

Place and cultural identity in the segregated city¹

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"If you ask the people you meet, "Where is Penthesilea?" they make a broad gesture which may mean "Here," or else "Farther on," or "All around you," or even "In the opposite direction."

"I mean the city," you ask, insistently.

"We come here every morning to work," someone answers, while others say, "We come back here at night to sleep."

"But the city where people live?" you ask.

"It must be that way," they say, and some raise their arms obliquely toward an aggregation of opaque polyhedrons on the horizon, while others indicate, behind you, the specter of other spires.

"Then I've gone past it without realizing it?"

"No, try going on straight ahead."

And so you continue, passing from outskirts to outskirts, and the time comes to leave Penthesilea. You ask for the road out of the city; you pass again the string of scattered suburbs like a freckled pigmentation; night falls; windows come alight, here more concentrated, sparser there.

You have given up trying to understand whether, hidden in some sac or wrinkle of these dilapidated surroundings there exists a Penthesilea the visitor can recognize and remember, or whether Penthesilea is only the outskirts of itself. The question that now begins to gnaw at your mind is more anguished: outside Penthesilea does an outside exist? Or, no matter how far you go from the city, will you only pass from one limbo to another, never managing to leave it?" (Italo Calvino 1997, 157 [1972])

A great deal of attention is currently being paid in urban sociology to the relationship between place and identity. The background to the growing interest in the identity

development of individuals can be found in the radical changes the city is presently undergoing. These changes have often been described in terms of the dissolving city, a concept that not only refers to the continuing physical/functional decomposition that Italo Calvino so vividly outlines in the quotation above, but also to the city's social and cultural disintegration.

My main concern is the impact the growing social polarisation and segregation will have in the long term on cultural hegemony and the potential to maintain a democratic dialogue between different classes and sections of the population.

In penetrating this issue I will adopt as my point of departure the conceptual distinction between space and place, introduced in the urban theory in the 1980's. The concept of space is used as a relational category and refers to the general social powers that structure the development of society and its spatial expressions, while the concept of place is used as an existential category, constituting the background of human identity development and action (Simonsen 1993, 75; see also Nylund 1999).

The dichotomy between space and place has the honourable purpose of counterbalancing the structuralist urban theory of the 1970's by focusing on the agents and their potential to interpret and change their own living conditions. In other words, the intention is to live up to the ambitious programme of critical theory, which states that the aim is both to criticise the existing society and point out potential for change. However, neither the concept of place nor the concept of identity are unambiguous, and the thesis of "place constituting the background of human identity development" consequently opens up many different and often contradictory interpretations.

Two main questions can be crystallised from the general discourse about place and identity. One focuses on the implications of globalisation, the other on marginalisation. In the following, I will make a brief presentation of these partly separate discourses before returning to the epistemological question of the relationship between place and identity.

GLOBALISATION AND IDENTITY

One of the spatial consequences of the economic reconstruction and the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation is that capital has been tied together in a global hyperspace, where capital flows freely between countries and regions. In the discussion on how increased globalisation has influenced place-bound identity development, two different positions have been maintained.

One big group of urban theorists, including Manuel Castells (1997), David Harvey (1989) and Richard Sennett (1999), argue that globalisation has resulted in stronger identification with place. The main argument is that commitment to place is developed

as a reaction against internationalisation. In Richard Sennett's words: "As the shifting institutions of the economy diminish the experience of belonging somewhere special at work, people's commitments increase to geographic places like nations, cities and localities" (Sennett 1999, 15). Several of these researchers warn that the result of increased place identification could very well be a disintegration of civil society, endangering the dialogue between different groups and classes.

Other theorists, such as Ulrich Beck (1992), Anthony Giddens (1996), Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), are more optimistic. They maintain that one of the consequences of increased globalisation is that dependency on a specific place decreases and that individuals instead gain access to many different places. Even if the distinction between "spaces of flows and places of meaning" remains, the concept of place in this perspective acquires a new meaning and no longer necessarily refers to one particular place of commitment but rather to a network of places with different significance. Communities will still be rooted in shared meaning but do not have to be bound to one particular place. Instead, they are constituted by social networks that are stretched out in space and connect many different places in a network of places.

The consequence of reduced place-dependency is considered to be that rule-bound behaviour is replaced by reflexivity. Hence, the individuals no longer submit to traditional norms and values but instead develop a critical and reflexive attitude both towards the superior social structure and towards their own conceptions, which they have previously taken for granted (see, for example, Lash 1994a, 115–116).

The discourse on reflexivity appears promising, both with regard to the potential to maintain a democratic dialogue between different groups of people and with regard to the potential of individuals to reinterpret and change their own living conditions. The concept of reflexivity is, however, far from clear and the British sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry have pointed out that there are at present three parallel and partly contradictory discourses about reflexivity: a cognitive, an aesthetic and a hermeneutic (Lash & Urry 1994, Lash 1994a,b).

The discourse on *cognitive reflexivity* has its point of departure in the reflexivity concept developed by sociologists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens (Beck 1992, Giddens 1996). In this discourse, reflexivity is considered to be mainly an intellectual capacity that enables individuals to understand and critically question the growing flow of knowledge-based information and form their own personal opinion about reality.

According to Lash and Urry there are, however, some serious shortcomings in the idea of cognitive reflexivity (Lash and Urry 1994, 31–59). Their main criticisms can be summarised under the following three points. Firstly, the discourse gives cognition priority in the reflexive process, thereby ignoring the emotional and bodily experiences that have always played an important role in identity formation; secondly, it has

a universalist approach and does not take into consideration that the process of reflexivity is often group-specific and context-dependent; thirdly, it is still based on the Enlightenment thought in that it consolidates the notion of a continuous linear development process, where more knowledge *per se* is expected to result in increased potential for critical questioning.

The discourse on *aesthetic reflexivity* has its point of departure in Adorno and Horkheimer, who, back in the 1940s, in the book "The Dialectics of Enlightenment", called into question the blessings of Enlightenment and maintained that cognitive reason suppresses both the external and inner nature (Adorno and Horkheimer 1981 [1944]). Theodor Adorno later developed a theory about aesthetic reason, where he argued that modern art – as opposed to popular culture – enables a mimetic, sensual and expressive approach, which makes it possible to question the universal through the particular². According to Scott Lash, present-day proponents of aesthetic reflexivity are to be found first and foremost among the deconstructivists. Jacques Derrida, for example, warns that categorisation, with its binary oppositions, represses those aspects of reality the concept cannot capture. Another central figure is Jean Baudrillard, who launched the term sign economy, which refers to the transition from a society based on use value through a society dominated by exchange values to a society where sign values dominate over other values (Lash 1994a, 135ff).

² For a more detailed discussion of Adorno's notion of mimesis, see, for example, Wellmer 1993, Nytlund 1995.

In this discourse, reflexivity is considered to be linked to an ability to react critically to different cultural expressions. As opposed to Adorno, present-day deconstructivists maintain that popular culture not only opens up the potential for dominance but also for resistance. According to Lash, Adorno's scepticism towards popular culture was not so much that it was popular but more that it, to far too great an extent, imitated high culture and was likewise imprisoned in conceptual compulsion. In the deconstructivists' interpretations, popular culture is far less mediated than high culture and is ascribed almost iconic representation, which means that it can evade the effects of conceptual abstraction. In the light of this, it is also maintained that popular culture can be deconstructed from its dependence on consumerism and commodity production and in doing so contribute to promoting a mimetically critical approach (ibid, 137–139).

According to Lash, what makes this discourse so promising is that aesthetic criticism is no longer considered to be limited to the modernist *avant garde* but is also assumed to encompass the majority of the population, who have developed a capacity to react critically to different types of cultural representations. One problem, however, is that criticism of universalism is so radical that every counter-force is perceived as being potentially totalitarian and repressive. Aesthetic reflexivity thus risks being transformed into endless negation, where deconstruction follows deconstruction. Lash

warns that a constant emphasis on the particular could very well be transformed into particularism, which makes it impossible to reconcile aesthetic reflexivity with the aesthetic approach to “the others” (ibid, 142ff).

According to Lash, the main problem is that both the discourse about aesthetic reflexivity and the discourse about cognitive reflexivity lack a convincing notion of how the collective “we” and shared meaning arise. The notion of reflexivity is subject-centred and reflexivity is considered to be an individual ability. In both discourses explicit reference is made to increased reflexivity being a consequence of increased individualisation. However, no reasonable explanation is given for how these subjects have been constituted and consequently these discourses cannot show how the “we” as a subversive force can be constituted (ibid, 144).

The discourse on *hermeneutic reflexivity*, as opposed to the cognitive and aesthetic discourses on reflexivity, has its starting point in everyday experience in the life-world and confirms that meaning and identity arise through the inter-subjective practice in everyday life. Lash refers to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who underlines that the individual is always situated in the world and is therefore deeply rooted in existing practice and meaning. Although meaning and practice are learnt, they become unconscious as if inscribed in the body. Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* refers to context-dependent individuals, whose pre-understanding and background assumptions are embodied as unthought categories. These unthought categories make up the ontological foundation of our conscious actions. According to Lash, Bourdieu emphasises that reflexivity opens up the potential for the unthought categories to be exposed and subjected to a hermeneutic interpretation (ibid, 153ff).

Lash argues that what characterises the hermeneutic, context-dependent reflexivity in our society is that it is primarily directed at the aesthetic sphere. This is mainly because disorganised capitalism is first and foremost a sign economy, where both production and consumption are becoming more and more design-intensive. It should be noted that the Lash concept of sign economy is far more concrete than Baudrillard’s. For Lash the sign economy refers firstly to a network economy, where people at the workplace are trained to use and question not just informational signs but also aesthetic symbols, and secondly to a sphere of consumption, where people to a growing extent define themselves and gain their identity through distinctive consumption of goods, sounds, narratives and culture in the broadest sense (Lash 1994b, 210–213, see also Lash & Urry 1994, 6off).

In the light of this, Lash puts forward a thesis in which the nature of reflexivity in contemporary society is *hermeneutic/aesthetic*. The hermeneutic means that greater significance is paid to questions of meaning (the signified) than to questions of representation (the signifier) or the nature of reality (the referent); the aesthetic means

that the current struggle between classes and ways of life is expressed primarily in the cultural arena, where people defend their own cultural values. Because meaning is always shared, hermeneutic/aesthetic reflexivity will always be collective and community-based (Lash 1994a, 157ff).

Lash puts forward a number of factors that characterise a current reflexive community as opposed to a traditional community. At the same time he maintains that it is important to distinguish between reflexivity and *critical* reflexivity. Where the former opens up a critical approach to the experiences of everyday life, a necessary precondition for the latter is that the criticism can be further developed into a questioning of system-created life conditions.

“Communities are reflexive in that: first, one is not born or ‘thrown’, but ‘throws oneself’ into them; second, they may be widely stretched over ‘abstract space’, and also perhaps over time; third, they consciously pose themselves the problem of their own creation, and constant re-intervention far more than do traditional communities; fourth, their ‘tools’ and products tend to be not material ones but abstract and cultural” (Lash 1994a, 161).

“Aesthetic reflexivity...is reflexive in so far as it operates mimetically on everyday experience; it becomes critical only when its point of mimetic reference becomes ‘system’ of commodities, bureaucracy, or reification of life forms” (ibid, 140).

According to Lash, there is no doubt that the hermeneutic/aesthetic reflexivity is currently covered by the broad masses, who, freed from traditional structures and institutions, have learned to act critically to different cultural expressions and forms (Lash 1994b, 210). However, he permits the question of whether this reflexivity can be developed into a criticism of society, which also includes attention in the face of other competing life forms and views, to remain open (Lash 1994a, 163ff).

At first glance, Scott Lash’s theories of hermeneutic/aesthetic reflexivity appear to be a useful tool in analysing how the context-dependent identities are formed in a segregated society. The theories also appear usable in analysing the potential to achieve consensus. When meaning and values are created in clearly delimited cultural communities, it could be difficult to find a common framework for interpretation and understanding. Lash’s argumentation does not stop here, however. He maintains that only two-thirds of the population demonstrate growth in reflexivity and critical questioning while the rest of the population suffer from a reflexivity deficiency (ibid, 130).

Ultimately, this thesis could not only mean that people with different ways of life would find it difficult to agree and achieve consensus but that people from

marginalised areas would lack the capacity to take part in the dialogue as they lack reflexive competence.

Lash's principal argument in favour of the reflexivity deficiency in marginalised areas is that the underclass has been excluded from the information and knowledge management processes that characterise the sign economy and which are a prerequisite for the development of aesthetic reflexivity. This is exemplified most clearly on the labour market, where the underclass has either been relegated to unemployment or routine tasks with a low level of knowledge management. However, differences also emerge outside the labour market, where the underclass receives and makes passive use of information and communication technology and has very limited potential for developing the capacity to create and manipulate symbols (ibid, 130ff, Lash 1994b, 213ff; see also Lash & Urry 1994, 145ff).

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According to Lash, one of the consequences of this increased social polarisation is the growing disparity between reflexivity winners and losers. In terms of space, this disparity is reflected in detectable patterns in the urban landscape. He characterises the central business districts as "live" or "tamed" zones while the peripheries of the cities, and the ghetto in particular, appear as "dead" or "wild" zones. His conclusion is: "And as civil society, as the public sphere itself, becomes increasingly superimposed on the I & C structures, exclusion from them becomes exclusion from *citizenship*, effectively both political and cultural exclusion from civil society" (Lash 1994a, 132–133).

In this context I would like to disregard the question of whether it is reasonable to assign information technology such major significance in identity development and instead focus on the two other more basic preconditions on which Lash's reflexivity theory is based: release from traditional values and reduced place dependency.

Lash states explicitly that his theory about hermeneutic/aesthetic reflexivity, like the theory about cognitive reflexivity, is based on an assumption that post-traditionalisation is a prerequisite for reflexivity (Lash 1994b, 206, 212). In doing so, the reflexivity theorists are carrying on a long sociological theory tradition. It is well known that the emergence of sociology as an independent science goes hand in hand with the emergence of modern society and one of the most important tasks of sociology was to attempt to understand the characteristic features of this society. Both the major classics of sociology and our great contemporary sociologists, such as Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens, agree that one of the most important characteristics is that "all that is solid melts into air" and that human beings are thereby released from the traditional bonds and develop an independent capacity to decide on what is true, just and credible³. What is interesting, however, is that this link between reflexivity and de-traditionalisation is currently being called into question, both within theoretical and empirical research. I will revert to this in the section on the contradictory marginalisation debate.

³ For a discussion on Habermas notion of reflexivity see, for example, Nylund 1995.

In the matter of release from place-dependence, this is an implicit prerequisite, both in Lash's strong emphasis on the significance of information technology to the development of reflexivity and in the idea that reflexive communities are stretched out in terms of space and time (Lash 1994a, 161). Lash thus affiliates himself to the major group of urban researchers who view geographical mobility as a prerequisite for reflexivity. "Nomads", "tourists" and "cosmopolitans" are well-known metaphors, all of which maintain that access to many different places creates greater potential for critical questioning.

The Swedish phenomenologist Jan Bengtsson even goes as far as to maintain that: "The following relationship appears to apply to the identity formation of the human being: the more the place means to identity and the less the significance of other factors, the more narrow-minded the person is" (Bengtsson 1994, 30, my translation) and he specifies "the smaller the places a human being identifies with, the more narrow-minded the person" (*ibid.*, my translation). Considering Bengtsson's phenomenological point of departure it is quite surprising that he arrives at such a radical conclusion. And what's worse, not much fantasy is needed to imagine the stigmatising effects of such a categorical, not to say narrow-minded, statement.

Nevertheless, the idea that access to many different places is a precondition for reflexivity seems to govern much of the current analyses of reflexivity development in the marginalised areas. Even Lash's statement that the inhabitants in the marginalised areas suffer from a deficit of reflexivity, seems basically to be based on a conception that these inhabitants are more place dependent than the rest of the population.

The conception of release from place-dependency being a prerequisite for reflexivity does not, however, remain unchallenged. Even if the current marginalisation discourse in general is far removed from the ideas about increased reflexivity, a growing number of researchers are questioning both the notion that access to many different places is a precondition for reflexivity and the notion that people in the marginalised areas suffer from a deficit of reflexivity.

THE CONTRADICTORY DEBATE ON MARGINALISATION

Social polarisation and segregation is a research area with high priority, and large amounts of research funding have been channelled in that direction. This is particularly true in the Nordic countries, where segregation has come to stand as a symbol for the erosion of the welfare state. The ambition of this kind of research is to elucidate the reasons for and the consequences of the ongoing marginalisation process. However, as research results are a kind of re-presentation, they will never reproduce reality but

can only construct and create more or less convincing images of it. These images of reality often serve as a basis for political decision-making, the consequence being that research results not only affect our way of interpreting reality, but also contribute to changing it.

In light of all this, I consider it essential to more closely examine some of the contradictory interpretations and constructions that characterise the contemporary debate on marginalisation. Generally, it is possible to distinguish among three different types of research on marginalisation: the realist, the constructivist and the structuralist. These three types of research are based on different epistemological assumptions, and thus provide us with a clear illustration of the practical consequences of a researcher's choice of theoretical point of departure.

Realist research can be characterized as taking its point of departure in the actual place in question. Through studies of either the built environment and/or its inhabitants, the researchers strive to gain an understanding of the essence of the problem of marginalisation.

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Such studies often include work initiated by government commissions, the primary objective of which is to describe the physical and social conditions in marginalised areas in order to provide the state with more facts and figures on which to base its decisions. The image that arises from such research indicates quite clearly that marginalised areas are marked by: single mothers, people with poor educational backgrounds and others who are dependent on the welfare state and its benefits, as well as a large proportion of immigrants. Such residential areas are often geographically isolated, which makes daily contact with other social classes difficult. Thus the general trend becomes a vicious circle in which such areas become ghettos, gradually abandoned by inhabitants who have the resources to leave, as well as by the public and private institutions (see, for example, Nylund 1998).

While the strength of realist research is that it focuses on a place, this also becomes its greatest weakness. As realist studies seldom penetrate appearances or attempt to examine the causes of the problems, the risk arises that such descriptions will appear to be offered as explanations with the result that the problems appear to be inherent in either the built environments or the inhabitants themselves. One such example is the debate on modernist architecture, which has been blamed for causing social problems⁴. A second example is the debate on multiculturalism, where the causes of problems relating to integration are often implied as being related to the cultural backgrounds of the inhabitants themselves⁵.

Loïc Wacquant has pointed out that this kind of research tends to have a stigmatising effect, the result of which is that the inhabitants not only experience socio-economic exclusion, but symbolic exclusion as well (Wacquant 1999, 130ff).

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the debate on modernism see, for example, Klarqvist 1999.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the debate on multiculturalism see, for example, Molina 1997.

Patrick Champagne has identified a problem associated with realist research: it is often confined to repeating a number of received opinions, and thus contributes to reinforcing existing prejudices. One explanation may be that realist research is often applied research, with short time boundaries and very little potential for theoretical reflection or the application of new approaches. Another might be that there is a dependence relationship between government commission work and the media, the consequence of which is that the media often sets the agenda regarding which issues are put into focus. Realist research has also been criticised for its lack of consideration for the perspectives of the inhabitants themselves. Interviews are often superficial, it is claimed, reflecting more of the preconceptions of the researchers than the reality of the inhabitants. The interview questionnaires themselves are often said to be poorly structured, failing to take the self-image or self-presentation of the respondents into account. Repeated in-depth interviews are seldom possible, owing to the short time frame, thus excluding the kind of deeper dialogue that leads to the acquisition of new knowledge. Thus the policy proposals that result from such studies are also often superficial, tending to repeat general demands, well-intentioned but non-committal, in terms of better sectoral co-ordination, improved collaboration with the residents, more common areas and other meeting places, etc. (Champagne 1999).

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Critics of realist research are, of course, not questioning of the use of knowing more about reality. They do not see the problem as associated with statistical studies establishing, for example, the number of unemployed immigrants in marginalised areas, such figures are a precondition for analyses of the structural background of excess unemployment among immigrants. Rather, as pointed out by Bülent Diken, the problem arises when this information is put forward without clarification, leaving the playing field open to essentialist explanations that find the causes of unemployment in the ethnic or cultural backgrounds of the inhabitants (Diken 1998, 242).

Social-constructivist research is developing as a reaction to realist research, asserting that the constant focus of realist research on problems and shortcomings in the marginalised areas has contributed to the construction of "the problem of marginalisation." Since the mainstream discourse gives the appearance of a neutral representation of actual conditions, it will contribute to reinforcing the longstanding process of social exclusion. Thus Indian scholar Gayatri Spivak stresses that: "In terms of the hegemonic historical narrative, certain people have always been asked to cathect the margins so that others can be defined as central" (Spivak 1990, quoted in Soja 1996, 135).

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, too, regards the marginalisation process as an expression of an instrument of social exclusion by which the majority population oppresses "the others". Bauman takes his point of departure in the concept of "the stranger" used by phenomenologist Alfred Schutz and sociologist Georg Simmel,

claiming that the stranger, owing to his status as an outsider, has no choice but to question accepted norms and values. Thus the stranger causes "chaos in the cognitive, moral, and aesthetic map of values" (Bauman 1998, 29ff, Bauman 1995, 53ff). In an effort to re-establish an equilibrium, the majority population strives to mentally or physically expel the stranger (Bauman 1995, 59), the aim being: "to push the stranger outside the realm of the ordinary and to disarm him as the possible source of normative influence" (ibid. 66). According to Bauman, urban stratification is one way of pretending outsiders do not exist. In practice, contact is avoided through the establishment of a kind of "no-go-in" areas, which gradually and increasingly become "no-go-out" areas for the excluded part of the population (Bauman 1995b, quoted in Diken 1998, 131). Richard Sennett follows the same line in his description of the main accomplishment of modernist physical planning being "the walling off of differences between people", with the aim of ensuring the isolation of outsiders (Sennett 1990, quoted in Diken 1998, 131).

One reaction may be that the outsider strives to achieve acceptance and assimilate into the majority culture, thereby repressing his own cultural identity; another that the outsider rejects the society from which he has been excluded; and a third that, thanks to his hybrid identity, the outsider gains the strength to question the normal society (Bauman 1995, 75ff).

The strength of constructivist research is that instead of focusing on the weaknesses of the marginalised areas, it highlights the potential. It stresses the importance of discourse in the development of identity and self-perception, as well as the necessity of a reflexive, critical approach to socially constructed assumptions. In emphasising the ability of marginalised groups to reinterpret and redefine their own identities, constructivist research admit the marginalised areas a potential to develop into sites for resistance. bell hooks describes marginality as a kind of radical openness, on the basis of which trans-boundary identities of resistance can be constructed (bell hooks, 1990, quoted in Soja 1996, 84).

The weakness of constructivism is that it is insufficiently attentive to the importance of material conditions to the development of identity. One consequence may be that the constructivists underestimate social reality, idealising enstrangement instead. Diana Fuss warns against an overly naïve confidence in the outsider as a subversive force:

Any displaced nostalgia for or romanticisation of the outside as a privileged site of radicality immediately gives us away, for in order to realize the outside we must already be, to some degree, comfortably on the inside. We really only have the leisure to idealize the subversive potential of the power of the marginal when our place of enunciation is quite central (Fuss 1991, 5, Quoted in Soja 1996, 118).

Structuralist research strives to undermine the illusion that the world is transparent, attempting to release itself from preconceptions and penetrate appearances. The focus is neither on descriptions of particular places nor on the discourse on marginalisation, but on the structural roots of the marginalisational process. The main interest is to understand the spatial conditions that provide the framework for development in specific places.

In their attempts to explain the ongoing processes of marginalisation, several urban researchers have emphasized that marginalisation is an outcome of the economic reconstruction that followed after the recession of the 1970's. Manuel Castells seeks the background to the geographical and social segregation in the transition to the network society, where large groups of individuals, who are unable to adjust to the informational economy, from a production perspective will be regarded as redundant (Castells 1996, 102,113). Peter Marcuse follows the same line of argument in establishing that what distinguishes marginalised areas in the post-Fordist society, as opposed to previous epochs, is the fact that they contain groups of individuals who have been excluded from the social community. "The post-Fordist ghetto is a 'new ghetto' in that it has become an outcast ghetto, a ghetto of the excluded, rather than more generally of the dominated and exploited" (Marcuse 1996, 179). This means that the inhabitants to a lesser degree are used as a workforce, and consequently their links to the economic life in the surrounding society have also weakened. The result of this economic and social process of exclusion, using Bauman's terminology, is that the no-one-goes-in areas gradually also become no-one-goes-out areas.

According to Castells, the large groups excluded from established society develop identities of resistance, opposed to the nation state and the global techno-economic system. He speaks of "the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded", characterising resistance identities as a defensive reaction to the changes that threaten the stability of their existence. This is a form of culturally constituted collective identity in the defence of religious, national or local values experienced as threatened (Castells 1997, 8ff). Castells sees these identities of resistance as characterized by the fact that they do not participate in the dialogue with the surrounding society but, instead, reject it (ibid, 356).

Castells' discussion of identities of resistance may, at the superficial level, seem to be closely related to Scott Lash's theories of the reflexive deficit. Both claim that the growth of the network economy has given rise to social polarisation, where some groups in the population have been excluded from reaping the benefits of developments in information technology. However, whereas Scott Lash asserts that the result is a loss of reflexivity for the marginalised groups, Castells stresses the potential for the marginalised groups to develop identities of resistance. His examples of such identities include fundamentalist groups, women's groups, and environmental activists. All

groups which construct their own identities. Castells argues that neither Islamic nor Christian fundamentalists are traditionalist movements, any more than are women's groups or environmental activists. In his view, these are all groups that reconstruct a cultural identity for themselves that is, de facto, hyper-modern (ibid. 16,26).

A new identity is being constructed, not by returning to tradition, but by working on traditional materials in the formation of a new godly, communal world, where deprived masses and disaffected intellectuals may reconstruct meaning in a global alternative to the exclusionary global order (ibid, 20).

Castells opens up the possibility that identities of resistance may be transformed into project identities, producing subjects in the form of collective social actors. Such groups then shift from protesting against the norms and values of society to attempting to change society as a whole (ibid, 65f, 356f). Moreover, Castells goes so far as to imply that in contemporary society, an identity of resistance always precedes a project identity (ibid. 357) which could be interpreted to mean that potential forces of change in society are to be found in marginalised groups. At this point Castells' theories diverge most clearly from those of Lash. What Castells implicitly seems to emphasise is that radical questioning, i.e. reflexivity, is more likely to evolve among those outside society than among those being comfortable inside. It should be noted, however, that Castells does not see the emergence of project identities as a historic necessity, on the contrary, he finds it equally possible that cultural resistance will remain enclosed in the boundaries of communes (ibid, 67).

Since Castells also asserts that identities of resistance are fundamentally a matter of marginalised groups defending their places against the placeless logic of the space of flows (ibid. 358), his theories do also contribute to undermining the idea that decreased dependence on geographical location is a prerequisite for reflexivity.

Castells' theories appear to be confirmed by Danish architect Bülent Diken, who has made empirical studies of Turkish immigrants in Århus. Diken shows that the Danish-Turkish inhabitants in the Gellerup neighbourhood in Århus have, in contrast to normal assumptions, developed a Turkish group identity of their own *subsequent to* their arrival in Denmark, as a reaction to discrimination. Diken argues that all communities have traditions that change and are re-invented in a reflexive process. This means, according to Diken, that it is preferable to speak of a reflexive choice of traditions than to refer to reflexivity as a result of the -which turned out to be a powerful weapon in immigration politics when they tried to argue against discrimination" (Diken 1998, 153f).

"They (the Turks) re-invented the tradition, which turned out to be a powerful weapon in immigration politics when they tried to argue against discrimination"
(Diken 1998:153f).

"... women who came to Denmark after they have been emancipated from "traditional" Turkish dress. In Denmark, they begin using or re-using the head scarf... In other words they found out that "things could be different". Even "fundamentalism", which re-enters the scene at this point, can be taken as a reflexive alternative among other alternatives in Gellerup" (ibid, 172f).

"In short, a traditionalization follows after a former modernization process in Gellerup, hence it is called re-traditionalization. This all means that it is virtually impossible to talk about an exotic, static, unambivalent and unreflexive traditionality that remains the same all the time. Here we have "quotations" from the past in the collage of the present, even if traditions or conventions that are quoted are not especially reflexive in themselves" (ibid, 173).

Diken also notes that although immigrants in the marginalised areas may be regarded as place-bound and isolated in comparison with the surrounding city and country, they have many contacts with the world outside Denmark. Thanks to satellite communication they are able to readily follow the public debate in Turkey and in other countries too, and so they will always be part of the process of modernization (ibid, 240).

The strength of structuralist research lies in the way in which it places the problems of marginalisation in an overarching social context. This makes it possible to see both the structural factors that cause marginalisation and the overriding political initiatives that are needed to counteract it. The weakness of structuralist research lies in the fact that it seldom focuses on the specific physical and social conditions that shape life-conditions in a particular place. The analyses only give slight insight into different life-forms and the way in which the inhabitants of a place perceive its problems. Consequently, structuralist research is of very little help in formulating concrete proposals for physical and/or social measures to improve living conditions in a specific place.

This is also the reason for which structuralism has been criticised as supporting deterministic approaches that give local actors very little opportunity to impact on and alter their own living conditions.

* * *

The current debate on marginalisation is polarised and the contradictions become manifest in a number of dichotomies and binary oppositions: Firstly, essentialism, which refers to the cultural background of the immigrants as something pre-given and static, is contrasted to constructivism, according to which cultural identity is socially constructed and constantly changing; secondly, realism, which focuses on measurable features in the marginalised areas, is contrasted to hermeneutics, which emphasise

subjective experiences and meaningful interpretations; and thirdly structuralism, which searches for explanations in the general development of society is contrasted to action theories, which searches for the explanation in the conscious or unconscious behaviour of the agents. Often these perspectives are seen as irreconcilable, but maybe a more complex and less rigid discussion could be raised by trying to combine these different perspectives.

EPISTEMOLOGY OF PLACE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The contradictory interpretations of identity development in the marginalised areas seems to originate from poorly defined concepts. Both the concepts of identity and place are ambiguous and some of the central questions are if the concept of place refers to real existing places, to discourses about places, or to the experiences of place; how space relates to place; and finally what characterises the relation between physical and social space.

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Answering these questions certainly lies beyond the scope of this paper, but I think that some of the questions could be elucidated by turning to Pierre Bourdieu's and Henri Lefebvre's theories.

In the discussion about identity development Bourdieu makes a distinction between "objectivity of first order" and "objectivity of second order". While objectivity of first order is constituted by the distribution of material resources and socially scarce goods and values, objectivity of second order refers to systems of classification and the mental and bodily schemata that function as symbolic templates for the practical activities – conducts, thoughts, feelings, and judgements – of social agents. Bourdieu maintains that in order to understand society and its prevailing relations of power a *double reading* will be required. The first reading treats society as an objective structure, that could be observed independently of the representations. The second reading must recognize the life experiences of the agents and their interpretations of reality, in order to explicate the social categories of perception and appreciation that structure their action (Wacquant 1992, 7ff).

Bourdieu views the classificatory schemes as socially constructed collective representations and maintains that there is a correspondence between social and mental structures. In other words, systems of classification and forms of understanding are socially determined, which means that ways of interpreting and understanding the world are class specific. In this respect Bourdieu gives the objective reality priority over subjectivist understanding. His argument is that the viewpoint of agents will vary systematically with the point they occupy in objective social space (ibid. 11f). Bourdieu stresses that the correspondence between the social and the mental structures fulfills

crucial political functions and contributes to the conservation of existing social order. Although representations and systems of classification tend to present the structures out of which they are issued as natural and necessary, symbolic systems are not only instruments of knowledge, they are also instruments of domination. Therefore, social representations do not simply mirror social relations, they also constitute them (ibid, 12ff).

There are many similarities between Bourdieu and Lefebvre. Lefebvre too maintains that representations are constituted by a mixture of ideology and knowledge, which make them barely distinguishable. Consequently, trying to answer the question whether representations are true or false makes no sense. What makes analyses of representations useful is rather that they can tell us something about those societies which have given rise to them and recognized themselves in them. Representations are often made up by abstract verbal signs, but as they tend to present coherent narratives about reality, their influence on social and political practice is considerable. In this respect representations are objective, though subject to revision (Lefebvre 1998, 39ff.45).

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In relation to the current marginalisation debate this would mean that the discourse about place means as much for identity development as the place in itself. The narrative about the place contributes to our self-understanding, or as Lefebvre puts it, representations of space tend to manipulate the lived space (ibid, 59). Bourdieu explicitly emphasizes that the attempts to understand the marginalisation problem by restricted place-bound studies seldom will give the expected results. Because the problem of marginalisation is socially constructed, it will be necessary to go behind appearances and analyse those social representations which have formed the public image of these areas.

"The perfectly commendable wish to go see things in person, close up, sometimes leads people to search for the explanatory principles of observed realities where they are not to be found (not all of them, in any case), namely, at the site of observation itself. The truth about what happens in the "problem suburbs" certainly does not lie in these usually forgotten sites that leap into the headlines from time to time. The true object of analyses, which must be constructed against appearances and against all those who do more than endorse those appearances, is the social (or more precisely, political) construction of reality as it appears to intuition, and of its journalistic, bureaucratic and political representations, which help to produce effects that are indeed real, beginning with the political world, where they structure discussion, and extending to the world of science (Bourdieu 1999a, 181).

Bourdieu pays special attention to the central role that research plays in the production of symbolic representations. He emphasises that social sciences can never be neutral,

detached, apolitical. Whether we wish it or not research will have influence on the social constructions of reality, and thereby becomes part of the political power (Wacquant 1992, 50ff). As a consequence Bourdieu underlines the importance of developing a reflexive attitude towards the organizational and cognitive structures of the research discipline. What is needed is a systematic exploration of "the unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu 1990, quoted in Wacquant 1992, 40).

In the light of this, the growing demand of immediately useful research, which at a superficial level may seem innocent, can have devastating effects. Because applied research is restricted to study the phenomenon on the surface, it tends to contribute in creating and maintaining the picture of "the other", simultaneously undermining the self-estimation of the outsiders.

Even if both Bourdieu and Lefebvre acknowledge that the social representations influence identity development, they oppose to social constructivists and their one-sided focus on representations. Lefebvre emphasises the danger of reducing social and physical space to mental constructions. If discourse analyses remain unrelated to the existing reality, they will neither be able to elucidate the relation between knowledge and power, nor will they be able to answer the question of how non-verbal signs and signals should be categorised (Lefebvre 1992, 61–62).

According to Lefebvre a precondition for understanding the lived space in which the "I" must either recognise itself or lose itself, is that we both develop an understanding of the perceived and the conceived space. While the conceived space refers to the representations of space, the perceived space refers to the spatial practice, which both forms and is formed by the societal production and reproduction, in a close association between daily routine and urban reality. The lived space finally refers to the meaning creating processes by which the "inhabitants" appropriate space (ibid. 38ff.61).

In other words, both Lefebvre and Bourdieu emphasise that the existing reality as well as the discourses have determining influence on identity development. In the case of Bourdieu this means that habitus adapts to fields, that are defined by first as well as by second objectivity. In the case of Lefebvre, that both the perceived and the conceived space are seen as substantial building stones in the symbolic meaning creating processes of the lived space.

Bourdieu has labelled his own work as "structuralist constructivism" (Wacquant 1992, 11). The question is how this theoretical position influences his views on "place as the background for identity development and action". His approach is as always dialectical. On one hand he maintains that the marginalised areas neither can be understood through the stereotyped images that the mainstream discourse offers nor by inspections of the place; either because the most dramatic experiences do not originate

in the specific place or because they are fundamentally defined as an absence, first and foremost of public and private institutions (Bourdieu 1999b, 123). On the other hand he maintains that the place mediates the social structure and gradually converts it into mental structures and systems of preferences (ibid, 126). What characterises the social structure, according to Bourdieu, is that it is relational, which means that the social agents are always situated in a social space defined in relation to other social positions. The structure of social space shows up as spatial oppositions and as a consequence the inhabited space functions as a sort of spontaneous symbolisation of social space (ibid, 124).

In the line of this argument Bourdieu maintains that a necessary precondition for the understanding of contemporary marginalisation is a rigorous analysis of the relations between the structures of social space and those of physical space (ibid, 123).

Bourdieu's empirical research illustrates how the different levels can be connected in the analyses of marginalisation. For three years Bourdieu and his research team studied social suffering in contemporary society. The research result was published in France 1993 in a book "La misère du monde" and appeared in English 1999 with the title "the Weight of the World". The focus of the book is on the lived space and voice is given to groups of the population that are seldom heard.

Through interviews and dialogue with inhabitants and civil servants in the peripheries of the cities a picture is presented where the only thing the inhabitants share is their common excommunication (ibid, 129). And where the lack of economic, cultural and social capital "chains one to a place" (ibid, 127). In Bourdieu's analyses nothing indicates that the inhabitants in these areas would develop into a subversive force, quite the opposite "the stigmatized area symbolically degrades its inhabitants, who, in return, symbolically degrades it" (ibid, 129). "If there is an effect specific to cohabitation, it lies in the fact that in this sort of environment, nobody can help anybody, so that a social slide downwards encounters no brakes, none of the safety nets that other milieux might provide" (Bourdieu 1999a, 186). Bourdieu finds the background to the process of marginalisation in neoliberalism:

"..we move from a government policy directed at the very structures of distribution to a policy that simply wants to correct the effects of the unequal distribution of resources in economic and cultural capital....the new form of state activities help to turn a (potentially) mobilized people into a heterogeneous aggregate of fragmented, isolated poor..." (ibid, 184).

Bourdieu's research seems to confirm the thesis that a democratic dialogue is difficult to maintain in a strongly segregated society. The reason is not, however, that the inhabitants in the marginalised areas have a deficit of reflexive competence, rather that

they have been excluded from the possibilities to get a share of socially scarce resources, both in terms of goods and values. One reason being that social services have been cut, another changes in the labour market. And with such dramatic changes the problem can hardly be solved by well-intentioned experimental projects.

Bourdieu's theoretical and empirical research seems to be indispensable when it comes to understanding processes of increased social polarisation and segregation in our contemporary society. Not only does he give us empirical evidence about growing inequalities but also tools to understand how living conditions are formed and experienced by the people in the marginalised areas.

What Bourdieu pays less attention to is, however, how these life-conditions could possibly be changed. Bourdieu seems to have little to offer when it comes to discussions of when and under which circumstances people in the marginalised areas might oppose and alter the existing. Neither does he give any answers to the pressing question of why despair and hopelessness at times is changed into resistance. Does for instance a hermeneutic/aesthetic reflexivity, in Lash's sense, play a part in these processes of resistance? And what does it take for identities of resistance, in Castells' terminology, to turn into project identities? Maybe a general answer to these questions cannot be given. When and where resistance will evolve might be a genuine empirical question depending on particular social and spatial conditions in specific historical situations and places.

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