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Introduction to Geographies of Exclusion

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The human landscape can be read as a landscape of exclusion. This was clear to Engels in his observations on the industrial city, to Raymond Williams in his account of the landscapes of landed capital in eighteenth-century England in *The Country and the City*, and to Lewis Mumford, writing about Baroque cities in *The City in History*. Because power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments, any text on the social geography of advanced capitalism should be concerned with the question of exclusion. My purpose in writing this book, however, is not to provide a comprehensive account of exclusionary processes. There is already a substantial literature on the capitalist city which is, to some extent, concerned with exclusion, insofar as it is concerned with problems of access to urban resources, particularly housing, and associated spatial outcomes.[1] I would also leave off my agenda those programmes of exclusion which are starkly expressed in spatial terms and connect with clearly articulated ideologies, such as apartheid in. South Africa and the 'race' policies of Nazi Germany, although I would not wish to suggest that these cases of oppression could not be further illuminated by geographical analysis.[2]

While this may seem like a perverse avoidance of central theoretical issues and crucial social and political problems, my intention in this book is to foreground the more opaque instances of exclusion, opaque, that is, from a mainstream or majority perspective, the ones which do not make the news or are taken for granted as part of the routine of daily life. These exclusionary practices are important because

they are less noticed and so the ways in which control is exercised in society are concealed. One cue for my analysis comes from Paul Rabinow,[3] who has suggested that 'we need to anthropologize the West'. Rabinow argues that we need to 'show how exotic [the West's] granted as universal (this includes epistemology and economics); [and] make them seem as historically peculiar as possible'. To me this implies that we need to recognize as problems those aspects of life of which you might be unaware, particularly if you happen to be white, adult, male, and middle class, but which contribute to the oppression of others. Human geography, in particular, should be concerned with raising consciousness of the domination of space in its critique of the hegemonic culture. This has been the objective of Marxist analysis in human geography, but as a totalizing discourse Marxism has inevitably been insensitive to difference, almost as insensitive as the dominant capitalist culture which is the subject of Marxist critique. To get beyond the myths which secure capitalist hegemony, to expose oppressive practices, it is necessary to examine the assumptions about inclusion and exclusion which are implicit in the design of spaces and places. The simple questions we should be asking are: who are places for, whom do they exclude, and how are these prohibitions maintained in practice? Apart from examining legal systems and the practices of social control agencies, explanations of exclusion require an account of barriers, prohibitions and constraints on activities from the point of view of the excluded. I would agree with Jane Flax, however, that there is no single oppressive reality, no single structure obscured by the images of the dominant culture, to uncover. She suggests that

> *Perhaps reality can have 'a' structure only from the falsely universalizing perspective of the dominant group. That is, only to the extent that one person or group can dominate the whole will reality appear to be governed by one set of rules or to be constituted by one privileged set of social relations.*

One part of the problem, then, is to identify forms of socio-spatial exclusion as they are experienced and articulated by the subject groups. These groups, however, may be seen as both dominant and subordinate, depending on the way in which they are categorized. Both men and women may experience exclusion as members of an oppressed minority group, for example, but men may be dominant in their relationship with women in a minority culture.[5] These different realities can be difficult to recognize, and the observer must appreciate that his or her own understanding of the socio-spatial worlds of others will inevitably be limited by his or her own background and perspectives. However, I still feel that it is possible, and certainly desirable, to represent other people's experience of socio-spatial exclusion while acknowledging that the question of positionality is one that has to be addressed.[6]

For the moment, rather than pursuing this argument in the abstract, I will comment on a few cases of exclusion which signal the specific kinds of socio-spatial issues which I will be considering in this book. The first concerns what is now a widely discussed problem, namely, the function of indoor shopping centres as social space.[7] These centres have become a significant mode of retail service provision in the developed capitalist economies, projected by both commercial and civic interests as progressive, and providing an improved environment for con-

sumption and leisure for all the family. In the more extravagant developments, a fantasy world of imagined places is created, effectively removing consumption from associations with need. As Shields has observed in an account of the West Edmonton Mall in Canada, the model for several very large retailing developments in North America and Europe:

> *It fragments conventional geographical space and historical time with its wild combination of interior settings; evoking disparate times and places while it seeks to impose its own stable order on the ensemble. At the turn of a corner, one is in a simulated 'New Orleans'. Another corner – 'Paris'.*

In comparable British developments, including the Meadowhall Shopping Centre, near Sheffield, which similarly recreates the romance of Paris and Florence under one roof, and the Metro Centre in Gateshead, their exoticism has stimulated a new form of holiday experience. For some, a coach trip to the shopping centre has become a substitute for a day by the sea, in Blackpool, Scarborough or Skegness. Such places clearly do provide an attractive alternative to a traditional shopping street, polluted by vehicle exhausts and exposed to the weather (and they may be rather more appealing than a decaying seaside resort). Thus, a British television documentary on the Metro Centre in Gateshead focused in a positive way on the characteristic features of international consumption style and the consumers, all apparently white, middle-class nuclear families, the kind of public which populates architects' sketches. The documentary had a rather different sub-text, however. Out of sight in the control room, employees of the private security firm which polices the centre had their eyes fixed on closed-circuit television screens. They were looking for 'undesirables', mostly groups of teenage boys who did not fit the family image projected by the company. When they were located, security guards evicted them, not just from the building but from the precinct. Such actions point to the fact that shopping centres like this one constitute a kind of ambiguous, seemingly public but actually private space. There are implicit rules of inclusion and exclusion in a built form that contribute to the structuring of society and space in a way which some will find oppressive and others appealing. 'Being in the tightly policed, semi-private interior of a mall is quite different from being "on the street". "No loitering", as the signs in the mall say. Certain types of comportment are expected'.[8] In the shopping centre management's response to the presence of adolescents, maybe not consuming very much, in a place dedicated to consumption by the family, there is a connection between the function and design of the space as determined by commercial interests and design professionals, architects and planners, and the construction of one group of the population as 'deviant', out of place, and threatening the projected image of the development. Again, Shields notes that the shopping mall introduces 'an unheard of degree of surveillance, with almost Orwellian overtones, into daily life', and, in this controlled environment, teenagers who have few other places in which to congregate are one of the principal groups targeted by the security guards. Their presence necessarily constitutes deviance.[9] Comparing this with my own experience as a teenager in the 1950s, sitting for hours over a cup of coffee in an ABC café in a north London suburb, undisturbed by staff, it appears that the boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming

public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance at the same time as spaces of consumption eliminate public spaces in city centres.

This view gains some empirical support in a number of studies of teenage subcultures. For example, in a Home Office study of 'downtown drinkers' in the planned shopping precinct in Coventry,[10] the writer reported that:

> *Unruly groups of young people were seen as a problem by approximately two out of three interviewees. As with litter, the problem is not just a local matter. Throughout the country, shopping centres often serve as convenient places for youth subcultures to meet – places to which there may be a lack of obvious alternatives. On the other hand, the mere sight of such groups, however rarely they actually infringe any laws, can be alarming to others. This is a delicate issue. [Attempts] to exclude youth groups from shopping centres are likely to bring further problems, and may also be quite unjust. Nevertheless, in Coventry, perception of unruly groups of young people as a common problem was significantly associated with the fear of crime. This link was stronger than that between perceptions of litter and fear of crime but not as powerful as that between perceptions of public drinkers and fear of crime [my italics].*

This quotation, like the television documentary on the shopping centre, suggests that it is not adolescent males as a social category, or even 'unruly' groups of young people, *per se*, who are seen as threatening; rather, it is their presence in spaces which comprise part of 'normal family space' which renders them discrepant and threatening. Exclusion may be an unintended consequence of commerical development. Adolescents will be acutely aware of discrimination against them, while their exclusion is much less likely to impinge on the consciousness of conforming adults.

In the interaction of people and the built environment, it is a truism that space is contested but relatively trivial conflicts can provide clues about power relations and the role of space in social control. This is demonstrated in a second example, dredged from memory, which concerns an incident in Philadelphia in the late 1960s. At this time, hippies were still a threatening species in Philadelphia, the category 'hippy' embracing just about any man with long hair or woman wearing beads. Rittenhouse Square, in the city centre, was popular with slightly non-conforming people at the weekend; in it was a low wall which was a convenient place to sit. One warm Sunday afternoon, there were a lot of people sitting on the wall, some playing acoustic guitars, but mostly just chatting and enjoying the sunshine. At some point, a park guard started to order people off the wall on the grounds that it was *not* a place to sit. The wall, he asserted, was there to separate the path from the grass. It was definitely not to sit on. Almost everyone acquiesced. This might have been because the park guard, who, like many agents of social control in the United States, was equipped with a revolver and a night-stick, appeared intimidating. It could also be the case that this group of middle-class American youth, having been brought up in conformist communities, were accustomed to accepting authority despite their trappings of non-conformity.

There are two aspects of this incident which are of more general significance. The first concerns ambiguity. To the park guard, the function of the wall was unambiguous. It was simply a boundary between one kind of space and another and, apparently, he could not conceive of alternative interpretations. His job was to police the wall, to ensure its sanctity and prevent its violation. It may be reading too much into the incident, but his behaviour appeared to fit a pattern noted in a number of studies of the authoritarian personality, following Adorno's early study of the psychology of authoritarianism.[11] Shils suggested that authoritarians were distrustful and suspicious, that they had *on intolerance of ambiguity*, and, thus, differentiated clearly between those on the outside, the 'other', and the relevant in-group.[12] Similarly, Rokeach[13] suggested that authoritarian individuals '[protected] inner weaknesses by a ready acceptance of the views of higher authorities and by forming unambiguous judgements which rigidly separate, into distinct categories, objects of approval and those of disapproval'.

The issue is not just about an unsuspecting park guard overloaded with theoretical meaning. Apart from the park guard's own perception of non-conformity, the social status of Rittenhouse Square also contributed to the representation of its hippy-ish occupants as conspicuously deviant. The square was surrounded by solid apartment buildings occupied by affluent middle-aged and elderly residents who saw the hippies as polluting 'their' space. In fact, the park guard admitted to me that he had been told to clear the square of young people because their presence offended the residents. The arbitrary use of power by the guard thus reflected a more fundamental aspect of power relations. The square as a contested public space exposed the conflictual nature of social relations and the design of the square itself assumed symbolic importance in this conflict. It should not be seen just as an arena where this particular power game was played, however, but as one instance of the interaction of space and people which forms part of the routines for the reproduction of power relations in an advanced capitalist society.[14]

The policing of Rittenhouse Square, a rather unsubtle example of social control, might be compared with many instances of exclusion where boundaries are drawn discretely between dominant and subordinate groups. Martin Walker notes the spread of the private pool club in the United States, an institution, like the whites-only golf club, which continues 'the discrete and self-deceiving way of modern American apartheid. It is now justified as a way to avoid the crowds, crime and drugs of the municipal pools, these being code words which are used to signify black people.'[15] Elsewhere, Mike Davis has captured the helplessness of the poor and homeless in the large North American city, faced with exclusionary developments by corporate capital.[16] Talking to a black, homeless man in downtown Los Angeles, Davis comments: 'In front of us, tens of thousands of poor people, homeless people; at back opulence, affluence, Bunker Hill, the new L.A.' He then asks: 'Could you walk up there?' and the man replies: 'If they were to catch me in that building, they would have so much security on my ass, I would probably be in jail in five minutes.' Again exclusion is felt acutely, but the homeless are rendered invisible to the affluent downtown workers by the spatial separations of city centre development which keep the underclass at a distance.

These examples give some indication of the concerns of this book, exclusions in social space which may be unnoticed features of urban life. It is the fact that

exclusions take place routinely, without most people noticing, which is a particularly important aspect of the problem. In an attempt to make these practices more transparent what I try to do in the first part of the text is to define attitudes to others which inform exclusionary practices and to set the control problem in the broader context of the cultures of modern societies. I then try to show how the processes of control are manifested in the exclusion of those people who are judged to be deviant, imperfect or marginal. A study of exclusion, however, is necessarily concerned with inclusion, with the 'normal' as much as the 'deviant', the 'same' as well as the 'other', and with the credentials required to gain entry to the dominant groups in society. Thus, I focus on processes of boundary erection by groups in society who consider themselves to be normal or mainstream. The curious practices of this majority, the oddness of the ordinary which is examined microscopically by authors and playwrights from Jane Austen to Mike Leigh, have been neglected in social geography, and one of the purposes of this book is to rectify this omission.

My treatment of space and society is concerned particularly with symbol, ritual and myth, taking cues from social anthropology and psychoanalysis, subjects which have not been overly concerned with space but which provide many useful analogues for spatial problems. I would argue that many social problems can be profitably spatialized, but, at the same time, a human geography which attempts to assume a distinct identity within social science is necessarily impoverished. For example, it seems to me that the concern of social anthropology with representation, imagery and alternative world-views should also be central to human geography, hence 'geographies' in the title of the book. To uncover these diverse geographies, reflecting varied experiences and interpretations of space and place, involves drawing on a wide range of ideas located elsewhere in the social sciences and the humanities. A post-disciplinary perspective on social and spatial problems is preferable to viewing the world from within conventional subject boundaries.

In Part I, 1 first attempt to build up pictures of the rejecting and the rejected and then travel along several theoretical avenues in order to identify exclusionary processes affecting both groups and individuals. In addition to theories of socio-spatial structuring, this section makes reference to psychoanalytic theories of the self, which assumed greater importance as the writing progressed. This was partly because I was trying to familiarize myself with this literature while working on the text but also because some ideas from psychoanalysis seemed to connect with what were, for me, more familiar arguments about boundary formation developed in social anthropology and human geography. I would not claim that this account achieves any real synthesis, but it does suggest some connections between individual and group behaviour, and between environment and behaviour, which might be integral elements of the problem.

These theoretical arguments connect with instances of exclusion at different spatial scales, starting with the home and moving out to the nation-state and questions of geopolitics. Exclusion in the home, in the locality and at the national level are not discrete issues. A number of reciprocal relationships are examined and there is, inevitably, considerable cross-referencing in this part of the book. While there are common strands to the argument here, the problems considered are very different, ranging from conflicts within families and homes to international relations.

In Part II, I get away from the usual subjects of geographical analysis to consider academics as subjects, but what I claim in this section is that we can use the same arguments to explain the exclusion of knowledge as to explain the exclusion of discrepant others. I suggest that the production of knowledge involves both the exclusion of knowledge which is deemed dangerous and the exclusion of some categories of intellectual. The processes of social segregation observable in the modern city, for example, are mirrored in the segregation of knowledge producers. The defence of social space has its counterpart in the defence of regions of knowledge. This means that what constitutes knowledge, that is; those ideas which gain currency through books and periodicals, is conditioned by power relations which determine the boundaries of 'knowledge' and exclude dangerous or threatening ideas and authors. It follows that any prescriptions for a better integrated and more egalitarian society must also include proposals for change in the way academic knowledge is produced.

I do not attempt in this book to give an account of exclusion in advanced capitalist societies which covers all salient forms of difference. There would be a long list of these, including exclusion based on race, gender, sexuality, age, and mental and physical disability. What I hope to do, however, is to clarify some of the spatial and social boundary processes which separate some groups and individuals from society and render deviant those who are different. At the same time, I suggest that social scientists need to look more closely at their own practices and develop critiques of their work which parallel their analyses of the marginalized and oppressed.

Notes

1. Thus, much of David Harvey's work could be read as a (class-based) geography of exclusion. His essay 'Class structure and residential differentiation' (in *The Urban Experience*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, pp. 109–124) is specifically concerned with closure and exclusion as they operate in the property market. In a similar theoretical vein, we could note Blair Badcock's *Unfairly Structured Cities*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984. Weberian closure theory is also concerned with exclusion — through the erection of barriers to entry into more privileged groups. Closure theory has been given a spatial dimension, particularly in Christopher Husband's work on racism. See his 'East End racism, 1900–1980', *The London Journal*, 8, 1982, 3–26.
2. Rössler's study of the connection between central place theory and the concept of *lebensraum* in Nazi Germany demonstrates that there is considerable scope for the kind of research on fascist and other authoritarian regimes which explores ideology, spatial theories and spatial practices (Mechtild Rössler, 'Applied geography and area research in Nazi society: central place theory and planning, 1933 to 1945', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7 (4), 1989, 363–400).
3. Paul Rabinow, 'Representations are social facts: modernity and postmodernity in anthropology', in James Clifford and George Marcus

(eds), *Writing Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986, 234–261. This echoes Robert Park's recommendation in his 1925 essay on the city:

> *Anthropology, the science of man, has been mainly concerned up to the present with the study of primitive peoples. But civilized man is quite as interesting an object of investigation and, at the same time, his life is more open to observation and study. Urban life and culture are more varied, subtle and complicated, but the fundamental motives in both instances are the same. The same patient methods of observation which anthropologists like Boas and Lowie have expended on the study of the life and manners of the North American Indian might be even more fruitfully employed in the investigation of the customs, beliefs, social practices and general conceptions of life prevalent in Little Italy or the lower North Side in Chicago or in recording the more sophisticated folkways of the inhabitants of Greenwich Village and the neighborhood of Washington Square, New York.*
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> *(Robert Park, The City, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1925, p. 2)*

4. Cited by Linda Nicholson (Linda Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/ Postmodernism*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 6).
5. In patriarchal Gypsy communities, for example, women suffer double exclusion, as women and as members of a marginalized minority.
6. However, agonizing over position leads to authors denying the possibility of writing with any authority about anybody other than their own social group, which may be quite narrowly defined. Given appropriate methods of investigation, I feel that some generalization about those with different world-views is possible and desirable, although there is always a risk of distortion and misrepresentation which can only be guarded against by repeated engagement with other groups.
7. Rob Shields's 1989 essay is one of the more thoughtful studies of shopping centres, but David Harvey also makes some relevant comments on the blurring of public and private space in the new arenas of consumption. See Rob Shields, 'Social spatialization and the built environment: the West Edmonton Mall', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7, 1989, 147–164, and David Harvey, 'Postmodern morality plays', *Antipode*, 24, 1992, 300–326.
8. Shields, op. cit.
9. With a thorough application of surveillance technology, the shopping centre can become a panoptican mall', echoing Jeremy Bentham's design for a model prison. See Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, Verso Press, London, 1990, pp. 240–244, on 'the mall-as-panoptican-prison' as it has been realized in inner-city Los Angeles.

10. M. Ramsay, *Downtown Drinkers: The perceptions and fears of the public in a city centre*, Crime Prevention Unit, Paper 19, Home Office, London, 1989.
11. Theodor Adorno, *et al., The Authoritarian Personality*, Norton, New York, 1982.
12. Edward Shils, 'Authoritarianism: "right" and "left' ", in R. Christie and M. Jahoda (eds), *Studies in the Scope and Method of the Authoritarian Personality*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1954.
13. Michael Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*, Basic Books, New York, 1960.
14. David Harvey makes similar points about social relations in Tompkins Square Park, New York City, where 'On a good day, we could celebrate the scene within the park as a superb example of urban tolerance for difference', but 'on a bad day . . . so-called forces of law and order battle to evict the homeless, erect barriers between violently clashing factions. The park then becomes a locus of exploitation and oppression' (1992, op. cit.).
15. Martin Walker, *Guardian*, 26 May 1990.
16. *Rear Window*, Channel 4 TV, London, 1991. As Davis puts it, rather floridly: 'The Downtown hyperstructure – like some Buckminster Fuller post-Holocaust fantasy – is programmed to ensure a seamless continuum of middle-class work, consumption and recreation, without unwonted exposure to Downtown's working-class street environments' (op. cit., 1990, p. 231).