctly identified and controlled. How do M&C do this?

Having set their context and purpose, and chosen Marxism as their theory, M&C assert that:

"Before we can turn to empirical analysis, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework which will both enable a more precise formulation of the questions at issue and provide an overall approach and set of concepts for use in investigation." (M&C 1978 p.21)

The assertion of theory and the carrying out of an extensive theoretical discussion of the land question, before any substantive empirical analysis, and therefore essentially in abstract from the real world, has consequences both for the relationship between theory and observation and for the type and direction of the analysis which follows the theory. Why does the discussion follow this order and what are the consequences for M&C's empirical analysis?

Essentially Marxism takes the more apparent and observable features of social life to be explicable in terms of underlying structures. They can be comprehended by the discovery of the causal mechanisms central to each structure. These mechanisms are characterised in terms of the relationships between a small number of theoretical entities - such as the different modes of production co-present within any particular social formation. For Marx the causes and effects of social phenomena are aspects, or applications of the structural relationships between the elements. Marx's theoretical purpose was to produce descriptions of the structure of different modes of production. However no such mode is ever found in a pure form. Different modes are always co-present within any actual society, although if the capitalist mode is dominant, we will characterise that society as capitalist. It follows from the above, as Keat & Urry (1975) show, that social analysis consists of at least two component parts; the elucidation of the internal structure of each mode of production, a theoretical activity involving the positing of models of relevant causal mechanisms and structures; and the analysis of the ways in which different modes of production are co-present within a given society and the social and political consequences that follow. The first part does not, however, precede the second in the sense that it can be conducted entirely in the abstract. Whilst it is essentially atheoretical activity its purpose is the searching of the relevant causal mechanisms in the real world and so must always be firmly rooted in the reality that is being analysed. M&C are aware of this. Their second chapter is in essence an attempt to establish this first component part. However, the fact that it precedes the substantive empirical investigation of the book, does not mean that the discussion is carried on entirely in the abstract. As M&C state "the book is concerned to analyse the nature of the incorporation into the present British social formation of the system of private ownership of land."(p.31). The fact of the existence of such ownership is seen to have produced effects on the development of the dominant mode of production. Chapter two is concerned to theoretically establish the causal mechanisms and structures which are significant to the British situation. Thus they identify the British social formation as being characterised by a structure dominated by the capitalist mode of production in co-existence with elements of previously dominant feudal and other pre-

capitalist modes. They see the social formation in a continuous state of transition with the dominant structure operating to redefine and co-ordinate other elements and substructures in the social formation in relation to itself. There are two major restructuring effects in this process:

- "1. The incorporation of the previous mode of production... into a social formation dominated by capitalism, and the 'realignment' of the elements and relationships of feudalism to the dominant structure.
2. The articulation of the capitalist mode of production in the context of and in relation to structures and elements of previous modes of production." (M&C 1978 p.25)

It is these kinds of transformations that M&C wish to analyse in relation to the land question in Britain. To analyse the land question we are provided with a further set of concepts, the principal one being that of 'rent'. The nature of rent is seen as pertaining to the dominant mode of production in which it exists. Under feudalism rent existed as the direct means for the expropriation of surplus value by the ruling class and thus arose directly out of the condition of exploitation of labour. The transition to capitalism has operated to gradually redefine and co-ordinate the nature of rent in relation to itself. In capitalism, surplus labour is not extracted as rent but in value form in the process of commodity exchange. Thus M&C see rent as no longer technically necessary economically to the central form and relations of production - it is, they say, "the economic category of a relation of the distribution of surplus value." It results historically from the conditions of the transition to capitalism and its own precondition, the system of private land ownership, was in fact a condition enabling that transition.

This basic theoretical understanding of the nature of society and of rent and private landownership as elements of it (whilst drawing empirically on the British context for its own formulation), attempts to entirely precede and in fact set the context and directions of the following empirical analysis. The danger of such a sequential analysis is of course that observation is only carried out insofar as it proves the preceding analysis, in which case the analyst has begun climbing the treacherous Althusserian road where history "hardly exist other than as the application of a theory...which does not even exist in any real sense." (Althusser 1970 p.110)

Have M&C managed to avoid this road? In the rest of this paper I will argue that in part they have, but unfortunately only by failing to relate their analysis and theory as they would have liked to. However, I will also argue that insofar as they have successfully related their theory and analysis in their own terms, they have fallen into the trap of mechanistic use of theory, despite the great pains they have ostensibly taken to avoid it.

of landownership which 'differ from each other in terms both of the relationships of landownership involved and of the role of that landownership within the overall structure of that social formation.' 'The prime aspect' they say 'of this structural distinction relates to... the nature of the insertion of the economic ownership of land into the overall political, ideological and economic position and function of the groups'. (p.63)

These three examples show the way in which their theory attempts to guide their analysis in the book. In the first two, where in fact M&C are studiously attempting to avoid theory determined history, the concern of observation they feel should remain on the one hand with fractions and on the other with structural class relations and contradictions. Thus it is their intention that their empirical investigation should remain at the generalised level of the concepts which are provided by their essentially macro-level theory of Marxism. In the last example above they proceed to theoretically determine the "position and function of the groups" (which are incidentally former landed, industrial and financial landownership) and on the basis of these formalised types, organise the rest of the book. Thus chapters four, five, and six are entitled according to these types, so that even before we have looked at the reality of these types their differences and significances have already been codified in terms of determinations, structures, functions and so on. All of this would seem to inevitably lead to an analysis where historic process becomes frozen - its movement only being able to take place within the close field of the pre-given structure, and at the level of the concepts provided by the theory.

#### Historical and Empirical Analysis

The empirical chapters looking at the three groups of landownership are preceded by chapter three entitled an "Overall View of Landownership and Rent", which seeks to give a preliminary overview of the distributional effects of private landownership in the U.K.. In this chapter the problems of attempting to quantitatively assess the totality of the distribution of rental income in a way that illustrates their theory, by the use of empirical data recorded for quite different purposes, is painfully evident. Rather than allowing a whole set of discrete facts to reveal through disciplined historical enquiry the kinds of relations they are seeking to establish, they impatiently force into shape those facts by a number of adjustments and reservations. The overall impression is not one of getting a feel for the global reality of the U.K. land question, but rather of the desocialising and de-historicising of the real world. By their attempts at forcing facts to reveal the forms they are seeking to establish, the real content of those facts are frozen and therefore lost. M&C partly acknowledge the stasis and superficiality of their quantitative analysis when they state that,

"information simply on the proportion of rent within the economy, whilst it may give some indication of the distributional effects, is insufficient for a proper appraisal of private land ownership and rent on the structure and production of landownership."  
(p.54)

### Problems of Theoreticism

In fact it is obvious that M&C are very aware of the problems of theoreticism. Much of chapter two of their book is concerned with the demolition of certain areas of marxist theory in relation to the land question. Two examples of this are their attempts to establish on the one hand, whether one can theoretically deduce a coherent fraction of landed capital, and on the other, whether different forms of rents can be seen as mechanistically generated economic categories deducible from the operation of the capitalist mode of production. In both of these instances M&C criticise previous analysts for simply theoretically assuming that, firstly a fraction of landed capital existed (from which they could theoretically draw a number of further conclusions as to the structural position and function of that fraction without ever looking at a historically specific context), and secondly, that differential rent was deducible 'out of time' as it were. In both instances they conclude that the precise nature of any given landownership relation must be established by empirical (which does not mean non-theoretical' they stress (p.29)) investigation. So it appears that M&C have evaded the mechanistic trap, that they intend to let history speak for itself, albeit through the mouthpiece of their theory. Yet the impression is misleading for their conclusions on these two matters have only altered the extent of the mechanistic role their theory takes in their analysis. They have not avoided the essential relation between theory and empirical analysis which they criticise. This relation, which they attempt to impose on the book, is based on the initial presupposition that theoretical formulation is at a higher level than empirical analysis, that what is needed is a theory of the land question followed by empirical analysis, rather than, as Thompson would argue, a theoretically informed knowledge where theory and observation are always inextricably interlinked. So the theory, for all the dismantling of bits of its component parts, does remain to precede historical analysis, and attempts to very rigidly determine the form and direction of that analysis. In relation to the above two examples M&C conclude in the first instance that;

"if the existence of ground rent is not sufficient basis for the existence of a landed fraction of capital then the actual constitution of land - ownership in Great Britain must be established."(p.53)

and in the second that;

"if the forms of rent relations cannot be assumed outside the specified relations of landownership and since the concern of the present inquiry is with the structural class relations and contradictions, the empirical investigation should focus on relations of landownership rather than detailed categories of rent." (p.53)

At the end of chapter three, M&C theoretically establish what they term to be 'three structurally differentiated categories'



They go on to argue, as I have cited above, that to establish the nature of these effects they have to look at the historical developments of their three categories of landownership, defined in terms of their structurally distinct economic, ideological and political positions and functions within the social formation. Yet the following three chapters on Former Landed Property, Industrial Landownership and Financial Landownership are remarkable for the conspicuous absence of these types of terms and indeed of the whole theory which has kept such a tight control of the proceedings up to that point. Suddenly as if in recognition of the fact that their theoretical constructions of the land question afford no terms for the writing of the history of that question, all of the terminology of chapter two is abandoned. In place of structures, positions and functions of real organisations and individuals like the Church and the Duke of Westminster, owning real farms and urban estates with fiscal and administrative problems. The actual development of those organisations, the way in which their landholdings grow and decline, the actual meaning for the individuals and groups concerned of that land in terms of cultural and political values become released from the theory which was supposed to explain them, and its analogies of structures, fractions and so on derived from mechanical and organic mechanism. History is reintroduced as open ended and indeterminate process, whose structure is not pre-given but protean. Further more the human agent is reintroduced into history. The restructuring effects which their theory saw as resulting as a matter of objective necessity from the contradictions between the capitalist and feudal modes of production, and to which therefore human volition and practice could theoretically contribute nothing, all of a sudden become the actions of groups of individuals reaction intelligently but within their class conditioning. The historical resultant becomes the outcome of contradictory class interest and forces, an outcome in which human agency, whilst often giving rise to an involuntary result, does make its own history, and does not simply exist to involuntarily fill 'places' and 'functions' on political, ideological and economic levels.

Thus, to take an example at random; the three factors M&C prefer as leading to the restructuring of the property industry and its finances in the late sixties and early seventies are declining development opportunities, pressures for increased rental participation from the financial institutions, and taxation. In all of these factors M&C introduce the conscious volition of the individuals and groups running the industry. With the supply of office development catching up the demand from the tertiary sector, whose previous fast growth was slowing down, the property industry began to seek other areas in Europe and Australia. Similarly because of the raw deal the financial institutions began to realise they were getting from simply investing in the sector, they began to demand a larger share of both initial rental income and subsequent increases. All of these developments, and the actual restructuring of the industry are seen as coming from the development of economic contradictions, and in that sense the marxist tenet that the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary, holds true.

The apparent shedding, in this historical analysis, of the theoretical reius which had threatened to control it might support a hiatus between theory and empirical research in the book. This would be a misunderstanding of the nature of the theoretical chapter of the book. Given their attempt at pointing out the very approximate nature of the theoretical concepts which previous social scientists had taken as predeterminable, the chapter can be seen as not so much a framework constructed to be filled with empirical material, but more the partial demolition of a past framework ill-suited to the holding of that material. The reconstruction has been a slow one where empirical material has as far as possible acted as its own framework, but whose shape has been guided by the insights gained by the theory of the past. Understood like this one should not be surprised by the invisibility of the theory in the empirical chapters, for visible theory there, is, on the contrary, unnecessary.

Yet this escape of their historical analysis from theory of the land question is not, unfortunately, total. To an extent the theoretical structure they had provided themselves with, does constrict their analysis on three levels: Firstly by predetermining, theoretically, divisions which are empirically very nebulous, by determining secondly the level at which the analysis proceeds, and thirdly the areas of interest of the analysis. In the first case we have seen how, for instance, M&C in chapter three theoretically define "three structurally differentiated categories" of land ownership, according to which they entitle their following three chapters which serve to empirically investigate their actual natures in the British context. The outcome, in their historical chapters, of this artificial formalising of types prior to observation is a failure to recognise in the empirical analysis the considerable blurring of the boundaries of these types in the real world. For instance, increasingly industrial and financial landownership are merging both through the sale and leaseback mechanism, and because many firms have internalised their accounting of landownership. By virtue of M&C's separation into two chapters of these two groups of landownership, they fail to adequately cover this blurring of boundaries. One is left with the impression that they are the very distinct entities in the real world, that M&C suggest they are theoretically.

With regards to the level at which the analysis proceeds, whilst on the whole avoiding the use of their theoretical terminology, as we have seen, M&C, in their historical analysis, have largely remained at the very general level represented by that terminology. Implicit seems to be the assumption that if their empirical research does not serve to illustrate their precoded categories of structural class relations, contradictions and so on, it is wrong. The result has been a failure to deal, except in the most abstract theoretical way, with the actual content of the landownership question at the micro-level; land prices, transfer mechanisms, how the process actually works as human practice. It may be argued that the book is an attempt at a global perspective, yet the loss of micro-level detail has not been effectively traded-off against the possibility of a complete overall view, for excluded from the analysis are both the state's

landholdings and owner-occupation housing. This is despite their proven significance established by M&C in chapter three, both in quantitative terms with regard to the proportion of rental income and total acreage attributable to these sectors, and in terms of their more general structural importance in the social formation. The reason for this omission may again be seen to lie with the theory and its object of interest. Marxism exists as a critique of the capitalist mode of production, its concepts are principally related to that mode and its relations of production, its very purpose politically is the overthrow of that mode. An analysis of the land question by the use of the theory does not reveal owner occupation housing and the state's landholdings as of great significance in terms of structural changes in the land question, and so these areas are largely omitted from the analysis. (though the state's role in the regulation of the land market system always enters into the analysis. Indeed, the last chapter on the Community Land Scheme attempts to illustrate the futility of that legislation in attempting to bring about fundamental changes in the land market system.) So that though history, in the book, is not written with the theoretical categories, and those categories do not give sufficient cause for the historical outcomes that M&C describe, they nevertheless do determine which history is written and which is excluded. Of course all histories are partial. Thompson maintains that this partiality should always be the result of a dialogue between disciplined historical investigation and possible insights provided by theory. If one accepts this view, then M&C's theory in structuring the partiality of their analysis must be considered in the above respects to have overstepped its function.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### LUCHAS DE CLASES POR EL DERECHO A LA CIUDAD

(Class Struggles for the Right to the City)  
GRUPO DE ESTUDIOS JOSÉ RAIMUNDO RUSSI. EDITORIAL OCHO DE JUNIO  
BOGOTÁ 1975.

Marxist research in Latin American urban issues has recently been dominated by three areas of enquiry: The class structure of the 'barrio' which leads to questions of the revolutionary potential of urban social movements; the role of the state in regulating the anarchy inherent in capitalist urbanisation which leads to, among other things, questions of the politisation and cooptation of urban social movements; and thirdly the articulation of different modes and forms of production which leads to questions of the structural limitations of 'informal' employment strategies and the self-help building movement.

This excellent little book analyses the urban struggles that took place between 1972-1974 in Bogotá, Colombia. It incorporates an analysis and critique of an urban social movement that developed in the eastern part of the city in opposition to an integrated planning project whose centrepiece was a six-lane motorway to be built between the northern bourgeois suburbs and the C.B.D.. The intellectual progenitor and principal financier of the project was the IDB, who, in the Napoleonic fashion typical of U.S. Imperialism, conceived of it as a pilot programme for integrated planning projects for the whole of Latin America. The history and final emasculation of both the project and the defence committees offers a fascinating and instructive account of the strengths and weaknesses of such movements.

Though fully aware of the complex class structure of the areas to be affected by the motorway, the authors quite rightly focus on the class location of that great mass of the population involved in petty commodity production and exchange in order to investigate the revolutionary potential of the urban social movement. This class they characterise as a 'sub-proletariat' and it consists of all those who, though they do not generate surplus-value, do contribute to the general process of production, as well as acting as a permanent army of the unemployed and an industrial reserve army of labour. The consciousness of this class is ridden with contradictions: though deeply penetrated by bourgeois ideology, it can arrive at a revolutionary consciousness in the course of local struggles only as long as these are under the political direction of a working class revolutionary party. This represents a considerable distancing from Marx's unfavourable comments on the lumpen-proletariat and moves towards a Fanon/Maoist

reassessment of the revolutionary rather than reactionary potential of this class. Some doubt, however, can be expressed about the kaleidoscoping of the unemployed, the industrial reserve army, and mass of petty commodity producers into one class, and in general the authors are more clear about what the sub-proletariat isn't rather than what it is. The precise differences between a proletariat, sub-proletariat, and petty bourgeoisie are not dealt with, the problem of contradictory class locations is not discussed, and serious doubt can be expressed about the inability of at least a large part of this class to produce surplus-value.

The book, however, does dispell a very common myth - undoubtedly the product of marginality theory - that low income settlements are homogeneous in their class composition. Not only were there large occupational differences within the eastern zone - blue and white collar working class, a sub-proletariat, a petit bourgeoisie etc, but the population was deeply divided according to housing class: there were small owners, illegal occupiers, tenants and subtenants. There follows an excellent analysis of the internal class divisions within the movement and the way in which the bourgeoisie was able to exploit them and eventually destroy the threat to its interests.

The authors quite rightly conclude that the urban contradiction is a secondary not a primary contradiction, that the class struggle at the point of residence and consumption is more of a liberal democratic than revolutionary nature, and that as power in capitalist society lies at the point of production, urban struggles can only become revolutionary through an alliance of workers, peasants and a sub-proletariat under the direction of a revolutionary working class.

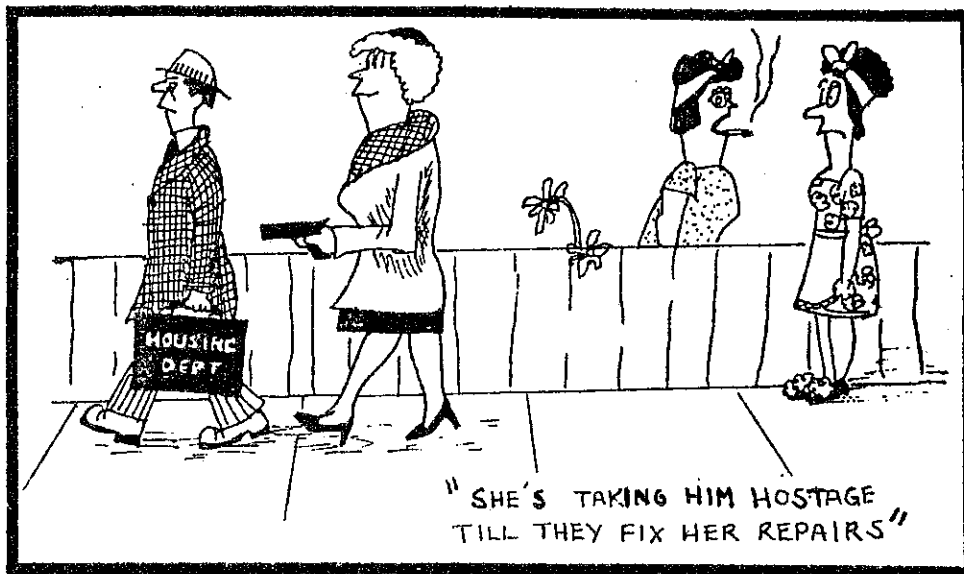
The role of the state in the planning process is understood, in the Castell's fashion, as the management of the relations between production, consumption and exchange. Its principle functions are seen as the redistribution/appropriation of ground-rents and surplus-value, the provision of urban services, and the assertion of its ideological control. The state acts in integrated planning projects to represent and consolidate the interests of construction, landed and finance capital. A Poulantzian concept of fractions of capital is utilised to analyse the internal divisions and alliances within the bourgeoisie. The book outlines the successful opposition of the industrial fraction of capital to the project, which, rather than the popular opposition, finally forced its abandonment. Though these divisions are undoubtedly real and of vital importance in analysing the role of the state, many of the difficulties involved in the use of the concept of class fractions are side-stepped - particularly those presented by the growing interpenetration of capitals, the ambiguous status of finance capital, and the tendency of fraction analysis to end up as a form of pressure group political theory. On the other hand there is a very good analysis of the structural possibilities and limitations of urban social movements - the authors are far more cautious than other Latin American writers in their assessment of the revolutionary

potential of these movements. The state and the bourgeois political parties can use housing and services shortages as a means of selective political mobilisation and have developed institutionalised methods of domination (community development, corruption of local leaders etc.), that can effectively block the development of class consciousness. Similar limitations can be identified within invasions - the development of submarkets in land and housing, corruption of local leaders, the triumph of the ideology of private property. Only in the struggle against urban renovation where the role of the state is more transparent are the revolutionary possibilities greater.

The book remains unclear, however, about two essential questions that flow from this; how far is the much discussed revolutionary character of urban social movements a manifestation of more general class contradictions in society as a whole (e.g. in Chile and Peru as well), and; what exactly is and should be the relationship between party and class in these movements?

All in all an excellent little book, but desperately in need of a map!

Rod Burgess



## BOOK REVIEW

### THE PARADOX OF STATIC CHANGE

VINOD VYASULU, 1977, STERLING, NEW DELHI.

### SAO PAULO: GROWTH AND POVERTY

C.P.F. de CAMARGO, et.al., 1978, THE BOWERDEAN PRESS, LONDON.

These two books, one from India and one from Brazil, should certainly be of interest to students of Third World development and, both being extremely readable, they should also appeal to a wider readership who while interested in the subject may not claim any direct expertise in the field. Both are radical in their perspective although the latter one is a report commissioned by an organisation not usually associated with radicalism in the West: the Catholic Church. However, in the generally repressive political atmosphere of Latin America the Church has become one of the few vehicles through which to voice radical critiques of the ruling classes.

"The Paradox of Static Change" is written by Vinod Vyasulu, a lecturer in Bangalore, South India and who as an occasional contributor to the Monthly Review may already be known to some readers. His book is in fact based upon an introductory course of lectures on Third World development theory which he gave to undergraduate students in Economics. As such it is an excellent introductory text for anyone wishing to become familiar with the increasingly large body of literature associated with this topic. Nevertheless, as one who pretends to know something about the field, I found that it still held new references, unfamiliar angles on old ideas and an overall feeling which was refreshingly different from some of the now quite common development theory texts which attempt to 'sum it all up'. Perhaps this is because it is one of the few of such books, actually written by a person from a Third World country and by someone who acknowledges his position in that country's bourgeoisie and appreciates the need to make a political contribution through his work in development education. But on a more mundane level, the book is also well written in an easy, nearly chatty style, almost as if it had been directly transcribed from his lectures. This makes for very pleasant reading.

Because he is lecturing to students new to the subject Vyasulu goes back to the roots of the ideas he is discussing, carefully giving all the necessary references for background reading and even recommending chapters of particular aspects. Although he makes it clear from the start that his sympathies lie with historical materialist approaches to underdevelopment and the writers in the Baran tradition he also refers his students to various neo-classical texts, in order that, as he puts it, 'you may be able to find arguments to refute me'. A chapter on methodology introduces his students to the value and basis of dialectical materialism.

The book is also interesting because it is one of the few Indian books to discuss dependency and underdevelopment in the Latin American tradition and apply it, schematically at least, to the Indian situation. In this he does not attempt to prove its direct applicability, but merely demonstrates the general relevance of the concepts to the characteristics of Indian underdevelopment,

noting at the same time various differences and pointing to the need for empirically based historical studies of the development of the Indian socio-economic formation.

Finally he attempts to create an awareness amongst his students, who, by virtue of being students, tend also to be members of the Indian elite, of the nature of their position and the contribution of their class to the perpetuation and deepening of underdevelopment. He ends with a discussion of the alternatives for action that they face. This part of the book may seem remote from our own concerns in the West, but its relevance lies in that our position is closely linked to and mutually supportive of the position of the Third World bourgeoisie. An understanding of their position can only improve our awareness of the implications of our own actions for Third World development.

"Sao Paulo: Growth and Poverty" was written by a group of sociologists and economists at the Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP) as a report commissioned by the Catholic Church in Brazil. It is severely critical of the pattern of city growth and the capitalist social formation which has encouraged it. This critique rapidly earned the book and CEBRAP a reputation as subversive amongst the Brazilian bourgeois establishment.

Sao Paulo, a city of 12 million inhabitants, is the fastest growing city in the world. If its current growth rate of 4.2% per annum is maintained it will reach 25 million by the year 2000! Also as Brazil's leading industrial centre Sao Paulo has some notable examples of the world's most dramatic problems of Third World urbanisation, embodying the conflicts of capitalist development and underdevelopment. Despite a serious empirical base the report is far from dry, rather it is written in a style which flows easily and conveys its message powerfully with each point being put clearly and succinctly. Written very much from the viewpoint of Sao Paulo's destitute poor and heavily exploited workers it reads as one long indictment of the capitalist class which has made the city what it is. Small wonder that they have branded it as subversive.

The book starts with a chapter describing Sao Paulo's position in the Brazilian economy, an essential starting point given the general argument of the book. There then follows a chapter describing the material living conditions of the inhabitants and showing the failure of urban planning to come to terms with the immense environmental problems. Problems created by an industrial capitalism whose total disregard for the welfare of the proletariat is founded upon the sure knowledge of a seemingly limitless army of reserve labour. The third chapter on 'Accumulation and Distribution' sets out to demonstrate how "the organisation of the productive process itself determines the way in which the wealth produced is distributed between wages and profits". This chapter and the next describe the lives of the poorest inhabitants and how they relate to the city's economic system. This provides an inspiring example of the effective use of a clear theoretical position with an empirically based study of a particular case of Third World urbanisation. Though never explicitly stated, the theoretical concepts and methodology used is consistent with a critical Marxist approach. The book ends with a discussion of democracy and



the Labour movement in Sao Paulo, describing the ineffectiveness of social democratic methods of protest in achieving change within the restrictions imposed on such methods by the Brazilian state.

At several points USG members have referred to the need to draw up alternative reading lists for geography students, unfortunately to my knowledge we have not yet followed up this excellent idea with action, however..., in the meantime, as someone who has found these two books useful, let me recommend them to other students of Third World underdevelopment.

Jamie Mackie

S.O.A.S. London

das Berufsverbot (-e) *noun*/bə'RU:fsfɛrbo:t/  
witchhunt; West German McCarthyism;  
form of institutionalised discrimination  
in employment; particular instance of  
same, usually stemming from widespread  
vetting of applicants for jobs in Public  
Service including engineers, teachers,  
postmen and gardeners. Hence „Weg  
mit dem ———“ *slogan* "Let's get rid  
of Berufsverbot"; aim of West German  
socialists, Communists, pacifists and  
others, who need our help. *See also:*  
Phone tapping, Judges (ex-Nazi, role  
of), Terrorism (pretext), Human Rights,  
BRD (democracy, European, model).

In 1972 the Presidents of all the Bundeslander (federal states of West Germany) issued a decree 'against the employment of radicals in public service' (over 20% of all jobs). The pretext was terrorism; the purpose to outlaw democratic change.

Berufsverbot (lit. career ban) has led to the investigation by the secret police of over 1m people. 4000 have been kept out of jobs as a result. Many more have had to fight legal battles against the State. In Britain the right wing (now firmly in power) look to West Germany as a model.....

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