Counter-cartographies of a diasporic urbanism:
politics of representation, migrancy and multiculturalism

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Introduction

The relationship between architecture and migrancy

The definition of architecture has changed over the years from being based solely around the concept of buildings and dwelling to a broader meaning that includes the social and political processes involved in building and making space. Architecture thus includes both a critique of cities and urban spaces as well as the processes that form them; in fact the city itself is now seen as a process, for example the work of Rem Koolhaas and the Harvard Design School’s Project on the City has looked at the Pearl River Delta in China and Lagos in Nigeria as case studies for the interrogation of the urban environment as process. The work of the urban practice Chora is also based around this reading of the city. This definition of architecture means that it is much more susceptible and accountable to the world in which it operates and thus the idea of architecture as a discipline for and practised solely by the white, western male is questioned. Whilst a lot of work has been done around the question of gender and architecture, for example the edited book by Jane Rendell, the engagement of architecture with issues around migration and the post-colonial has been strangely lacking. This topic has been theorised in the work of literary critics and cultural theorists like Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, and their work will form the basis of my research around the question of migration, the post-colonial and urban practice.

My own interest stems from being a migrant myself and of experiencing the edges and limits of the city that are left untouched by the prevalent discourse on architecture and urbanism. Having lived in Pakistan till the age of eleven and then in England, I know the feeling of being torn between cultures and places and of seeing borders and boundaries where none exist for other people. Writing this on a visit to Pakistan, the familiar feeling of not quite fitting is still with me, perhaps stronger here for the first time than in England. But then at times I can almost believe that the other life in England doesn’t exist, that I have only ever lived here. What are the consequences of this relationship with a country or a city, in London especially, where the recent flux in the population has meant that whilst migrants from elsewhere have moved to London in large numbers, the native population of the city is moving out.

This complexity of the contemporary city requires new ways of understanding beyond the traditional techniques of architecture. The mapping of invisible phenomena such as zones of control or the flow of capital and people reveals the hidden processes that constitute the urban. For example, the collective research project, ‘Solid Sea,’ by multiplicity looks at the Mediterranean as a collection of routes, borders, boundaries and ‘regulated bands of water.’ The mapping of this area through a series of case studies is producing an on-going contemporary atlas of the region. I see my own work situated at the intersection of this kind of urban practice and certain forms of artistic practice that use the city as the subject and site. The emphasis placed on the politics of representation in artistic practice allows for new ways of articulating the city whilst including ‘other’ narratives, such as the

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3 The recent rise in international migration to London has been accompanied by an increase in the number of Londoners moving to the rest of the UK. Currently around 350 thousand people both arrive in London and leave London annually.” in Data Management and Analysis Group, “Dmag Briefing 2005/39: London’s Changing Population,” (London: Greater London Authority, 2005).
migrant or the post-colonial. For example, the video-essayist, Ursula Biemann has mapped the lives of female workers of the Free Trade Zone along the Mexico-US border.⁵ In doing this she has revealed what it takes to produce the consumer items that facilitate our lives in the west, but crucially she has also revealed a 'counter-geography' that maps the link between global trade and sexualised female labour.

**Borders and borderzones in the contemporary city**

Another important aspect of the work mentioned above, is the emphasis on borders and the prominence of these artificial sites in the lives of many people. Contemporary research on the subject speaks not only of 'borders' but also of 'boundaries' and 'borderzones.' These conceptualisations vary from the 'border' being an artificial divide that only manifests itself through the act of crossing, to a 'borderzone' being the thickening of the area around the border, where its influence ranges. The 'boundary' on the other hand is seen as less rigid, allowing for some crossings and exchanges,⁶ turning the site of division and containment into a fertile plain where subjectivities slip and new cultures form. Another project by multiplicity, 'border device(s),' maps these conditions and gives them spatial form through casestudy examples. Borders thus represent artificial divides at a time when the nation-state is seen by many as serving the main purpose of containing and dividing populations.⁷ Africa is the most obvious example of the colonial need to carve up land into territories that bear no relation to the people inhabiting its vast spaces, colonial India being another good example of the British strategy of divide and rule. These spatial practices of the coloniser based on the power gained through knowledge and the use of representational practices will form an important part of my research and their subversive use will inform my own strategy of researching the urban environment in ways 'other' than the traditional techniques of urban practice.

**Alternative models of architectural practice**

New formations of architectural practice inform this process, from the work and discussions I have been involved in whilst working at muf, an art and architecture practice concerned with the public realm, to the work of the AAA, an interdisciplinary group based in Paris whose founding member, Doina Petrescu, is my tutor. Traditional architectural practice is constrained by its product or outcome, in the form of an object, rather than a more holistic approach that includes the full spectrum of the social, political, economic and the migrant, at the confluence of which the city is located. The focus on interdisciplinary practice or rather "extra-disciplinary practice"⁸ allows for collaboration and a true engagement with this wide subject area, whilst acknowledging that this kind of work is not possible through the traditional mode of operation of the solo architect. It also speaks of the difficulties inherent in this way of working, as Katherine Clarke of muf states;

"collaboration is like a love affair. it segues from admiration to anxiety, rejection to rage, desire to envy, powerlessness to misunderstanding, from not getting what you want, but maybe coming nearer to knowing what that might be…"⁹

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⁹ Katherine Clarke, “How to: a description of what it takes to make a relationship to make a thing” in Jane Rendell, Public Art Journal: A Place Between (public art forum, 1999).
In addition to this, an emphasis on research and action creates an urban practice that recognises its subject, the city, as a public entity, or even “the public” and this reading of the city leads to questions of responsibility and accountability. The work of many contemporary urban practices inhabits this space, including the two mentioned above and other networks and organisations, such as the Camp for Oppositional Architecture, public works and CityMine(d). They all envisage architectural practice as research and action/intervention and this methodology of “action-research” informs their work to varying extents. This way of working also enables a critique of the official narratives of highly orchestrated public spaces and juxtaposes them with the alternative realities of lived urban space. Grounded in the observation and consequent notation of the city in new ways, they reveal the hidden structures of power and the unplanned processes of self-regulation within the city. The work of the Berlage Institute has taken this thinking further by asking the question of where to go “beyond mapping.” One such answer could be provided through the strategy of temporary occupation/intervention, where an action is used as a testing ground for further proposals. Thus the question, “what does it take to …” is a way of framing this new way of working and in a way my research can be said to ask the question, “what does it take to include the migrant in contemporary accounts of the city?”

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, each of which addresses a main aspect of the research question, including a case study based around the Kurdish population of North London.

1 - Post-colonial Subjectivity

I began with the chapter on post-colonial subjectivity, as this for me is the major omission within urban practice. The aim of the chapter is to look at the work of several post-colonial critics in order to determine different ways of articulating a post-colonial subjectivity. So far, I have looked at the work of two post-colonial critics, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, who are considered alongside Edward Said as the three main theorists of this area from a literary studies perspective. The work of Homi Bhaha has been highly influential in articulating the colonial relationship beyond the binary oppositions of power and powerlessness, arguing that the subject position of the colonised is not merely the effect of the dominant discourse. This is a step beyond the work of Edward Said who kept the binary oppositions intact in his seminal book, Orientalism. Rather, Bhabha has argued the case for hybridity and mixing in contributing to a post-colonial subjectivity. His work has used both the deconstructivist approach of Derrida and the psychoanalytical work of both Freud and Laçan, resulting in the articulation of the relationship between Freud’s theory of sexual fetishism and colonial desire and the possibility of resistance through mimicry strategies.

Spivak’s work on the articulation of post-colonial subjectivity has a feminist perspective as well as being profoundly influenced by the work of Derrida. Whereas Derrida has been criticised by some for not having engaged fully with a political project, Spivak’s work can be seen as a political appropriation of Derrida. She is also one of a few writers in the west whose work has had a long-standing concern with the subaltern and she has used deconstructivist strategies in the
articulation of a subaltern subjectivity. In her work with the Subaltern Studies Group, who have been looking for an account of the subaltern in the texts of the elite, she has deconstructed literature written in her native Bengali to try to give an ‘other’ account of the lives of the rural poor in India. Thus Spivak uses literature as an antidote to the sanctioned history of the nation and following her, other practices such as story-telling, narrative or video can also be used in a deconstructivist fashion to reveal an ‘other’ history. This way of operating, which for Spivak can never exist without a one-to-one engagement with the people, also becomes a strategic use of a politics of the imagination.

The politics of knowledge

The second area of research has been on methodology, which is important not only in doing theoretical work but especially in carrying out the work related to the case study and in seeing how each informs the other. The starting point in feminist critical thought has been the recognition of the link between the production of knowledge and the practice of power. This has meant that political struggle in feminist methodology is central and it can therefore be used for collective struggles against oppression, allowing for temporary alliances between disparate groups for a common cause. The idea of a ‘situated knowledge’ is also a key concept, in that all knowledge is subjective and hence the subject position of the researcher must always be recognised. This line of thought has also critiqued the category ‘woman’ in feminist thinking, where the subjectivity of all women is homogenised into one over-arching category with differences in race, class etc. being left unacknowledged. This question of subjectivity means that the myth of objectivity and impartiality is confounded and what is instead required is an outlook that is aware of both the subjectivity of the researcher and the research subject. The strategic use of multiple subject positions allows for a nomadic subjectivity that can create a more ‘objective’ knowledge.

A radical politics for the contemporary city

The third topic of research follows on from the questions raised in the first two chapters; if difference is not only allowed but is celebrated, then there will always be the question of how to manage the exclusions inherent within public space. This is related in political theory to new notions of democracy that allow for these conflicts of interest to be played out. The performative, which for Bhabha is used in the articulation of a minority culture, is here used in the negotiations of a democracy at work. Thus, Chantal Mouffe’s notion of an agonistic public space is constructed around her conviction that the antagonistic dimension of the social and the public should be channelled in order to create a viable democratic process instead of striving for a fixed democratic product.

Derrida has looked at a different concept of democracy that recognises the use of friendship in Greek philosophy as the basis for democracy, where the exemplary friendship would be between two males. He has theorised what a democracy that was based on an ‘other’ type of friendship would be and whether this concept would be viable without the link to a nation-state. Derrida’s notion of hospitality as the basis of ‘a democracy to come’ is an articulation of this new form of democracy that is underlined by the risk inherent in offering unconditional hospitality.
Case study based around the Kurdish population of North London

I have started this research by trying to find a way of engaging with the Kurdish community that allows me to make long-term relationships with members of the community. There is now a substantial Kurdish presence in areas of London, especially Green Lanes and Stoke Newington (where I live) and where I have conducted interviews and attended events at the local community centre. This centre is well known as a hub for the organisation and support of the liberation movement of the Kurds and one wall of the community centre is covered in photographs of men and women who gave their lives to the cause. Recently the centre has become more focused on local issues as people have come to realise that this is home, however flawed, and the politics of the centre has changed emphasis from the freedom movement to trying to improve the quality of life of those living in London.

Mapping

I have used the technique of mapping and speaking together by asking people to draw a map of Kurdistan from their memories and to mark on it important areas and places that are spoken of in conversation. The misuse of the technique of mapping can become a process of decolonisation and the maps and the words that go with them reveal hidden meanings, relationships and political allegiances. The interviews were recorded by video and I have produced a short film that overlays the conversations, personal maps and the generally accepted map of Kurdistan. In keeping with a feminist methodology, I have used an informal mode of interviewing, which valourises personal histories and narrative over factual information gathering. Since the personal and the everyday is given weight, the number of interviews carried out is less important than the analysis and interpretation of them.
POST-COLONIAL SUBJECTIVITY

in the work of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak
The limitations of identity politics within post-colonial theory

Post-colonial criticism is based around a search for self-definition and the opening up of a critical space in which to conceptualise difference. The question of difference has so far been related to a politics of identity, which by definition is also a politics that excludes others. This perhaps is the greatest challenge to and critique of this mode of thought. bell hooks has also criticised the term ‘post-colonial’ for being premature, claiming that even after a departure from the colonies the processes of decolonisation are still in progress. The role of post-colonial theory and the prominence of cultural difference within western discourse may help in this process, as there are an increasing number of critics from former colonies within the western academy. But this has its own limitations with all the problems inherent in speaking for something or someone. To live with the coloniser means to learn their ways and habits and to be, to a certain extent, complicit in the processes of colonisation that are still taking place.
Textual strategies of deconstruction that reveal hidden meanings

Jacques Derrida started the project of deconstruction in the sixties as a reaction to the structuralist approach to language which saw it as a system of signs, with the signifier being the word and the signified the subject. Derrida following Saussre claimed that language can only ever be a description of differences as every word is an approximation and can never wholly describe the signified, resulting in the meaning being perpetually deferred. This reading of language sees it as a series of metaphors and argues that there are inherent contradictions within any text that are revealed through the rupture between the metaphors used and the central argument of the text. This new way of reading can reveal hidden meanings within a text and furthermore can reveal the inadequacy of the concepts that form the foundations of western thinking. The binary oppositions at the heart of western theory, which deconstruction helps to displace, are marked by these contradictions. Derrida’s work has thus been concerned with the margins and fissures of theory, just as it has been concerned with the margins of a text – the footnotes, notes in parentheses and other appendages to a text that less careful readers would ignore.

Marginality and the loss associated with privilege

Gayatri Spivak has consistently used deconstructivist thinking in her work and she has sought to bring the political to Derrida. In accordance with a feminist approach, she strives to give a political grounding to philosophy and not just to practice theory for theory’s sake. She claims that the reversing and displacing of binary oppositions that is the basis of deconstruction can offer new ways of thinking for the feminist writer. It allows one to question the oppositions that are the basis of western thought. According to Derrida, deconstruction is the realisation that in every text there is a desire to explain and there is the attempt to make every word and metaphor produce this explanation. Spivak has argued that the desire to explain is the desire to place oneself in the world and that this in turn assumes an explainable universe. The act of explanation thus decimates difference by assuming that everything is within the scope of understanding. The result is a homogenous world that suppresses difference. On a more specific level she sees explanation as a manifestation of a politics – a way of being in the world. Thus each politics must have its own margins and exclusions and is in fact defined by the politics/explanations of its margins. The challenge then is to know this and to not produce excuses/explanations for the other side. For Spivak, deconstruction is the tool used to mediate between the centre and the margin;

“...the deconstructivist can use herself (assuming that she is at her own disposal) as a shuttle between the centre (inside) and the margin (outside) and thus narrate a displacement.”

This is also related to Spivak’s desire for post-colonial intellectuals to realise that part of the process of engaging with those at the margins is to understand that the privilege of a western education and way of life can alienate. She urges that the task ahead is to, “unlearn our privilege as our loss.”

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2 "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds..., The Post-Colonial Studies Reader (London: Routledge, 1995) p.28
The exclusion of the performative in speech-act theory

Derrida has critiqued western philosophy for the binary opposition between the written and the oral and he has deconstructed this distinction in Austin’s speech-act theory. This he claims has an exclusion at its heart that renders it unworkable, namely, certain forms of performative speech such as the soliloquy. The exclusion is based on the identification of a difference in speech and writing, where speech is considered to be contextual, whilst writing is considered to be without context. Derrida’s assertion is that any part of speech and writing can be taken out of context and put into quotation marks thus rendering a different meaning. The exclusion of the soliloquy and other performative speech acts from speech-act theory is a way of getting around this problem. Spivak notes, “… the principle of an undecidable and/or alterable (to the point of rupture) context is the possibility of every mark, written or spoken.” This position raises the possibility that context is not exclusive to oral speech.

In a famous dialogue, Derrida and John Searle, a contemporary of his who is also an advocate of speech-act theory, work through the differences in these two approaches. For Searle, the existence of a form of writing that makes communication possible without the recipient being present is central and he demonstrates this with the example of the shopping list. But for Derrida this means that one’s own presence can be enough or is equated to another’s and so there is no difference between the sender and the receiver. This deconstruction allows Derrida to include all forms of communication within speech-act theory, including the soliloquy. Thus for Derrida both speaking and writing are forms of interpreting the world and this process produces the possibility of communication. The deconstruction of Searle’s position reveals that, “… the necessary possibility of the absence of sender and receiver is the positive condition of possibility of ‘communication’.”

The radically other

Derrida has criticised western philosophy for its over emphasis on the self-conscious. He has been influenced by some strands of Freud’s work, in which the conscious ego is perceived as an entangled mess rather than being contained within neat boundaries. This view allows Derrida to think of the subject as something that is not singular but varying and divided and its heterogeneity allows for the possibility of communication, which is embodied in a two-way traffic named the unconscious.

Derrida thus states that the ego’s subjectivity, or the unconscious, is the limit of the radically other and this limitation cannot be reached through speech-act theory. Instead he uses psychoanalysis to critique western philosophy and his work is littered with alternative definitions; he speaks of the trace over simple origin, difference over identity, supplementarity over the logic of non-contradiction and the logic of iterability over repetition. Iteration in this sense is repetition and communication, which allows for the irreducible element – the otherness within the
same. It therefore follows that identities are iterable and impure but can establish consensus through communication.

“This iterability – like the trace structure – is the positive condition of possibility of identification, the very thing whose absolute rigour it renders impossible.”

To go back to Searle’s original exclusion, Derrida can now include the performative or the parasitic within this new discourse, as iterability is not limited by convention. It blurs the simplifying boundaries between the inside and the outside, between reality and fiction. This breaking down of binary oppositions marks deconstruction as it does iteration; it requires a profound change in thinking that celebrates displacement, disturbance and subversion. It allows for a questioning of authoritarian fictions as well as apathy and self-centrality but it also shows the way to a condition of possibility of the positive. It opens the way for a collective practice towards social justice.

The striations of class and caste in a deconstructivist approach to the ‘subaltern’

Gayatri Spivak has had a long relationship with the work of Derrida; she takes on the deconstructivist project and puts it within an overtly political context. Her work has also had an ongoing interest in the effects of colonialism and she has combined this with a feminist and Marxist approach. She is also one of a few post-colonial thinkers that have made a mark in western academic circles and yet whose work has had a long and deeply held concern with the subaltern. As Spivak has argued, most post-colonial thinkers only tend to engage with the immigrant populations of the West and the subaltern is neglected even as she/he is left behind. Although Spivak uses the term ‘subaltern’ liberally, she has recently spoken of its overuse, which has arisen from a popular unease with the term ‘Third World.’ This has resulted in a distortion in the meaning of the word, from the ‘subaltern’ being the people within the Third World without a voice such as the poor, the lower classes or castes and the tribal/indigenous populations, to it meaning anyone within the Third World. This second reading of the term does not take into account the striations produced through class and caste structure. Spivak’s own definition only points to some of the most disadvantaged people within the Third World and it relies on Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies Group’s description of the term, derived from the work of Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci.

The use of literature in revealing an ‘other’ history

Spivak following Derrida has argued that deconstruction can reveal the limits of theory. She employs deconstruction to read texts in her native Bengali and uses western theory to find new meanings within that text. Deconstruction thus allows her to place an emphasis on, as well as to question the text, whilst also interrogating its given meaning. This approach has allowed her to question the authority of history over literature. Why are some histories more valid than others when all are discursively formed? This thinking has also proved useful in her work with the Subaltern Studies Group, members of whom are trying to uncover an

5 Ibid p.87


7 The Subaltern Studies Group have done extensive work on uncovering a history of India from the perspective of the forgotten poor. Cf.. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Selected Subaltern Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
alternative history of colonial India. As such Spivak’s work is concerned with the situatedness of knowledge and she maintains that it is not possible to report or discuss any event without the presence of the ‘I.’ She follows Foucault, alongside other feminist writers, in asserting that it is not possible to speak without assigning oneself a position. This in turn allows for a blurring of the distinction between history and literature. Where does literature begin and history end? Consequently each of the disciplines uses the techniques of the other; hence all history is discursively formulated just as all literature uses history as a way of situating itself. Although it may be true that a text can move someone ‘naturally,’ there is another perhaps more important way of engaging with a text, which is in the form of a pact between the author and the reader. In this contract there are certain implicit guarantees, which are the modes of interpretation, without which a text cannot be understood. Spivak calls this a ‘social guarantee’ and perhaps her work can be described as an interrogation of this guarantee and a questioning of its purpose and effects.

Deconstructing representational boundaries between disciplines ...

The use of literary representation in revealing other histories has been the primary work of the Subaltern Studies Group, as described above. The lack of first-hand material on these populations has meant that the group blurs the boundaries between what is historical record per se and the reading between the lines and inferring from the omissions. Since the account of the subaltern can only be found in the texts of the elite, the subaltern consciousness can be described as fragmented and made up of a number of contradictory strands. Spivak has opposed early attempts by the Subaltern Studies Group to find a pure subaltern consciousness on the grounds that the subaltern was not in control of his/her destiny. Spivak goes on controversially to state that the subaltern is in fact an effect of the dominant nationalist discourse in Indian society. This some feel denies the subaltern a voice but in fact what Spivak contends is that the struggles of the subaltern are ‘supplementary’ to the dominant struggle for national independence. Hence the use of deconstructivist language helps to stage the subaltern consciousness and to allow political struggle to be seen as a series of tactical relationships that can shift according to need. This Spivak calls an ‘emergent collective consciousness’ and it is what can also be seen as the possibility for political change. The tactic of reading between the lines of the dominant discourse has lead to a blurring of the boundaries between history and literature and Spivak’s own contributions have been the rereading of stories by the Bangladeshi activist/writer Mahasweta Devi in order to reveal something of the life of the subaltern. Thus literature becomes an antidote to the sanctioned history of a nation/empire.

... and in identity formation

Within these concerns, the question of who represents and why, is embedded. Can only a woman be a feminist and only non-whites speak of racism? Perhaps the problem starts if only men and white people are allowed to speak and to be
heard. Although if only a woman can talk of feminism and non-whites of racism it can become a way of legitimising suffering – I suffer therefore I am. This also leads to the problematic conclusion that knowledge rests on identity, when in fact knowledge is created through perpetual differentiation. In the case of the subaltern it means that as soon as one is able to speak, the position of the subaltern is forsaken and the privilege is implicit within the speaker. This is important because when minorities and marginal groups speak of themselves, they are already speaking in the past tense. At the point of speech or writing, of finding a voice, at least some of the marginality is forsaken.

But this assertion does not mean that an engagement with the subaltern is impossible, or should not be attempted, and Spivak uses the phrase ‘ethical singularity’ to describe the type of relationship that needs to be established. She describes it as a ‘profound engagement,’ a two-way communication that results in responsibility on both sides. This means that the subaltern is not just the subject of the discourse but is also subject to it, a process that requires a deep and long-term engagement. To establish a genuine discourse requires circumstances close to normal and it is not enough to just rely on relationships formed in crisis situations where there is a certain amount of desperation on both sides. Spivak is also critical of the anthropologist’s approach of spending a given amount of time with a certain group of people, as she believes it is almost impossible to reach anything close to normality. Perhaps the most important ingredient is time and a commitment to the people and their causes, of course being able to establish ethical singularity with all or a large number of groups is impossible due to gender, race and class differences. Thus Spivak has described ethics as ‘the experience of the impossible,’ although she is at pains to clarify that this does not mean that ethics itself is impossible.

This idea of the impossibility of creating ‘an ethical singularity’ with every single human being is equivalent to the impossibility of loving every human being and in acknowledging this there is the need for a certain type of collective political struggle, which in the end does not rely on meaningful relationships being established with everyone, but rather through the recognition of the impossibility of such an endeavour, hopes to create a collective politics of understanding. This requires the establishment of a new type of cultural work that is not just an unquestioning solidarity with the subaltern but is the establishing of a critical engagement that hopes to learn from her. This exchange can in turn produce a new sort of person that Spivak calls, ‘the organic intellectual.’ This is the subaltern empowered through knowledge exchange, who can help to guard against the biggest problem a western post-colonial intellectual faces, that of speaking for the subaltern. Because to speak of the post-colonial condition only from the immigrant point of view is to ignore the vast majority of the people who have to deal with the legacy of colonialism. As Spivak states;

"...I pointed out with the greatest possible urgency that a conflation of Eurocentric migrancy with postcoloniality lets drop the vicissitudes of decolonisation and ignores the question: who decolonises?" 9


10 Ibid p.278
For me, this points to the limitations of much of the post-colonial literature and to the need to name a new subject for my work that goes beyond the subaltern or the post-colonial.

**A critical philosophy that allows for the use of naming as a political strategy**

The question of ethics has been central to Spivak’s work and has become increasingly so in recent years. In order to begin such a project, she draws an important distinction between a critical and a dogmatic philosophy. Whilst a dogmatic philosophy may be more concerned with an idealistic mode of thinking which generalises in order to create an over-arching principle, a critical philosophy is less concerned with neat edges and is aware of the limits of theory. The harmful effects of a dogmatic philosophy that generalises political struggle are only too apparent and for Spivak, the most obvious example is the non-relevance to the subaltern of the bourgeois nationalist struggle for independence in the Indian Subcontinent. But in order to theorise, an arbitrary closure of some kind is needed and this tactical use of an essentialist mode of thinking is described by Spivak as ‘strategic essentialism.’ Although this can never be a long-term strategy and has to be used contextually and this apparent contradiction has been used as a criticism of Spivak’s work. She invokes Foucault’s insistence on naming as a strategy:

“One needs a name for this thing whose mechanism [can be used] as a grid of intelligibility of the social order. It is called power because that is the closest one can get to it.”

Foucault thus named ‘power,’ which creates itself through the process of naming. Since every name is a metaphor, or a close approximation, it can never be completely accurate. Criticism of nominalism points to the many misunderstandings that arise from such an action; these misunderstandings are referred to as paleonymy. This problem of naming is in fact the shift or rupture between the particular and the general and it also speaks of the rupture between theory and practice – this place for Spivak is the space of deconstruction. The risk associated in approximating in order to move forward, to name in order to speak is the risk of all endeavour and it is this fine balance that in the end has led Derrida to claim, “…deconstruction, strictly speaking, is impossible though obligatory…”

11 Ibid p.143

12 Ibid p.145
The logic of hybridity and mixing in contributing to postcolonial subjectivity in the work of Homi Bhabha

Certain concepts of deconstructivist thought have been employed in the work of the post-colonial critic, Homi Bhabha. Whilst his work has not had such an overt engagement with Derrida as Spivak, he has used concepts such as ‘différance’ and ‘supplement’ to describe the post-colonial experience. Bhabha’s work has sought to break down the binary oppositions such as East/ West, Self/ Other, which have been kept intact in earlier post-colonial work such as Edward Said’s Orientalism. He has argued that Said failed to recognise the dual nature of Orientalism which is a discipline of teaching as well as a fascination with and desire for the Orient. Colonial relations therefore are not restricted to the binary nature of power and powerlessness and the subaltern subject position is not merely the effect of the dominant discourse. In fact, the process of colonisation is a two-way exchange. This has been essential to the understanding of the post-colonial experience and has also revealed the possibility of political resistance thus marking the beginning of the process of decolonisation. Using Said’s claim of Orientalism being a discourse in its own right, Bhabha moves on to the question of enunciation and asks who speaks and to whom, revealing the use of Orientalism as an instrument of power over the colonised. Focusing on the processes of identity formation of both the coloniser and the colonised Bhabha uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to determine the effects of one upon the other.

The relationship between Freud’s theory of sexual fetishism and colonial desire

He begins with an analogy of Freud’s theory of ‘sexual fetishism’ where the mimicry implied is transferred to the colonial experience with its desire for a replication of its own norms and values. This allows for the colonial subject to be cast in the image of the coloniser on the one hand whilst withholding the possibility of him/her being identical to the coloniser on the other. The desire for mimicry can thus never be fulfilled because to allow the oppressed to be identical to the dominant group would mean an end to the inequality that hegemonic power rests upon. Here Bhabha uses deconstructivist thinking which claims that there can be no repetition without alteration, thus resulting in the implanting of colonial values into the colony only ever being a simulacrum – an unfaithful copy. Thus Derrida’s concept of différance opens up the possibility of resistance to the homogenising tendencies of the colonial power.

The role of mimicry in producing resistance through hybridity

The lack of fixed subjectivities within the complex colonial relationship and the emphasis on multiple subject positions is something that Bhabha shares with feminist writers [although he has been widely criticised for not taking a view on issues of gender and class.] This diversity he claims can be found in the “in-between” spaces of society where subjectivities slip between given norms. The ‘political’ is also within this space that is in continual flux and is other to the merely oppositional, which is considered the normal arena of resistance. The hybridity
produced through mimicry allows for internal resistance, a breaking down of hegemonic power from within. The reflection of the coloniser that is produced in the colonised is alienating rather than comforting and can lead to aggression through a lack in the perceived self-image. By displacing the coloniser’s subjectivity, the very figures that colonial authority cultivates in its self-image to lend it support become the agents of its decline. As Bhabha states;

“The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.”

Negotiation and the performative in minority culture

The concepts of ‘mimicry’ and ‘hybridity’ rest on the assumption that culture is produced performatively and in minorities this becomes a continuous negotiation, resulting in the production of hybrid cultures. Notions of performance also inform Bhabha’s constitution of the ‘nation.’ He places an emphasis on the temporal nature of the nation and contends that it is in a process of becoming, rather than the traditional emphasis placed on the historicity of nations. A nation for Bhabha can never be a ‘horizontal’ homogenous space but instead is constituted of a ‘doubling’ and a ‘splitting.’ This notion of the hybridity of the nation is based on Freud’s concept of the “uncanny” in describing the unconscious. The impossibility of a single national perspective, due to the processes of ‘doubling and ‘splitting,’ leads Bhabha to claim that the people of a nation are at the cutting edge, the forefront of the nation.

“The people are not simply historical events or part of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference; their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address.”

They occupy the space at the splitting and the doubling of the nation, at its edges and boundaries. This process rests on the tension between what Bhabha calls the pedagogical and the performative or in other words between the historicist and the processual outlook. This is based on the dual Derridean concepts of ‘repetition’ producing ‘alteration’ and the idea of the ‘supplement.’ The ‘supplement’ being defined as something that comes after and compensates for a lack in the original. The narrative of the nation for Bhabha is a supplementary narrative.

The monopoly of tradition in diasporic communities

In contrast to Benedict Andersen’s *Imagined Communities,* he claims that contemporary nationhood is a double phenomena which rests firstly on the traditional view of nation as being comprised of its history, traditions and a continuity in culture and secondly, on a performative mode which is the domain of minorities and marginalised groups. This second mode disrupts the conception of culture as a static entity. Bhabha argues against the monopoly of tradition as this for him stunts the processes of hybridisation. Hence the importance placed on tradition in diasporic communities can lead to an alienation of the younger generation that cannot see themselves reflected within the image of the culture performed by their elders. This situation is very similar to that of a minority culture within a dominant culture. The minority in this case becomes the hybrid culture of those trying to bridge the gap between two seemingly disparate positions. This

1 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.* (London: Routledge, 1994). p. 88

2 Ibid. p. 145

is the ‘double vision’ of the migrant and these hybrid processes occur within the interstices of society.

The emergence of culture marked by the ‘unhomely moment’ - unhomely geographies

This discussion of the hybridisation of cultures shows that cultural difference can be an empowering process but it can also be one that causes conflict– whether that is with the dominant culture or within elements of one’s ‘own’ culture. This process is conceptualised by different authors in different ways; Bhabha for instance calls this the ‘splitting of the subject’ or the emergence of the ‘unhomely moment.’ Both are describing the moment of the formation of culture and thus of community - a process of alienation that leads to greater understanding. This takes place in the interstitial space described above and causes a disturbance at both ends, meaning that neither can be totally comfortable in their place. The use of the phrase ‘unhomely’ adds another dimension by expanding the concept to include an unsettling of the binary opposition of public/private, past/present. Irit Rogoff uses this concept to talk of ‘unhomed geographies,’ the places where such processes take place. Where new narratives are constructed out of a process of decolonisation whether that is from gender biases or racist ideologies.

All this is in contrast to the traditional view of fixed identities, especially condoned by a colonial discourse that casts the other as a constant – constant in its difference. This process has a two-fold effect, firstly it serves to normalise and homogenise difference in the service of the coloniser and secondly, it fetishises by reducing difference to a spectacle. But this fetishisation is different from that experienced with regard to gender because in racist ideology the fetish is that of the colour of the skin or other physical attributes that are visible to all. Bhabha points out that this results in the subject of racism never being hidden and so racism, “sustains itself on the presence of the very difference which is also its object.”

Globalisation theories

One of the biggest and sustained criticisms of this mode of postcolonial thought exemplified in the work of Spivak and Bhabha, has been the lack of engagement with global capitalism This is perhaps more true of Bhabha’s work than Spivak’s, but it is true that the processes of the international flow of capital have been lacking from postcolonial thought as a whole. Arif Dirlik has been a particularly vehement critic and although I am sympathetic with this part of his critique of postcolonialism, his views against the use of Western theories and the breaking down of binary oppositions such as coloniser/colonised seem to be regressive. The first part of his critique would be something that I hope to address in my work.
POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

a feminist methodology and the role of community engagement in research
The link between the production of knowledge and the practice of power

Feminist critical theory can be loosely categorised into three main strands of, feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism. Whilst these have been conceptualised as three distinct categories, there is significant overlap and this blurring of the boundaries has allowed for cross-contamination, resulting in some of the most influential work by theorists such as Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway. They have applied postmodern theories to the feminist standpoint to adjust the homogenous tendency of the original work. The starting point for feminist critical thought was in the seventies and the eighties when a number of people began to find a link between the production of knowledge and the practice of power, including Nancy Hartsock in her seminal essay, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism,” which is generally credited as marking the beginning of this debate. They argued that all knowledge is socially constructed and therefore is a “situated knowledge,” to use Donna Haraway’s phrase, it is affected by the social position of the producer and as the people who wielded the greatest power in society were men, the knowledge they produced not only served to consolidate their position but was also directed towards solving their problems. This resulted in questions such as society’s willing acceptance of the unwaged work of mothers being left unasked. The consequence of such a way of thinking was that the feminist standpoint theory became both a theory of the production of knowledge but crucially, also a political strategy, because in order to see knowledge as situated and not value-neutral, a political stance has to be taken.

The role of political struggle in a feminist methodology

The origin of feminist theory can be found in Marxian thought, although there has been a tendency to deny or to gloss-over this by certain feminist theorists, especially those that subscribe to a more empirical point of view. Although feminist empiricism acknowledges that the social position of the researcher will have profound effects on the research, there is still the belief that using existing methods of research more rigorously can produce an objective knowledge. In a way feminist empiricism, which is related to feminist liberalism in political theory, stops short of a full embracing of the potential of a feminist view, so that qualitative analysis and subjective research is considered valid but only in the framework of a traditional empiricist system. Thus in Sandra Harding’s words;

“... It is thought that social values and political agendas can raise new issues that enlarge the scope of enquiry and reveal cause for greater care in the conduct of inquiry, but that the logic of explanation and research still conforms to standard empiricist rules.”

But the entrenched nature of the oppressive structures around gender and power means that this may not always be possible. Feminist theorists have therefore argued that the non-inclusion of women in philosophical and social discourse as well as the politics of everyday life has meant that a simple “adding” of women to the discourse at this late stage is unviable. Instead what is called for, and is...
already happening, is a complete reformulation of the canon around the question of women and gender.

The genealogy of such thought has its origins in Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, which spoke of the strange, almost reversing relationship between the master and the slave, where the master slowly becomes more and more dependant on the slave until the roles are, to all intents and purposes, reversed. This thinking is then picked up by Marx and Engels in their writings on the proletariat and the linking thread between these philosophers and feminist theory is the idea that knowledge is the product of a struggle against oppression. This relationship between a political struggle and the acquiring of knowledge remains one of the cornerstones of all feminist thought.

**Critique of the category ‘Woman’**

The historical basis of feminist thought as described above, also reveals the root of its biggest shortcoming. It is now obvious that the struggle against gender stereotypes can never be isolated and is linked to other struggles against hegemonic constructs such as race or class. But this has not always been the case and it was Black-American feminist writers who were at the forefront of this work. Just as in Marxism, class was the privileged theoretical category, so in early standpoint theory gender subsumed all others. Thus differences in race, class and sexual orientation to name but a few systems of classification were ignored in favour of gender and an all-encompassing Woman. This led to the rejection of the theory by many of the people who were imagined to be the happy recipients of a way of thinking that valorised the oppressed. In fact, some of the most sustained criticism has been from ‘Third World’ women or ‘women of colour,’ who did not feel included in the over-arching construct of Woman.

Here in women’s struggle for self-definition was a repeating of the marginal position they occupied in terms of race, class, cultural domination and other forms of oppression. The early work of Black women writers especially, chose to embrace this marginality and to use it as a source of creativity. bell hooks is perhaps most well-known for this stance and in her essay, “Choosing the Margin,” she speaks of the great strength she gained through her own and her mother’s marginality which they both embraced and in so doing transformed a site of oppression into a position of strength.

“I want to speak about the importance of homeplace in the midst of oppression and domination, of homeplace as a site of resistance and liberation struggle.”

Other writers have also described this process which is a combination of liberation struggle and also of something specific to Black women, the notion of sisterhood and the strong sense of community and building a home, both of which have their origins in the past history of slavery. In her essay “The Outsider Within,” Patricia Hill Collins speaks of the importance of both ‘self-definition’ and ‘self-valuation’ in the struggle for the subjectivity of Black women. The first term defines the fight against established stereotypes of Black women as aggressive, outspoken and so forth and the second term is a transformation of these stereotypes into not just another stereotype that is positive rather than negative, but instead seeks to...
bring about a more real understanding of Black women. This is possible through acknowledging the hidden part that power plays in the construction of stereotypes and how it is used to control others.

“The insistence of Black female self-definition reframes the entire dialogue from one of determining the technical accuracy of an image, to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself.”

Everyday practice as the site of political struggle

The central position of a political struggle within feminist theory means that it can be used for collective struggles against oppression and its nature allows for temporary alliances between disparate groups for a common cause. Thus the central work is of uncovering the hidden structures of power and the hegemonic processes that produce oppression, in order to break them down. This is a kind of struggle from below, also characterised as a “study-up” method and is contrary to the traditional western separation of knowledge and the political. It is also considered problematic for traditional thought because it gives value to the everyday and these everyday encounters become the basis for a new theory of knowledge. In my own research, I would like to use everyday practices such as walking, speaking, mapping, to interrogate the lived reality and the spatial politics of a migrant urban population. Walking especially has a history of being used as a tool for the exploration of the city, from the Situationists’ dérive to contemporary urban practices such as Chora who have used strategic walking as a means of mapping the city. Artists such as Wrights and Sites have also used walking to map a city that is sometimes overlooked by traditional methods of analysis. But the use of everyday practices and the importance of a struggle against oppression does not mean that this automatically leads to a standpoint, rather it is a ‘struggle’ (as bell hooks puts it) and an ‘achievement’ in the words of Sandra Harding. This then is the crucial point, this is not a theory of “I suffer, therefore I am.” The process of self-definition described above is a key aspect of creating a ‘home’ in the world and as such the hegemonic processes that do or do not allow this to occur should be investigated.

In more recent versions of feminist theory writers such as, bell hooks, Judith Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa, have written from the varying standpoints of race, queer culture or both. In breaking down the category of Woman, feminist thought has been able to revisit some of the structural problems within Marxian theory and has in fact managed to create a new way of understanding Marxism at a moment in history when it was considered, by many theorists, to be all but redundant in explaining modern life. Feminist theory has been able to expand the notion of “Woman” to create a theory of difference which goes beyond its original categorical impulses, in a way that traditional Marxist thought failed to do – the notion of the proletariat was never expanded beyond its original scope.


The need for a ‘nomadic subjectivity’ in creating an ‘objective’ knowledge

Knowledge production can be categorised into three distinct processes of method, methodology and epistemology. As Sandra Harding has pointed out, in some discourse there is a conflation of method and methodology. While methodology refers to the techniques of gathering evidence for the research, a methodology is an analysis of the research method. A third term, epistemology, refers to the theory of knowledge or how it is justified. The feminist method of research may include standard methods of gathering evidence but what is at stake is the methodology of the research. Thus the use of qualitative as well as quantitative information is one such strategy; it privileges and gives voice to the individual and as such thinks of the researched as an embodied subject rather than an object to be studied. This is a fundamental distinction because it also affects the research question. If a woman or migrant worker is seen as an embodied and historically situated person, then the questions that are asked are much different. They will attempt to see the world through the subject’s eyes and so will interrogate what it is like to live as a woman or a migrant worker, rather than what effect they will have on a masculine, western world. As Sandra Harding puts it:

“But the feminist challenges reveal that the questions that are asked – and, even more significantly, those that are not asked – are at least as determinative of the adequacy of our total picture as are any answers that we discover.”


Following this, there is also the claim that starting to think from a minority view is better than starting from the dominant view. This is advantageous because people who are disadvantaged have less reason to want to keep the status quo, than those who are leading a privileged life in the unequal distribution of power, therefore their view is more likely to be a critique rather than an easy acknowledgement. But this should not be the conclusion, it is only a good starting point for further research. What is required is a roving eye or a “mobile positioning” to use Sandra Harding’s phrase and a “nomadic subjectivity” to use Rosi Braidotti’s phrase. This will lead to a knowledge that has far more claim to being an objective reflection of the world than traditional scientific method, which does not acknowledge the subjectivity of the researcher as well as the research subject. The charge of relativism that is often made against feminist theory is therefore also untrue, not every view is as significant as the rest and some are more likely to reveal a deeper insight than others. This is the claim that Sandra Harding puts forward, that the problem with traditional epistemologies is not that they are too objective, but that they are not objective enough. She names “strong objectivity,” an objectivity that is rigorous enough to deal with the complex challenges put forward by a feminist critique.

Related to this is the question of the privileged position of the researcher and the fact that a standpoint from a minority or dominant view is often articulated not by the dominated group itself but through the prism of the researcher. This theorisation or production of a standpoint is produced, in Donna Haraway’s words, by the “dominated dominants” – people who are not from the majority or dominant group but still hold sufficient privilege. Gayatri Spivak has written extensively on
this subject and has used her own practice to overcome the problem of “speaking for” the subaltern through a continual questioning of the reasons for and results of the research and by establishing a two-way dialogue or a conversation with the research subjects. This results in responsibility on both sides and addresses the imbalance in the power relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Breaking the myth of objectivity and impartiality

Another important aspect of feminism is the recognition that just as the researched are historically located subjects, so is the researcher. Thus every researcher brings to his/her research their life experiences and prejudices. It is therefore important to locate yourself from the outset within the historical world. Therefore my place as a British-Asian who lived in Pakistan for her early years and now lives a fairly middle-class existence in London must surely colour my thinking on all issues. Thus the choice of basing my research around the Kurdish migrant population was strategic because although it was tempting to choose a population that I had prior knowledge of, such as the Bangladeshi population in East London, it seemed better to choose a culture that I had less contact with and would therefore be less likely to make easy assumptions about. Thus in acknowledging my own position as a researcher I was able to make judgements on how to make my research more “objective” and the traditional conception of the researcher as impartial observer was also challenged, what is referred to by Donna Haraway as “the god-trick.” In that the impartial observer has to be located precisely nowhere in order to produce an impartial and thoroughly objective discourse.

In her writing on “Situated Knowledges,” Donna Haraway debunks this myth and calls for a “partiality of vision.” Whilst acknowledging the hegemony that vision has had in Western thinking, she calls for a reappropriation of vision by feminists, who have quite rightly been sceptical of its power over all other forms of cognition. She asks for a reclamation of vision as a thoroughly embodied sense which has been detached from the body and turned into the “all seeing eye.” Haraway calls for a definition of objectivity that relies on partial visions, which together make up a faceted whole.

“So, not so perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision.”

The role of interdisciplinary practice in a feminist methodology

The partial perspective advocated by Donna Haraway can be obtained through the use of an interdisciplinary mode of practice. In using techniques from other disciplines, a certain misuse occurs which can lead to fresh insights. In fact, feminist thinking has been developed simultaneously across disciplines and it is this variation that has provided the lively discourse and intellectual rigour that characterises it. Woman’s Studies in particular is one discipline that has embraced this multi-disciplinarity, taking on the research methodologies of the humanities, sociology, ethnography, historiography. But this range of methodologies has been used singly by most researchers and in a recent article Marjorie Pryse has


argued for a more studied interdisciplinarity that allows the researcher to remain ‘rooted’ in their chosen specialism but to also be able to ‘shift’ across disciplines.

This focus on the interdisciplinary approach is founded in Foucault’s critique of the arbitrary compartmentalisation of knowledge resulting in a regulatory effect. The creativity of research can sometimes be hampered by disciplinary boundaries but for a truly interdisciplinary practice, collaboration is often key. This points to a new method of research that cross-contaminates through the use of ‘other’ knowledge. In my own research, I hope to use the skills gained from the practice of architecture and to collaborate with artists and other theorists. Whilst working in the area of urbanism and especially on the effect of migrancy on cities and their inhabitants, I feel this interdisciplinary approach to methodology is very important. The nature and complexity of cities, the varying situations and circumstances of migrants living within the city and the temporal nature of many of the phenomena to do with this subject, point to a range of research methods to be used from across disciplines.
A RADICAL POLITICS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

new concepts of democracy and the exclusions of public space
Other concepts of ethnicity

The overlapping of the public and the private in the processes of globalisation

Globalisation is seen by many as a homogenising force but this is only one aspect of the phenomena, where a capitalist approach sees the choices made by the countries of the North to be the blueprint for development of all other countries. But as Doreen Massey has stated, the processes of globalisation are not only temporal but also spatial and it is these active processes of making space that contain the fluctuating politics of contemporary society. This thinking is especially important in a time when a liberal conception of democracy is equated with civilisation per se and in the wake of recent terrorist threats and actions there is a general feeling in the West of waiting for the rest of the world to catch up to the ideals of democracy as exemplified in western societies. That this democratisation can also be done by force is a fairly new phenomena but the thinking that has lead to it may be considered old, the colonial impulse of educating those ‘less’ civilised remains.

Globalisation has also negated another aspect of the liberal tradition that has conceptualised democracy around a reliance on the distinction between the public and the private. The rise of globalisation has meant that there are many political spaces where the public and the private overlap, the Internet in its many forms being the most obvious. Following Chantal Mouffe, we may find the complete undoing of this distinction an uneasy prospect, as it has been a safeguard against a total control of society by the State. Having said that feminist struggles have been based around the relegation of certain forms of domination to the private/domestic sphere and the articulation and struggle against the oppression that follows. Thus Mouffe has argued for a rearticulation of this distinction that takes into account the feminist critique.

The necessary exclusions of public space

The nature of public space is such that it has inherent exclusions, in order to include some, others have to be excluded. Therefore the very idea of living together is political and in a way public space is the utopian ideal of this living together. Doreen Massey sees public space as,

“…a continually receding horizon of the open-minded-space-to-come, which will not ever be reached but must constantly be worked towards.”

Public space is thus a process rather than a final outcome and this assertion can be traced to the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, their conception of democracy as a receding horizon has similar connotations. For this conception of democracy to work, there cannot be a universal subject rather identity is questioned through a continuous negotiation with the ‘other.’ The notion of ‘identity,’ which has been prevalent in some post-colonial discourse, is thus questioned and is replaced by a more open concept of temporary identification or association.
The agonistic public space

Democracy thus relies on a notion of collective identity that is constructed through a process of forming alliances between similarly minded groups and this process is named the ‘logic of equivalence’ by Laclau and Mouffe. In a non-totalitarian society there is a vacant space at the heart of society which can either be filled by a totalitarian regime or in a democratic society can become the ‘breathing’ space which allows for the negotiation of democracy. Thus the temporary meeting of disparate groups in this space creates relationships/associations for a common cause and in doing so affects both parties. The alteration that occurs through this meeting and working towards a common goal is the subtle effect of a democracy at work. In fact Mouffe’s definition of an ‘agonistic’ approach to democracy is based around the assertion that democracy is put at risk and is undermined by the idea of a final consensus.

“If we want to acknowledge on one hand the permanence of the antagonistic dimension of the conflict whilst on the other allowing for the possibility of its “taming,” we need to envisage a third type of relation. This is the type that I have proposed calling “agonism.”

This thinking is especially relevant in the societies of the North where an equating of liberal democracy with democracy per se has occurred. The feeling of having reached a destination, however flawed, has imbued these societies with an apathy to which the voting records bear witness. For Mouffe the idea of total consensus in a democracy is untenable as the democratic process is what is of importance rather than the final product. While the end goal of certain parties may be different, the meeting up over common issues allows for negotiation and collective struggle. The crucial point here is that this meeting up will necessarily transform both parties and hence the outcome remains unknown.

The role of the performative in the democratic process

Laclau has thus insisted on the performative and creative dimension of this approach to democracy:

“... I think that we have to break with purely representational theories of human equality and we have to insist much more in this performative dimension, which is the very condition of equality.”

There is an overlap here with the performative theory of Judith Butler with regard to gender. Just as she has conceptualised gender (based on Derrida’s theory of repetition) as constantly evolving, where the repetition produces alteration, so radical democracy also looks to a similar operation.

Whilst the concept of radical democracy is based on Derrida’s philosophy, he has written on the subject of democracy himself. His conception of a ‘democracy to come’ is based around the central themes of friendship and hospitality and whilst there are similarities with radical democracy, there are some differences. In “The Politics of Friendship,” Derrida finds the roots of modern democracy in the ancient Greek conception of exemplary friendship between two men. Although friendship may be possible between a man and a woman or two women, it is of
a different nature and does not hold the same status as fraternal friendship. It is this friendship that becomes the basis of the democratic ideal from Plato and Aristotle onwards. Derrida explains the importance of this lineage of friendship in influencing the political;

"Then what I try to do . . . is to follow the thread of the paradoxes between friendship and politics, to look for a prevailing canonical model of friendship which in our culture from the Greeks to now, in Greek culture, in Roman culture, in Jewish, Christian and Islamic culture, has been dominant, has been prevailing and hegemonic."5

The lack in western philosophy, where the woman is yet again negated, is the place from which Derrida tries to define a new politics based around a different definition of friendship. Since the idea of democracy is based around friendship, it follows that democracy at its most base level means a certain equality of people - the vote in democratic societies. The central question for Derrida is this contradiction between the equality of all humans and the heterogeneity which marks the particularity of us all. Derrida asks, would a democracy not defined around the central concept of a fraternal friendship perhaps break from an easy alliance with the nation-state and for me this is a key concept. In an era of growing numbers of stateless and displaced persons, how could a democracy linked to nation-states still be a viable concept? As Derrida himself has asked,

"Is it possible that beyond the nation-state the concept of democracy keep not only a meaning but a force of injunction."6

**Hospitality as a basis for “a democracy to come”**

Derrida’s thinking on ‘hospitality’ begins to create this new concept of democracy and it starts with the observation that the initial act of offering hospitality to a foreigner is an act of violation as this invitation is made in a language foreign to the guest. But if the foreigner understands the invitation then is he/she a foreigner at all? Another contradiction within the laws of hospitality is that the absolute hospitality that must be extended to the other jeopardises friendship and therefore other ‘laws’ of hospitality are created to safeguard the initial hospitality. This can create problems, as with the current debates around immigration in most Northern European countries and Derrida has warned against this;

“The perversion and pervertibility of this law (which is also a law of hospitality) is that one can become virtually xenophobic in order to protect or claim to protect one’s own hospitality, the own home that makes possible one’s own hospitality."7

This leads us to Derrida’s concept of a ‘democracy to come,’ which has its origins in the concept of ‘the coming community’ by Giorgio Agamben8 and ‘the inoperative community’ of Jean Luc Nancy9 and also follows on from Derrida’s own work around the concept of hospitality. The friendship offered thus is what he calls a ‘teleiopoetic friendship’ - that is a close friendship but one which loves from afar and carries the risk of the friend being an enemy. This loving from a distance is what defines the idea of a new democracy, a democracy that is underlined by risk. The phrase ‘democracy to come’ also gives an insight into this concept, that this is a democracy that has not yet arrived but for Derrida is a promise to be

6 Ibid.
9 Jean-Luc Nancy, The Inoperative Community (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991)
fulfilled immediately, it is not necessarily an idea of a democracy for the distant future. Thus the idea of risk mentioned above is crucial to this new model of democracy, which carries with it the sign of a certain unknowability within the public sphere. The consequence of leaving things open will necessarily result in an outcome that can be good or bad, but the absence of a democratic struggle leaves the way open for other forms of identification. This then maybe the largest difference between the thinking of Derrida and Mouffe - Derrida’s rethinking of the democratic paradigm is based around the question of the ‘we’ of democracy. In the West at this moment the ‘we’ is taken to be the ‘liberals’ but for Derrida there can be no assigning of a determinate community to this ‘we.’ Thus Derrida’s ‘democracy to come’ does not set conditions or terms of identification, it is simply an engaging of the ‘other,’ a promise of a ‘democracy to come.’ Derrida defines it as ‘spectral’ for the very reason that there is an unknowability and a risk.

Another difference between the thinking of Derrida and Mouffe is that of the separation between the public and the private in political philosophy. For Derrida, finally, there is no absolute separation between the two spheres. In fact much of the problems of liberal democracy can be found in this separation. On the other hand, Mouffe is well aware of the role of this separation in the feminist struggles and she is less sure of discarding it. In fact the critique of Mouffe’s more recent writings on radical democracy have been based around her embracing of more and more concepts from the liberal tradition.10 In the end Derrida’s more open conception of democracy seems more useful as he does not tie his concept of democracy to a certain group whereas Mouffe’s conception, although open is still tied to historically specific groups that are joined in hegemonic struggles. The open nature of Derrida’s concept of democracy gives it its force because democracy cannot be confined to a determinate community, as is the case in the West with liberal democracy. His ‘democracy to come’ is then not an attempt to redefine democracy per se but to use the tools of deconstruction to constantly question the democratic process.

CARTOGRAPHY OF AN IMAGINED HOME

The use of non-articulated practices in the research process
Cartography of an imagined home

This chapter has been initially presented as a paper at a conference. In this chapter I will explore the relationship between migrancy, memory and the process of settling with and in, of constructing a new home. I will try to interrogate this issue of migration and its effects, using the city as a surface, a back-drop, a theatre upon and through which the negotiation of settlement within a new and yet not so unfamiliar ‘locality’ occurs. The use of the term ‘locality,’ is however loaded, following the work of Doreen Massey and Arjun Appadurai, who have both shown that locality does not necessarily entail the local. My work is focused on the Kurdish community in North London, the choice of whom is strategic, in that the homeland that is forsaken doesn’t exist in any world atlas and so the process of constructing a home is somehow doubled – first the negotiation of the home left-behind, second the construction of a new home – a cyclical process no doubt, one not being possible without the other. As an architect, I am interested in how this process affects the formation of a community within the city and the spatial configurations that result from the new ways of using the city. These unplanned and self-regulated processes are the reality of the contemporary lived space, for example, the community centre in which I carried out the interviews for this chapter is located on Stoke Newington High Street in East London, a shopping street that has an abundance of Turkish shops and businesses. The Kurdish population uses this street as a protest space to demonstrate for the release of the PKK leader incarcerated in Turkey. The trajectory and limits of the protest are clearly defined by the extent of the Turkish owned businesses along the High Street.

The two waves of Kurdish immigration to the UK, the first in the sixties and the second in the early nineties (and still continuing) are separated by a rapid politicisation and a renewed struggle in the fight for a homeland. Through using cartographic tools – or perhaps mis-using them, I will try to map the personal geographies of some of the people that I have spoken to (and am still in the process of doing so). How do their ‘maps of the imagination’ combine with this mis-use of traditional cartographic practice, which is itself a process of decolonisation, to reveal the process of “making home.”

Mis-using mapping as a process of decolonisation

‘Making home’ necessarily requires hospitality from the host, without it the home that is constructed remains temporary, partial and untenable. As Derrida stated, “… the foreigner is first of all foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated … the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State, the father, etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language, and that’s the first act of violence.”


2 “The 58-year old separatist leader, who founded the PKK in 1978, was captured in Kenya in 1999 and sentenced to death, although this was commuted when Turkey abolished the death penalty.” Guardian Unlimited, (28/09/2006 [cited 2006]), available from www.guardian.co.uk.

This assertion that the very first step of hospitality becomes an act of violence due to the imposition of language and culture acts as a warning. How can the processes of memory in the construction of a new home be interrogated without the violence Derrida refers to – to eradicate it completely is perhaps not possible. One strategy would be the use of non-articulated practices that are de Certeau’s everyday tactics, such as mapping, documenting, acting, walking can be used in non-conventional ways to create a “counter” practice that displaces meaning and becomes a creative act of research. A shift in perspective also happens at the moment that vision is multiplied, the ‘partial perspectives’ of Donna Haraway do give way to a fuller understanding.

The use of mapping, the colonising practice par excellence is strategic – to use it to speak of personal geographies and imagined homes, to map using subjective memory rather than the myth of the objective “all-seeing eye,” is to change a colonising practice into a moment of decolonisation. Perhaps fleeting, but recorded for posterity, these can become the individual stories that reveal some of the inner conflict, the trans-formation and to use the distinction made explicit by Mirjana Lozanovska,4 “the ‘em-’ and the ‘imm’ of migration” - that ‘departure’ and ‘arrival’ are contingent within any interrogation of this process called migration.

Kurdish history and migration

The long history of the struggle of the Kurdish people for a homeland is perhaps better known now than ever before. The Kurdish population is split between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, with many more living as part of the Kurdish diaspora across the world. The accepted map of the region showing the spread of the Kurdish population is a persistent image and Kurdistan exists as a sort of half-born, embryonic state with the Kurds being accepted as the largest “population without state” in the world.

The first wave of Kurdish immigration to the West occurred in the early twentieth century and was a voluntary migration, part of the large-scale labour migration encouraged by the West. These people either chose to or preferred for political reasons to portray themselves, and eventually also to think of themselves, as Turkish. This option was no doubt made more attractive by the lack of knowledge of Kurds and Kurdish culture in the West. The second wave of Kurdish migration had very different reasons – these were involuntary migrations caused by a number of political events in the Middle-East during the eighties including, the Iranian revolution and ensuing civil war, the military coup in Turkey and the Iran-Iraq war. Around this time many young Kurds migrated to the West seeking asylum and their political outlook was very different from the earlier immigrants. They were highly politicised and their presence combined with events in Turkey – the large-scale persecution of the Kurdish population following the military coup – resulted in the politicisation of the existing Kurdish population within the West.

Further events in the region, including the two wars with Iraq have resulted in more Kurdish migration and also the creation of a “safe-haven” in Northern Iraq, which has had Kurdish self-rule since the early nineties. Turkey’s banning of

Kurdish culture had also managed to turn what was once a well-used language with many dialects into a minority language. But this is beginning to change with a flourishing Kurdish culture, which has been nurtured in the Kurdish diaspora – there is even a Kurdish Parliament in Exile. In his extensive research on the Kurdish diaspora, Martin van Bruinessen points out;

“The so-called second generation, children of immigrant workers who have grown-up in Europe, tend to be much more interested in Kurdish identity, Kurdish politics, than their parents were. Many parents returned to their Kurdish roots under the influence of their children.”

The role of the imagination in creating a collective identity

This is a phenomena unique to the Kurdish diaspora and Appadurai’s notion of the imagination as a social practice is useful in understanding this process. He has elaborated on Benedict Anderson’s idea of ‘imagined communities’ to refer to the imagination as something other than just ‘opium for the masses,’ to use his phrase. Instead, he claims that imagination is the prelude to expression, without it there can be no desire, and so when exercised collectively it has the potential to fuel action. The reclamation of Kurdish identity is an example of just such a movement, the collective imagination of the separate waves of the Kurdish diaspora resulted in the rebirth of a Kurdish identity – one which is very much linked to both the close proximity of these two groups separated by the time of migration, and also to the internationalisation of the Kurdish struggle across the global Kurdish diaspora.

There are about 30 000 Kurds living in London today, concentrated mainly in the areas of Stoke Newington and Green Lanes in North-East London. The Kurdish community lives in close proximity to the Turkish community here, which numbers around 40 000 out of a total of 200 000 for the whole of London. In fact the community centre that I carried out my interviews in calls itself the Kurdish and Turkish Community Centre.

Identity formation beyond the nation-state

My first interview was with the founder of the community centre and the question of a straightforward construction of identity was at once confounded. That migrant identity is affected by geo-political positioning is now accepted but what is

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5 Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Movement: Migrations, Communications and the Globalisation of the Kurdish Question,” in Islamic Area Studies Project (Tokyo, Japan: Utrecht University, 1999).
sometimes missed is that it is also highly personal – it is about love and life. His first wife was Kurdish and so began a love affair that was to outlive the woman who initiated it. As he talks of this explanation of identity he is animated and effusive, the narrative disjointed in an eagerness to explain his own position;

“I am Turkish-Cypriot myself… I fell in love with a Kurdish woman… my family was massacred… I still think of peace… there is no inter-communal fighting between the Turks and the Kurds – not like Greeks and Cypriots.”

These excerpts are a testament to the complex negotiations that occur within the production of a migrant identity. Homi Bhabha has written about the hybridity of the postcolonial experience – the mixing of identities that form new narratives.

The map of Kurdistan that he drew was smaller than the generally accepted map of the Kurdish regions. Lake Van for him marked the northern tip of Kurdistan, stretching to the east towards Mount Ararat. His awareness of the contentious nature of the map especially within Turkey may have been responsible for shrinking Kurdistan at its northern end. Making it smaller could perhaps make it more viable – less controversial. When he talks about the map in relation to Turkey, he is hesitant and tries to pick his words with care – whereas before he seemed largely unaware of the silent gaze of the camera, he is now conscious of it, anxious not to offend.

Another interview was with a woman who had moved to London when she was sixteen, following her mother who had arrived a year earlier. Her understanding of her own subjectivity was one that used the language of ‘mixing’ and ‘hybridity.’ She used to live in Istanbul and still sees herself as part Turkish, as well as part Kurdish and now British. The map that she drew was in a way more pragmatic than the one drawn earlier, it was directional following her journey and so was a map that was more obviously personal. Kurdistan as a territory didn’t really feature in any great way, she shaded in an area that ‘they’ thought was Kurdistan and stated of her previous home;

“... I don’t want to call Kurdistan, because where I was born is the south-east of Turkey, it doesn’t belong to Kurdistan…”

Later on she talked of not being sure of what she would feel if there was a Kurdistan and her voice falls away so you can barely hear it – its almost as if she doesn’t want to say the word – “Kurdistan.” Whilst a Kurdish culture and a Kurdish identity are viable to her and are played out in her everyday life, the idea of Kurdish nationalism is problematic.
I think that the maps and conversations reveal something of the “structure of feeling,” in Appadurai’s words, within the Kurdish community. This may seem like a paradox but it is made possible through the mis-use of traditional cartographic practice. Where a “structure of feeling” for Appadurai is less place based, more dematerialised, in using mapping with video, interview and memory, this technique does become less objective and more subjective. **This mapping of a place that does not exist in maps** reveals the complex interplay of thoughts, relationships, political allegiances and power. The use of video in a similar way can be seen in the work of Ursula Biemann, who calls her films ‘video-essays,’ they are highly theoretical constructs that have a non-linear form and are situated “somewhere between documentary video and video art.”7 From an urban research perspective, multiplicity use video with raw data such as population statistics and maps and texts to give a multi-layered view of the urban conglomerate that is Europe today.8 Both these approaches use video in a highly subjective manner, personal accounts mixed with statistical data are used in a self-reflexive manner that rejects the possibility of a simple objective representation and instead acknowledges the power of representational practices.

The divisive power that maps can have is due to the same problem of representation, they are ideological constructs and so in each map that was drawn for me, an insight into the thinking of the author is hidden. In carrying on this work I hope to map what a Kurdistan for different generations of Kurds may look like. Perhaps gender will be equally important or the territory of origin? Perhaps even a locational proximity in their new home could influence. Whilst the map itself is important, what is also of importance is what is said as it is being drawn – the asides that reveal something further, like;

“The Kurdistan in mine is smaller… Kurdistan is in the hearts and the minds of the Kurdish people…”

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APPENDIX

Diagram of key concepts and their relationships
Appendix

MOBILITY
- migration
- flows/networks
- post-migrational space

SPACE
- Chora, thirdspace
- space/place
- In contrast to traditional Western Cartesian space
- Derrida's Khora
- Doina - chora as a relational space
- Grosz on chora/home economy
- Doreen Massey's place as a node
- Appadurai's locality/scapes
- flow of people/capital/goods
- Freud's unheimlich
- The unhomely moment
- Derrida's critique of Austin
- Judith Butler's work on performativity
- Adrienne Rich's feminist poetry
- Deluze & Guattari - rhizomes
- the situatedness of feminist knowledge that embodies the rhizomatic
- Abjection?
- Feud's conscious ego
- Lacan's psychoanalysis
- Bhabha's use of these with postcolonial subjectivity
- politics of knowledge
- Sandra Harding's 'Strong objectivity'
- Donna Haraway's 'partial perspectives'
- privileging individual narratives - the use of interviews
- concept of hegemony in
- Mouffe & Laclau
- Jacques Ranciere
- embodiment of multiplicity in politics
- role of the performative in democracy
- politics of re-presentation - colonial mapping/numbering practices
- maps as instruments of power

HOME
- local/global
- unheimlich
- politics of location
- Ommissions in Western philosophical thought
- Freud's unheimlich
- The unhomely moment
- a new definition of home that embodies the realities of globalisation and the 'unhomely' as a defining term for a postcolonial imagining of space
- the role of language in creating home and the strategic use of mistranslation/mistaken meanings
- the domesticated use of technology leading to a dematerialised practice of space
- use of urdu perhaps or another language spoken by people in case study

SUBJECTIVITY
- FEMINIST
- the other
- performativity
- nomadic subjectivity
- POST-COLONIAL
- double consciousness

POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION/KNOWLEDGE
- power/knowledge
- radical democracy
- representation
- contemporary paradigms that occur in the relational space of chora
- the internet and networks as post-migrational spaces
- the internet used to organise support for the kurdish struggle - a way of organising across countries
- use of urdu perhaps or another language spoken by people in case study
- a post-colonial subjectivity will necessarily embody feminist practices
- use of non-articulated practices as an antidote to sanctioned histories/narratives
- counter-cartographic practices as tools of decolonisation

CASE STUDIES
Post-colonial theory


**Post-colonial feminist theories**


**Politics of knowledge**


de la Bellacasa, Maria Puig “Feminist Knowledge Politics in Situated Zones: A Different Hi/Story of Knowledge Construction.” In *server donne*.


**Research methodologies**


**Concepts of ‘community’**


**Concepts of ‘democracy’**


Representational practices


The Kurdish diaspora


Visual culture


Urban practice


Theories of space and networked cultures


Feminist theories of space


Gender studies


Cultural studies


**Globalisation theories**


**Mobility and the politics of migration**


Critical geography


