

Fixity and Motion

Socio-spatial restructuring in the global age

A workshop at the Reflexive Modernization Research Centre (SFB 536) in Munich

February 20 and 21, 2007

Tuesday: 10 am to 5 pm

Wednesday: 10 am to 4 pm

Wed, Feb 21, at 6 pm public lecture by Prof. Bob Jessop, Lancaster (tba)

Location for workshop and lecture:

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‘(...) social theory has to develop an understanding of how cosmopolitan places (or the cosmopolitanization of places) constitute an active relationship of actors to space and place. Thinking along this line, reflexive modernists see globalization as a repatterning of fluidities and mobilities on the one hand and stoppages and fixities on the other, rather than an all-encompassing world of fluidity and mobility’ (Beck forthcoming).

In the global age and under conditions of risk, insecurity and non-knowledge new social forms, practices, and technologies emerge (Beck 1986, Beck 1999, Beck 2006). On a world scale new constellations of power and dominance and new configurations of social, cultural, economic and political networks arise. This leads to a fundamental restructuring of time and space. The changing nature of proximity and ‘immediacy’ (Tomlinson 2003) is one of the major examples for this. Beck (2006) describes the new cultural hybridities and the cosmopolitanization of modern societies. But also in economy - and maybe basically there - the transformation of time and space, the ‘time-space-compression’, occurs day by day and in everyday life. It plays an eminent and a prominent role as well for the coordination and the loose and close coupling of societies. The rising of a new ‘handlungsraum’ (Andreas Boes), a space of action, driven by IT revolutions and the empowerment of transport technologies shapes the modern world and the whole ‘world city system’ (Knox, Taylor 1995). The ‘world city network’ (Taylor 2004) concentrates, restores and activates dynamically power, money and knowledge.

But the world of capitalist flows - the ‘network society’ and the ‘liquid modernity’ - needs stable elements, powerful ‘global infrastructures’ (Graham, Marvin 2001) and ‘spatio-

temporal fixes' (Jessop 2006) to manage and organize the global mobilities of capital, people, goods, ideas, and waste.

„Travellers from strands in the web linking the world's cities. Corporate emissaries, government trade and commerce representatives and independent entrepreneurs, for example, move among cities, greasing the wheels of production, finance or commerce through face-to-face contact“ (Smith, Timberlake 1995 , 296).

The Internet and all its coupled technologies build a kind of backbone for global economies and intercultural relations around the globe. But face-to-face communications and the transnational exchange of goods, labour and knowledge is basically organized by physical travelling and mobility:

‘The scale of business meetings is enormous. Even back in 1988, the USA's major 500 companies were said to have held between 11 and 15 million formal meetings each day and 3-4 billion meetings each year’ (Larsen, Urry, Axhausen 2006, 30).

As we know from mobility research the figures of business travels is constantly increasing and the spatial mobility patterns change from car and train travel to ‘aeromobility’ (Lassen 2006).

This brief panorama shall be the point of departure for the workshop. In line with David Harvey and other theorists this workshop investigates

‘(...), the endemic tension between fixity and motion – ‘between the rising power to overcome space and the immobile spatial structures required for such a purpose’ (Brenner 2004, 34f.).

For many different theorists the dialectics of ‘fixity and motion’ (Harvey), ‘mobilities and moorings’ (Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006), ‘mobility and stability’ (Beck forthcoming)

‘provides the analytical key to the investigation of processes of sociospatial restructuring under capitalism. Capitalist sociospatial configurations are produced as historically specific geographical preconditions for capital's globalizing dynamism (...). Through [the] tumultuous process of creative destruction, inherited geographical landscapes, institutional arrangements, and forms of uneven development are reshaped quite dramatically (...) (Brenner 2004, 34f.).

In this way the workshop investigates different ‘politics of scale’ for the restructuring of time and space, power and dominance, here and there, near and far etc. By concentrating on and approaching from different theoretical backgrounds and empirical cases the papers given throughout the workshop illuminate different aspects of the reflexive modernization of modern societies where fundamental notions and terms of social theory come into question. The workshop opens the debate on reflexive modernization for new perspectives of the spatial dimensions of ‘Entgrenzung und Entscheidung’¹ (Beck, Lau 2004). It argues for a spatial turn in social theory and globalization studies (see Jessop 2006).

¹ There is no appropriate translation for the ‘very’ German notion of *Entgrenzung*. In a certain way it means ‘blurring boundaries’ or the extension of boundary management. *Entscheidung* means decision.

Preliminary Programme

February 20, 2007

10 am – 12.30 pm and 14 – 17 pm

Sven Kesselring, Andreas Boes,
SFB 536, Munich

Welcome and Introduction: the dialectics of ‘fixity and motion’ in the mobile risk society

Bob Jessop, Lancaster

Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes, and Spatio-temporal Fixes

Neil Brenner, New York

Between fixity and motion: accumulation, territorial organization and the historical geography of spatial scales

Sven Kesselring, Munich

Crossroads of Globalization. International Airports and the Reterritorialization of Cities and Regions

February 21, 2007

10 am – 12.30 pm and 14 – 16 pm

Ngai-Ling Sum, Lancaster

Rethinking Globalization: Re-Articulating the Spatial Scales and Temporal Horizons of Trans-Border Spaces and the Case of ‘Greater China’

Andreas Boes, Tobias Kämpf,
Kira Marrs, Katrin Trinks,
Munich

Working places in the information space. International cooperation in the IT industry

Sven Kesselring

Conclusion and farewell

References

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- Jessop, Bob. (2006). Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes, and Spatio-temporal Fixes. In: Castree, Noel, Derek Gregory: David Harvey. A critical reader. Oxford: Blackwell. S. 142-166.
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