

Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives
Professor R. Santhosh
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Lecture 26

Space, time place and flows David Harvey, Saskia Sassen and Manuel Castells

Welcome back to the class, we are beginning a new topic; we are going to have a lengthy discussion on some of the key themes in globalization literature. These themes are about space time, place, and a concept of flows and I am planning to spend this week, that is the week six, as well as week seven are trying to look at some of the important theorizations on these concepts.

And these concepts are some of the very foundational or fundamental conceptual categories in the theorisation on globalization and that these are some of the very basic categories in natural sciences, in physics. So, we are trying to understand how these terms have been theorized in social sciences and how do we make sense of this process of globalization through these categories, the category of space, the category of place, the category time and a new category or a new term that has come into picture or that has come into practice recently, that is the whole notion of flows.

And in this centre scenario, we will be discussing a series of scholars especially we will be discussing David Harvey, Saskia Sassen and most importantly, Manual castells and I hope you remember that we had a detailed discussion on Anthony Giddens and Giddens also really belongs to these scholars, who have contributed significantly to our understanding of these categories.

I hope you remember a Giddens argument about time space and distanciation where he argues that globalization is an extension of the fundamental features of modernity and he argues that the time and space get extended across the globe. So, he makes a distinction between the pre modern times and then the modern times and in the late modern times and consider this as a continuation of that discussion.

We will spend one hour on David Harvey and maybe two or three hours on Saskia Sassen and maybe four or five hours on Manual Castells, because Manual Castells is a very important scholar, a scholar of far-reaching consequences and we will spend four to five hours trying to discuss Manual Castells' work.

So as in the case of previous classes as well, we will use a combination of methods I will use PowerPoints in couple of classes. When I summarize David Harvey and Saskia Sassen, I will also use an original essay by Saskia Sassen on her argument about globe on global city, so that you get a better clarity on that and for Manual Castells, again we will have both PowerPoint presentations as well as original essays of Manual Castells as well as the essays written by others on Manual Castells.

So, in this particular class, rather than directly getting into any of these particular scholars, I want to give a very broad overview of some of the very recent debates taking place regarding space, time, place and flows.

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Central concern of spatio-temporal dimensions of the world



Modernity as a significant break in our understanding and practices of time-space relations

Relationship of capitalism with reorganization of time-space

Debate about its transformations in the late-modern era. Continuity or break?

Implications on economy, culture, politics and so on

(Contemporary Globalisation and the Politics of Space SWAPNA BANERJEE-GUHA Source: Economic and Political Weekly, DECEMBER 24, 2011, Vol. 46, No. 52 (DECEMBER 24, 2011), pp. 41-44)



And so that, what is the kind of state of the current debates and what are the most important themes of discussion. So, the central concerns in this week as well as the next week that we are going to discuss are the spatio-temporal dimensions of the world. So, what are the kinds of transformation taking place in the spatio-temporal dimensions of the world?

We know that we say that globalization is changing the world, we everybody says that, the globalization is bringing changes in the world and the world is no longer the same, the world is shrinking, we are living in a global village. We are familiar with all these theorizations, but how do sociologists or how do geographers make sense of this kind of a larger transformation? What are the changes that happen in the spatio-temporal dimensions, the dimensions of space as well as dimensions of time?

How do these transformations take place? Now, every scholar identifies modernity as a significant break in our understanding and practices of time-space relations and we know that modernity is a very loaded term, modernity not only introduces a new set of values or a new set of ideas or institutional practices, but modernity also brought in a host of new technologies.

For example, the clock, the modern calendar or the kind of a factory siren we have discussed all these topics, concepts earlier. So, how these modern technology or modern technologies of transportations, high speed rail or aeroplanes, so we are able to reach between continents within short span of time. So, these are changes, what are the consequences of these changes on the lives of people?

What are the consequences of these changes into the spatio-temporal dimensions of the world? So, there have been enormous theorizations on that, we will touch upon some of them, we will not have the time to go through each of them in detail, but we will touch upon some of them and most importantly, we will try to understand the relation between capitalism and the time space dimension.

The greatest theorist of capitalism, Karl Marx has very interesting arguments about, the relation between time and space and capitalism. He is the one who very vehemently argued about annihilation of place by time in the era of capitalism. So, we by analysing this spatio-temporal dimensions of the world, we are also looking at what kind of transformation is happening for capitalism in this late modern era.


We know that capitalism emerged during modernity and Marx was the theorist of that, but we know that capitalism expanded or capitalism proved to be much more resilient, capitalism or, or many things that Marx predicted did not come true and capitalism seems to be the most enduring, the most resilient economic system now.

Now, how did capitalism make use of these transformations happening in the spatio-temporal realm of the world? How did capitalism reinvent itself or what is the kind of relationship between capitalism and this reorganization of time and space in the contemporary times? Now, the debate about transformation in the late modern era, is it continuity or is it break? we go back to this earlier debate about the era of globalization? Does it really represent a break from the modernity? Or is it only a continuation?

And I you know that again, there is no consensus, we discussed this topic extensively, when we discussed Anthony Giddens. So, we will look into the implications of this economy, culture, politics and so on, because the implications of this spatio-temporal dimensions of this globalization is not something that is reducible to economy or polity or anything, it is a multi-faceted phenomenon, which will have significant implications on almost every aspect of human life.

So, for this particular class, I am taking material from this essay titled contemporary globalization and the political of space by Swapna Banerjee Guha, this essay appeared in EPW. So here is the details and those who want to read her essay can do that.



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"Space" as a material, social and political construct is important to understand globalization and also, a host of issues related to neoliberal developmentalism.

Since place is the arena where social structure and social relations interact, all praxis are grounded in specific places, giving rise to relations of power, domination and resistance. Thus, underlying the spatialities one finds the material framework of social relations, power structure and discursive methodologies of the common people.

Spatialisation of politics and theorisation of political economy become intensely material, unfolding the relationships between spatialities, peoples, institutions and the lived praxis that do not involve only one territory, but a highly differentiated and varied geography and many spatialities through which the nation states are contested and controlled. (Banerjee Guha; 2011)



So, she begins by saying that space as a material, social and political construct is important to understand globalization and also a host of issues related to neoliberal developmentalism. The primary argument is that, space needs to be seen as a material, political and social construct, space is not an inert category out there, a space is not a merely physical entity simply out there for you to go and observe and then to look at it from a distance, space is a construct, space is a material, social and political construct and this is an extremely important argument in geography or in sociology or in urban sociology and other things.

We completely change our understanding of space as something that is merely a kind of a physical entity out there, we understand that space gets constituted through a host of activities, space gets constructed, space gets constituted through a series of activities and once you understand how space is used in social sciences as a contested terrain or a terrain that is, that is constructed through social and political and material dimensions or material implication, then it makes this whole concept much more fascinating.

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So, I hope you make this distinction between space and place. We made it clear earlier, usually place is associated with the geographical physical place, the material place, a particular land a particular geographical area, which can be seen as something bounded. So whereas, space is a much more broader category, it is much more amorphous category and we will come to discuss that.

So, since place is the arena, where social structure and social relations interact, all praxis are grounded in specific places, giving rise to relations of power domination and resistance and this if you look at, consider this as a conventional anthropological or sociological understanding, we know that you go to a particular village or do you go to a tribal place or do you go to an urban city and then you understand that okay, all activities or praxis or praxis' and everything takes place in that geographical setting in that physical city.

So, that place is the place where every kind of social activity takes place, whether it could be domination, it could be cooperation, it could be competition, it could be whatever be there. So, all kinds of social interactions take place in a particular place. Thus, underlying the spatiality, one the find material framework of social relations, power structures and discursive methodologies of the common people.

So, now, this is a kind of a more conventional understanding that, that all these interactions and different forms of human interaction takes place in a given place and that materiality is important. Now, spatialization of politics and theorization of political economy becomes intensely material, unfolding the relationship between spatialities, people, institutions and lived praxis that do not involve only territory, but a highly differentiated and very geography and many spatialities, through which the nation states are contested and controlled.


Now, from this particular kind of a framework, which I mentioned as a more conventional understanding of you know, social sciences, when you look into the contemporary times, when you talk about the globalized world, when we talk about the contemporary period of extreme form of globalization, what we are seeing is a completely different story and this story tells you that if you are completely focused only on the geographical location or if you are focused only on the physical place, then you are not going to understand things completely.

So, spatialisation of politics looking into the spatial aspects of politics and theorization of political economy, becomes intensely material. Of course, it involves material, unfolding the relationship between spatiality people institutions and lived practices that do not involve only one territory, but a highly differentiated and varied geography and many spatialities through which nation states are contested and control.

So, what she is saying that this new political economy of course, which is material and the relationship between spatialities and people and institutions are not only confined into one territory in, one place, but you will have to look into different types of highly differentiated and varied geographies and many spatialities through which the nation states are contested and controlled. So, the nation state becomes an important player in that and the conventional authority of nation state is contested.

At the same time we cannot say that the nation state is becoming absolutely irrelevant, but this particular given geography is questioned or the relevance of this particular in a physical place or a bounded geographical area that no longer tells you the complete story, the flow of, capital flow of labour, flow of investment flow of technology, all these things really invite our attention to a much more complicated story between a territory, the capital, and the nation state.

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- From the point of view of economic globalisation, capital's increasing use of cheap labour in recent time in discrete locations of several countries, outsourcing services and production in locations far and near, is again a reflection of a distinct spatiality of its contemporary accumulation strategy leading to penury and impoverishment of the working class.
 - Tension and conflict may arise (Lefebvre 1974) over the use of space for individual or social purposes and its domination by state and other forms of class power.
 - Social movement on the rights of communities over natural resources and against the exploitation of corporates



From the point of view of economic globalization, capital's increasing use of cheap labour in recent time, in discrete locations of several countries, outsourcing services and production in locations far and near is again a reflection of a distinct spatiality of its contemporary accumulation strategy leading to a penury and impoverishment of the working class.

We know that how with the rise of globalization, completely different kinds of job opportunities came to India, I hope you all know that there was a call centre bubble, the call centres became a very important avenue for employment some ten years back. In almost every major city there was huge call centre, jobs for companies were set up and quite a lot of youth got employed, but it was a just a bubble, it was just a bubble and that bubble burst in a short span of five to six years and most of the people who worked there were forced to look for something else.

And we also know that these call centres were actually a result of the outsourcing, the process of outsourcing whereby companies that are physically located in Europe or in America, they had outsourced these jobs to people in India, because we hear you get educated youth who can converse well in English.

So, you understand that from a conventional capitalist, a system where every worker works within a particular geographical area, every worker works within a particular factory, from there, we have come across or we have come to a situation where a company could be headquartered in Seattle or in San Francisco or in some other part, but they could actually outsource their works to very remote places in the world.

So, as a result, what happens the capitalists increasingly use cheap labour in the recent times, in discrete locations to several countries, outsourcing, services and production of local locations far and near is again a reflection of the distinct spatiality of its contemporary accumulation strategy.

So, this capitalist accumulation, which is one of the central features of capitalism is continuing unabated or it is becoming more efficient because, now the logic of capitalism or logic of capital is no longer confined within the geographic boundaries. Now, tension and conflict may arise (Lefebvre, 1974) over the use of space for individual or social purposes and its domination by state and other forms of class.

So, we are not discussing Lefebvre, but please keep in mind that he is a very important French scholar. Now there are social movement on the rights of communities over natural resources and against exploitation of corporates. Swapna Banerjee invites our attention to a series of agitations that are taking place in India, where the multinational companies have made enough claims over the natural resources in which people especially indigenous communities, tribal people have been living for the past several centuries.

And that has, led to quite a lot of upheaval, social unrest and social movements. So, how do we make sense of that, this particular phenomenon, whether it is in Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar or in Jharkhand, you come across a host of such kind of stories of indigenous people very strongly fighting against the attempt by multinational companies to take over their land.

And all these examples are illustrations of the kind of points that we are actually discussing, the kind of accumulation strategies of the capitalism and that particular strategy takes a completely different form, regarding the kind of spatial logic in a late modern society.

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- Globalisation primarily concerns the goal of equalisation of profit with unhindered movement of goods, services, technology and selective labour power for the need of a constantly expanding market that essentially represents levelling of the globe at the behest of capital, exacting equality in the conditions of exploitation of labour (Marx 1967 edition) in every sphere of production.
- Formation of a transnational operated space by global capital within the boundaries of the nation state in the contemporary era. Consequently, globalisation needs to be theorised as a reconfiguration of superimposed social spaces that operates on multiple geographical scales.



Globalization primarily concerns the goal of equalization of profit with unhindered movement of goods, service, technology and selective labour power for the need of a constantly expanding market that essentially represents levelling of the globe at the behest of the capital, exactly equality in the conditions of exploitation of labour. Especially Marx has very interesting observations about the spatial aspects of capitalism and that is there in his work on capital, that is there in his work on Communist Manifesto.

So, in many places, he has argued about how capitalism has this insatiable appetite for more and more profit and how do they realize this quest for more and more profit by looking into, by working on these categories. Globalization primarily concerns of the goal of equalization of profit with unhindered movement of goods, services, technology and selective labour power for the need of constantly expanding market.

Because capitalism requires a constant expansion of market, a saturation of a market means it is a death bell of the of the capitalism. That essentially represent levelling of the globe at the behest of the capital, exacting equality in the conditions of exploitation of labour. So, formation of a transnational operated space by global capital within the boundaries of the nation state in the contemporary era.

Consequently, globalization needs to be theorized as a reconfiguration of the superimposed social spaces that operate on multiple geographical scales. Now, the point here is that there is a formation of a transnational space operated by global capital within the boundaries of nation states in the contemporary era.

So, how do you make sense of, for example, a multinational company a company that is into mining in a forest land in Jharkhand? How do we make sense of this kind of a particular kind of a capitalist expansion, how do we make sense of the kind of economic practices that is going on in that particular place?

So, she argues or the general argument is that there is a formation of a transnational operative space, this space, the particular mine in a Jharkhand in a village in Jharkhand could be only one site in which the kind of a transnational capital takes its shape, and by global capital within the boundaries of the nation states in the contemporary era.

Consequently, globalization needs to be theorized as a reconfiguration of superimposed social space that operate on multiple geographical scales. These corporate entities, they superimpose a kind of a particular social space, a particular social space is superimposed on the existing, multiple geographical scales.

So, these multiple geographical scales could be something that we are very much utterly unfamiliar with. It is not the kind of your administrative or other kind of the geographical scales but from the point of view of capital, this could be completely different kinds of multiple geographical scales.

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- Instead of eliminating absolute space - which, anyway, is not its agenda - global capital creates and recreates innumerable absolute spaces as a part of a largely produced framework of relative space (by building, fragmenting and carving out newer spatial configurations with specific human practice and circumstances).
- This leads to "annihilation of space by time" - a drive famously described by Marx (1973 edition) as capital's globalising dynamic - abolishing all spatial barriers to capital's accumulation process, in search of cheaper raw materials, fresh sources of labour power, new markets and new investment opportunities, to essentially create disintegration of space and marginalisation of peoples based on disparate levels of development in respective regions. The spatiality of the above process is further shaped by the geographies of cultural forms and practices of countries and regions and hence may vary from one spatial framework to the other.



Instead of eliminating absolute space, which anyway is not its agenda. global capital creates and recreates innumerable absolute spaces as a part of its largely produced framework of a relative space by building, fragmenting and carving out new spatial configurations with a specific human practice and circumstances.

So, the argument is that this global you need to be, we need to be absolutely sensitive to the larger logic through which the global capital work. So, the global capital is not interested in eliminating the absolute space. But global capital creates and recreates innumerable absolute spaces as a part of a largely produced framework of relative space, by building, fragmenting and carving out newer spatial configurations with the specific human practices and circumstances.

Now, this leads to annihilation of space by time, a term famously described by Marx as capitalist globalizing dynamic, abolishing all spatial barriers to capitals accumulation process in search of a cheaper raw materials, fresh sources of labour power, new markets and new investment opportunities to essentially create disintegration of space and marginalization of peoples, based on disparate levels of development in respective regions.

So, this is why the similar point as Marx argued, the capitalism wants to move beyond a given territory, it wants to move beyond a given spatial aspect and through technologies and other things it actually annihilates space by time, the more efficient method of transportation, movement of people, new technologies are brought in.

So, you overcome the limitations of space by inventing better and better technologies and abolishing old spatial barriers to capital accumulation process in search of a way cheaper raw material and fresh sources of labour power, wherever labour is cheap, the manufacturing or this kind of industries move to those places, new markets and new investment opportunities to essentially create disintegration of space and marginalization of peoples based on disparate levels of development in respective regions.

The spatiality of the above process is further shaped by the geographies of cultural forms and practices of countries and regions and hence may vary from one spatial framework to another. Now, once these are the central features of capitalism, how they take shape, how they articulate all are highly dependent on the cultural and other geographies of the specific countries.

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- In this sense, globalisation emerges as both spatial and temporal: spatial, featuring continual expansion or restructuring of capitalist territorial organisation, and temporal, featuring continual acceleration of capital's socially average turnover time.
- The current process of restructuring space, a double edged process allowing free movement of capital, goods and commodities and limited movement of labour (power), has, however entailed a unique dialectical interplay (Emmanuel 1978) between the endemic drive towards space-time compression (the moment of de-territorialisation) and the continual production of relatively fixed, stabilised configurations of territorial organisation on multiple geographical scales (the moment of re-territorialisation). In the above process, profit rates are equalised internationally by competition while wages are not.



In this sense, globalization emerges as both spatial and temporal, a spatial featuring continual expansion or restructuring of capitalist territorial organization; and temporal, featuring continual acceleration of capitals socially average turnover time. So, the kind of a connection between globalization and capitalism is very, very strong, when we talk about globalization, when we talk about the accelerated rate of travel that and then increase in production, we realize that the globalization is really serving as one of the fundamental functions of capitalism.

Because, globalization emerges as a both spatial and temporal, spatial because of featuring continual expansion or a restructuring of capitalist territorial organization. The logic of capital either capital as a form of resource, as a form of raw material or as a possibility of market or as a possibility of source of cheap labour.

So, these are the ways in which capital moves across the new spaces and also temporarily, it turns out the pace of this production becomes so fast. Now, the current process of restructuring of space, a double edge process allowing free movement of capital goods and commodities and limited movement of labour power has however, entailed a unique dialectical interplay between the endemic drive towards space- time compression.

The moment of de-territorialisation and continual production of relatively fixed stabilized configurations of territorial organization on multiple geographical scales, the moment of re-territorialisation. In the above process, profit rates are equalized internationally by competition, while wages are not.

She invites our attention to these very interesting dialectical processes between the de-territorialisation where unlike the previous forms of capital production, where a company is situated in a geographic area, it is built on a particular place and everybody works there.


So, in comparison with that, you are now increasingly moving into de-territorialisation, de-territorialisation where you or your company is headquartered in some other place and you have branches all over the world and you keep shifting your units of production from place to place, you are constantly in the search out for the cheaper labour or cheaper availability of raw materials, you are finding new markets.

So, in that sense there is a major kind of time space compression as Giddens argues and also a kind of a moment of de-territorialisation, you are not fixed into anything particular. At the same time, we know that there is also a kind of a re-territorialisation taking place because you have to have a material dimension to this capitalistic production.

Capitalism, whether it is through investment or through market or through production, there has to be certain kind of a place, this emphasis on space, on place could be momentary but it is still important and you have to have a factory somewhere, in the case of previous example of this call centre boom.

So, this call centre boom had to identify places like Bangalore or Hyderabad for a short period in time and after that it disappeared to a large extent. But that particular time when it identified these two major cities, Gurgaon or Noida or other places, these places have its own geography, it has its own placeness, it has its own concrete setting. So, there is a kind of a dialectical process between this re-territorialisation and de-territorialisation.

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- On national scales, not only territorial borders have become more porous to international capital, the role of national entity has also got decentred by creating a wide range of sub- and supra-national forms of territorial organisations. Examples: SEZs of industry, port and so on.

- This new wave of multiscalar exploitation is fashioned in a way that not only reflects the control of space by various forms of institutional and state power but also the import of a collective praxis of spatial struggles arising therefrom.



On national scales, not only territorial borders have become more porous to the international capital, the role of national entity also has got decentred by creating a wide range of sub and super national forms of territory organizations. Examples, SEZs of industry, port and so on and I do not think that I need to elaborate it further.

Because ever since we accepted or we embrace this free trade policies, there have been quite a lot of substantial changes happened in terms of the state's control over certain geographic areas. So now, we have declared huge swaths of areas as special economic zones and this includes production spaces, this includes ports, this includes airport, this includes a host of other areas.

So, now, what has happened or what is actually happening through these kinds of transformations, what is happening to the role of the nation state and these are the place where nation state has limited control in comparison with other places, which are not really kind of declared as the special economic zones or so these territorial borders are becoming more and more porous.

We discussed that or we will rather discuss it in future more in detail, what is happening to nation state in the era of globalization. Because, earlier we believe that nation state has absolute control sovereignty over the territory. Now, this territory seems to be really becoming very porous.

International capital, the role of national entity has also got descended by creating a wide range of sub- and supra - national forms of territorial organization. So, for example, a huge multinational company will have ownership on a huge tract of land and virtually the local government agencies, the local Panchayat or corporation or police, they will have very limited, access or very limited power over that.

So, what we are seeing is a multi-scalar manifestation of the capital, the influence of capital in the era of globalization and this new wave of multi scalar exploitation is fashioned in a way that not only reflects the control of spaces by various forms of institutional and state power, but also import of a collective practice of spatial struggle arising there from and she actually elaborates further on the kind of struggle that ordinary people are the people whose land is alienated or people who are being overthrown from those places or people who have not been given proper resettlement, even after there have been evicted from their land and this land is handed over to these multinational companies.

Their lives become important. And this kind of dispossession, accumulation by dispossession, it is a very, very important argument about the post or the late capitalist expansion. The whole argument about how capitalism succeeds by dispossessing people, so this accumulation by dispossession also creates quite a lot of dissent among the people, it creates quite a lot of sections of people, who are really poor in various sense and that is an important argument or important section important dimension of the globalization that we are forced to face with.

So this, I thought, I will introduce you This paper because it deals with some of the very important concerns of the relation between a spatiality spatial temporal dimensions of globalization and some of the important customs important, crises that are unfolding in front of us about poverty, about exploitation, about eviction and a host of other things. So, let us stop here and we will continue with the class next day. Thank you.