

The British Sociological Association is publishing a series of books to review the state of the discipline at the beginning of the millennium. New Horizons in Sociology also seeks to locate the contribution of British scholarship to the wider development of sociology. Sociology is taught in all the major institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom as well as throughout North America and the Europe of the former western bloc. Sociology is now establishing itself in the former eastern bloc. But it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that sociology moved from the fringes of UK academic life into the mainstream. British sociology has also provided a home for movements that have renewed and challenged the discipline; the revival of academic Marxism, the renaissance in feminist theory, the rise of cultural studies, for example. Some of these developments have become sub-disciplines whilst yet others have challenged the very basis of the sociological enterprise. Each has left their mark. Now therefore is a good time both to take stock and to scan the horizon, looking back and looking forward.

Series Editor: Bridget Fowler, *University of Glasgow*

Published titles include:

Nationalism and Social Theory

Gerard Delanty and Patrick O'Mahoney

Interactionism

Paul Atkinson and William Housley

Feminist Sociology

Sara Delamont

The New Sociology of Economic Behaviour

Ralph Fevre

The Sociology of Religion

Grace Davie

Space and Social Theory

Andrzej Zieleniec



 **SAGE**

Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

contents

Preface	viii
Acknowledgements	xviii
Chapter 1 Karl Marx: the implicit spatiality of historical materialism	1
Chapter 2 Georg Simmel: the space of formal sociology	34
Chapter 3 Henri Lefebvre: the production of space	60
Chapter 4 David Harvey: the political economy of space	98
Chapter 5 Michel Foucault: space, knowledge and power	125
Chapter 6 Legacies and prospects: spatialising contemporary modernity	150
Bibliography	182
Index	197

two

Georg Simmel: the space of formal sociology

The previous chapter sought to extricate the spatial dimension in Marx's historical materialist analysis of capitalism. It was possible to recognise an implicit if not explicit and formal consideration of the spatiality of capitalism as a mode of production, of space as a force of production, of the spatial division of labour, of the socio-spatial division of the urban and the reproduction of labour, and the global expansion of capitalist space through imperialism. Similarly, whilst both Weber and Durkheim failed to produce a systematic and detailed consideration of space either for interpretive sociology as the meaningful understanding of social actors or for the functional characteristics of the social organisation of social relations, spheres, etc. there are implicit aspects of spatiality in their analyses. However, the recent publication of the first English translation of Georg Simmel's 'The sociology of space'¹ provides the opportunity to consider what may be called the first sociological account of the importance of space for social relations. As Frisby, states in the introduction to the texts:

[a]llong with time, quantity and mass, all of which receive varied treatment by Simmel during various stages of his career, it is the study of space which constitutes one of the most extensive chapters of his major sociological work *Soziologie*. . . The study of social space as a crucial dimension of social interaction and also of cultural formations constitutes one of those projects in which it can be said that Simmel, in many respects, was a pioneer. (Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 10–11)

'The sociology of space' contains an examination of what Simmel identified as five 'aspects of space' and provides a somewhat abstract and formalised treatment of the significance of space for understanding social interaction. For Simmel, space is a crucial and fundamental element in human experience because social activities and interactions are and must be spatially contextualised. That is, the form in which social interactions are experienced and manifest are operative in delimited, delineated and prescribed space. Space then is both a determining aspect

of interactions, but which is also simultaneously socially constructed by such interactions.

If 'The sociology of space' is appraised alongside other works it provides the opportunity for a reconsideration of Simmel's sociology as a whole from a spatial perspective, one that makes a significant and early contribution to the social theory of space. Therefore, for Simmel, unlike other early theorists there is a need to critically theorise and incorporate a spatial awareness in his investigations of modernity. In this, Simmel prefigures other work on the importance of space in social relations and deserves acknowledgement as the only 'founding father' [*sic*] that sought a critical social analysis and appreciation of the crucial significance of space.

Simmel's contribution to the social theory of space may also be considered as significant in that his treatment raises aspects, elements and issues that are identified and developed elsewhere by later, perhaps better-known, theorists of space.² In much the same way that Simmel's work on culture can be said to have been relatively neglected until recently, so has Simmel's contribution to the social theory of space. Jurgen Habermas comments that the 'disappearance' of Simmel's 1911 collection of essays *Philosophische Kultur* (first published in 1911, 3rd edition, 1923) for over 60 years indicates that "Simmel as a critic of culture is in a peculiar way both near to, and far away, from us" (Habermas, 1996: 403).³ The intention here is to acknowledge this early sociological contribution by Simmel and to propose that Simmel's 'aspects of space' as well as the way in which space is examined in a number of diverse ways in his other works demonstrate an inherent spatial analysis that provide insights that are important for our more comprehensive investigation of social reality. Some elucidation of this spatial awareness and its significance for specific forms of sociation as well as the investigation of specific social spaces, whether they are for production or consumption, the circulation of goods, people, services, etc. or for leisure, recreation and culture as well as the experience and consequences of the space of modernity is a necessary correlate of this perspective. However, this is not the place for a detailed exegesis of how Simmel's conceptualisation of space was woven into his analyses of specific forms of sociation in modernity. A more comprehensive and detailed investigation remains for another day. What will be provided is a detailed consideration of Simmel's conceptualisation of his 'aspects of space' and the elucidation of their application in a number of other, perhaps better-known works. This will include highlighting the diverse ways in which Simmel examined space, the configuration and transformation of social space in modernity, the formation and expression

of cultural forms and social interaction as mediated by, in and through space. It will be argued that Simmel's conceptualisations and consideration of space is significant in the context of his better-known contributions to the investigation of modernity, and more specifically the sociology of the city. This is rooted in his analytical perspective on the importance of everyday, however seemingly inconsequential, 'forms of sociation' that are expressed, experienced and determined in the everyday life and spaces of the mature money economy of urban modernity. It is pertinent however to begin with a brief introduction to his sociological project as a whole in which it will be argued the significance of space is crucial.

SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF SIMMEL'S PROJECT

Simmel's overall project can be described as concerned with establishing the object of sociology as the "investigation of the forces, forms and development of sociation, of the co-operation, association and co-existence of individuals" (Simmel, in Frisby, 1992: 12). Simmel asserted that the study of society as a whole, 'real' object, was a reification and needed to be abandoned in favour of a perspective that was less anti-individualist. As Frisby puts it:

In contrast to Durkheim, who viewed society as a 'system of active forces' operating *upon* individuals, Simmel here sees society as constituted by interactional 'forces' *between* individuals. (Frisby, 1992: 14. Italics in Original)

The influence of a variety of intellectual trends, collectively termed 'neo-Kantianism', at the end of the nineteenth century had a profound influence on Simmel's thought and his conceptualisation of what should be the foundation of sociology. In his essay 'How is society possible?'⁴ Simmel discusses the influence of Kant's philosophy on his understanding of society and sociology, in particular, Kant's argument that it is our minds that structure our sensual experience of the world. As such, a distinction between the objective phenomenal world, as studied by the natural sciences and the social realm of action and values was emphasised. For Simmel, Kant's principle of the active mind participating in the understanding of the world was of central importance to the development of his understanding of sociology. Knowledge of the social world was not to be viewed or understood only as a collection of facts, but alternatively also as a construction made by selection and interpretation. As Simmel puts it:

Society is 'my representation' – something dependent on the activity of consciousness – in quite a different sense from that which the external world is,

For the other individual has for me the same reality which I have myself, and this reality is very different from that of a material thing. (Simmel, 'How is society possible?' in Wolff, 1958: 339)

Sociology then for Simmel should be the study not of societal facts but of those conscious interactions or associations. This constitutes one of Simmel's conceptions of society; as grounded in the everyday experience of its participants, and emphasises Simmel's argument against positivism. However, Simmel's sociology includes four conceptions of society: society as a totality (*Gesellschaft*), as a process of interactions or sociation (*Vergesellschaftung*), as an aesthetic object and as grounded in the everyday experience and knowledge of its participants.⁵ All of Simmel's conceptions of society share a common theme in that, "they are either directly grounded in or presuppose the concept of interaction or reciprocal effect (*Wechselwirkung*)" (Frisby, 1992: 6). For Simmel, everything in the world interacts with everything else and this is also true of the social world. Therefore, the inter-relatedness and interaction of the most diverse phenomena is at the core of Simmel's analysis of the individual and of society and his concern with the relations between phenomena is one of the reciprocal effect of the interaction of phenomena with one another. That is:

Society appears as a cosmos whose complex nature and direction are unlimited, but in which every single point can be fixed and can develop only in a particular way because otherwise the structure of the whole would change. (Simmel, 'How is society possible?' in Wolff 1959: 352)

From 1890 onwards, Simmel defines sociology as the study of 'forms of interaction' and by 1894 in 'The problem of sociology',⁶ sociology is still defined as such but becomes expressed more specifically as the 'forms of sociation' (*Vergesellschaftung*), that is the processes by which we engage in or are members of society. Sociology for Simmel should then be concerned primarily with the forms rather than the contents of social interaction and sociation, because other social sciences already deal with these contents. Form is abstracted from content, whilst recognising that the two exist together in empirical reality. For Simmel, sociology is defined not in terms of its subject matter, that is society, but in terms of its method. Sociology is therefore to be the investigation of the forces, forms and development of sociation, of the co-operation, association and co-existence of individuals. That is for Simmel "society exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction" (Simmel, 'The problem of sociology' in Wolff, 1959: 314) and is the only science which really seeks to know only society 'sensu strictissimo'. If sociology is the study

of forms of social interaction, then for Simmel sociology can and should examine any form of sociation, however insignificant (mealtimes, the rendezvous, flirtation, sociability, fashion, etc. are all forms that Simmel considered). Simmel therefore is interested in the minutiae of everyday life, the small-scale interactions and relations that form the basis of human existence. Simmel's sociology may be said to prioritise or reflect an interest in the micro-processes and relations of everyday existence that are expressed or identified as typifications or forms regardless of their specific contents. As such, these forms may be studied historically and comparatively in order to discover their general features (and also the study of the same form with different contents). For example, Simmel considers conflict as a general or pure form of interaction that may be found in both a political and an economic context and may be expressed in different ways, that is having different contents.

Simmel's contribution to the social theory of space may be placed within his overall corpus of work in which the investigation of forms of social interaction, their basis and the processes of reciprocal interaction by which we come to be members of society, were the foundation of his analysis. The investigation of apparently mundane, everyday, interactions and the subjective experience of them was, a fundamental part of Simmel's approach to sociology and his conception(s) of society as a 'web of interactions'. As Frisby contends, "[p]robably unique among his sociological contemporaries, Simmel explored time and time again the world of everyday social interactions and their cultural manifestations" (Frisby, 1997: 8–9). For Simmel social interactions have a spatial dimension – even the fact that he defines his sociology as the study of forms of sociation or social interaction suggests a spatial dimension. He also occasionally explicitly expresses this spatial approach to sociology as when he talks of the 'geometry of social relations'. Simmel writes:

Only if we follow the conception here outlined can we grasp what in 'society' really is society. Similarly, it is only geometry that determines what the spatiality of things in space really is. Sociology, the discipline that deals with the purely social aspects of man (who, of course, can be an object of scientific inquiry in innumerable other respects), is related to the other special sciences of man as geometry is related to the physico-chemical sciences. Geometry studies the forms through which any material becomes an empirical body, and these forms as such exist, of course, in abstraction only, precisely like the forms of sociation. Both geometry and sociology leave to other sciences the investigation of the contents realised in the forms, that is, the total phenomena whose forms they explore. (Simmel, 'The problem of sociology' in Wolff, 1958: 320)

It is possible then to identify in Simmel's work a variety of ways in which he examined a diversity of elements of space that have a reciprocal

effect/impact/influence on the character and expression of social interactions. For example, whether things, objects are fixed or mobile in space, whether they are near or far, how space can be open or closed, how it can separate or connect, make things/people insiders or outsiders, etc. It is these qualities that Simmel seeks to address in the somewhat formal study of 'aspects of space' in 'The sociology of space' which will be addressed. These in turn will be shown to have relevance for Simmel's understanding and investigation of other socio-spatial processes that he explores at different levels in other perhaps better-known works.

SIMMEL'S SOCIOLOGY OF SPACE – 'ASPECTS OF SPACE'

Simmel's sociology of space is a complex and somewhat abstract and formal attempt at identifying how and in what ways space is important in understanding social relations. Lechner suggests that Simmel's chapter on space can be interpreted in three ways. First, the abstracted possibility of individuals being together is reinterpreted in 'The sociology of space' so that, for Lechner, Simmel "emphasises... that interaction between individuals is usually experienced as the filling of space: the being together of individuals means that they share space" (Lechner, 1991: 196). Second, by investigating the spatial form of various social relations the project of Simmel's formal sociology is expanded. Third, the chapter on space must be viewed as part of Simmel's analysis of modernity in which the investigation of social forms in space illuminates how modern social structures are spatialised and how space itself comes to be modernised through reciprocal interaction with social formations.

The importance of the spatial element in social interaction is, for Simmel, a quality of space itself which, when combined with the dynamics and creative potential of human interactions, carries meaning and significance both for activities in space and of space itself. Therefore, space may be said to be a 'necessary though not sufficient' condition of sociation. It is these spatial conditions that Simmel sought to define in his identification and definition of his 'five aspects of space'. Simmel's analysis of space is thus rooted in his analysis of forms of sociation in space.⁷ There is in Simmel's conception of space a familiar neo-Kantian assertion of the active mind participating in understanding the world, that is, knowledge of the social world is viewed not as a collection of facts but a construction made by selection and interpretation. He writes:

Space always remains the actually ineffectual form, in whose modifications real energies are manifested, but only in the way that language expresses thought processes, which occur *in* words but not *through* words... space in general is only

an activity of the mind, only the human way of connecting sensory impulses that are unrelated in themselves into uniform interpretations... Kant defines space at one point as the possibility of being together; sociation has brought about quite different possibilities of being together – in the intellectual sense – among the different types of interactions of individuals; not many of these are realised in such a way that the spatial form in which this happens, as it does in all of them, justifies special emphasis. Thus in the interest of ascertaining the forms of sociation we enquire into the significance that the spatial conditions of a sociation possess socio-logically for their other determinants and developments. (Simmel, SoS: 137, 138)

However, the possibility of 'being together' in space can be realised beyond an abstract level of intellectual thought. This makes the spatial form of sociation and of such socio-spatial formations have a significance that needs to be considered.⁸ The relevance of Simmel's 'aspects of space' then lies in his attempt to give some detailed consideration to the way in which space has a significance for how and where and why particular social formations and interactions are possible and are framed and shaped by their spatiality. That is, Simmel's 'aspects of space' provide an early sociological analysis of space as an important element for the substantive analysis of social spaces, whether these are those of production, consumption, circulation, distraction or display.

40

exclusivity

The first aspect that Simmel considers in 'The sociology of space' is that of 'exclusivity'. For Simmel, every portion of space is unique. That is, no two objects, states, municipalities, houses, etc. can occupy the same portion of space simultaneously. For Simmel:

This uniqueness of space communicates itself to objects, so long as they can be conceived of merely as occupying space, and this becomes particularly important in practice for those whose spatial significance we tend to emphasise and put to spatial use. This applies especially to land, which is the condition for fulfilling and fructifying the three-dimensional quality of space for our purposes. To the extent to which a social formation is amalgamated with or is, as it were, united with a specific extension of land, then it possesses a character of uniqueness or exclusivity that is not similarly attainable in other ways. (Simmel, SoS: 138–9)⁹

This implies that sociological forms such as, for example, the state, the city, or the municipality exist in an exclusive space that forms and is formed by the particular associations within its territory that preclude the existence of another form, within that space. As Simmel writes:

The type of association among individuals which the state creates, or which creates it, is so much connected to the territory that the concept of a second state on the same territory cannot be sustained at all. (Simmel, SoS: 139)

Spatial exclusivity thus confers on some forms of association a unique and, potentially, dominant existence. Within the spatial association that is the state, for example, all other associations come to be dominated. It is impossible to conceive of two states occupying the same space. The state then is dependent on the exclusivity of its territoriality for its legitimate domination of activities that occur within it. Thus the power that resides within the space of the nation state is formed within and active over the space within and through which it has exclusive control. The nation state then as a political entity is impossible without a claim to the exclusiveness of its spatial domain.

In contra-distinction to this spatial exclusivity, Simmel posits the example of religion, notably the Catholic Church (although the extra-territoriality of Islam would serve equally well), to claim, in principle, that there is the possibility of a non-spatial and thus universal structure to some forms of association. Although individuals are localised in congregations that have a spatial exclusivity akin to the state they are part of a whole that is not spatially constricted to an exclusive space. Each congregation or diocese is orientated to Rome as the central authority through and in which the web of the church acts universally over the whole of its earthly domain. Thus as Lechner concludes, "social configurations vary in the extent to which they require exclusive occupation of 'their' space" (Lechner, 1991: 197). Exclusivity then becomes a fundamental aspect of consideration when investigating or analysing particular social formations. That is, to what extent is the exclusiveness of a specific spatial domain a requirement for a particular form of association to assume dominance. This then relates, in part, to questions of power.

41

boundaries of space

The second aspect of space that Simmel considers and one that has considerable significance for Simmel's understanding of the spatiality of forms of sociation is that of boundaries.¹⁰ Simmel states:

A further quality of space, which has a fundamental effect on social interactions, lies in the fact that our practical use of space is divided into pieces which are considered units and are framed by boundaries – both as a cause and an effect of the division. (Simmel, SoS: 139)

The boundary in Simmel's analysis infers that space itself is not solely a physical or material fact, but instead a social construction that frames relationships between individuals and between groups. This social construction of space also acts by delimiting it to structure the spatial

relatedness of objects, features and social relations within it (its contents) and also the human interactions that can be manifest (forms of sociation). This distinction between forms and contents is a crucial aspect of Simmel's sociology as a whole. By delineating its form and spatial arrangement the boundary serves a dual purpose. Objects and actions can be ordered and regulated under the aegis of a plan or functional prerequisites based upon some overarching value, principle or purpose whilst at the same time it also structures the inter-relatedness of its contents. Thus the social construction of space sets real and potential limits on that space and its contents. The boundary acts to structure the spatial and social relations that can occur between objects and human actions. This for Simmel is a fundamental point in the analysis of the importance of a space for social interactions. The extent to which space, as land for example, can be framed or bounded is significant as a fundamental aspect of space, in that not only does it close the space from an 'outside' giving it a more 'real' and concretised spatial character, it also constructs an inner cohesiveness that is subject to its own, localised regulations. This is a point emphasised by Simmel:

Similarly, a society is characterised as inwardly homogeneous because its sphere of existence is enclosed in acutely conscious boundaries; and conversely, the reciprocal unity and functional relationship of every element to every other one gains its spatial expression in the enclosing boundary... Once it has been laid down, the physical border's existing absolute precision illustrates well the formative power of the social context and its inwardly motivated necessity in this very lack of prejudice by natural space. (Simmel, SoS: 141)

42

This boundedness of space thus represents a crucial aspect of Simmel's sociology: that of considerations of inside and outside.¹¹ Lechner demonstrates that the quality of space that Simmel conceived of as boundedness has ramifications for who, how, why, when and where space is delimited in an increasingly urban society, in which ownership and use of land as a relatively scarce commodity signifies the creation of a space economy.¹² The partitioning of space thus prioritises and creates the potential for social hierarchies to be created and maintained by the spatial structuring of the landscape. The spatial framework that an individual or a group occupies has consequences for order and for control in and of space that feeds back into the social relations and actions of groups. This reciprocal effect, a dominant theme in Simmel's sociology, of the social construction of space being a determining factor or condition for social interaction has important implications for movement, circulation and control in the city of modernity. Thus Simmel emphasises that

through the structuring of its surface, space often receives divisions which colour the relationships of the inhabitants to each other and to third parties in

a unique fashion... The boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially. The idealist principle that space is our conception, or more precisely, that it comes into being through our synthetic activity with which we give form to sensory material, is specified here in such a way that the formation of space which we call the boundary is a sociological function. (Simmel, SoS: 142, 143)

This aspect of the boundedness of space contains elements that reflect later concerns with the development of disciplinary discourses that sought to 'know' space in order to control what occurred within it. Boundedness also reflects the potential for conflict and contestation over the meanings, values and uses of delimited and delineated space in that everyday activities have the potential for re-appropriating space by undermining its ordered and prescribed regularity. Who sets, maintains and polices the boundary is a key concern for those involved in the analysis of movement and migration, of the creation and maintenance of cultural, ethnic or social identities. Without some means of sustaining 'us' there can be no way of excluding or identifying the 'other'.

fixity of social forms in space

Simmel's third significant aspect is the capacity for social forms to become fixed by space. For Simmel, "whether a group or certain of its elements or essential objects of its interest are completely fixed or remain spatially indeterminate must obviously affect their structure" (Simmel, SoS: 146). The fixedness of objects and social relationships in space had, for Simmel, obvious repercussions for economic arrangements and relationships. He uses the mortgage and insurance policies on ships as an example of how formal and structural relationships are dependent on whether an object is fixed or mobile in space.

43

By making such unstable objects that existed only in mere interactions between people, once more the object of economic interactions would have led to even more unstable and precarious conditions if all these rights and relationships had not had the distinctive feature of *being immovably fixed at the place where they were exercised*. This was the stabilising factor which gave so much solidity to their purely dynamic and relativistic nature that it was possible to group additional economic interactions around them. Their spatial determinacy was not like that of a substantive object, which one would always find at the same place, but akin to the abstract stability of a pivotal point, which keeps a system of elements in a specific distance, interaction and interdependence... The significance of fixed spatiality as a pivotal point for social relationships emerges whenever the contract or union of otherwise independent elements can only occur at one particular place. (Simmel, SoS: 147)

The ship is not fixed in space but it can be considered and acknowledged as a pivot around which financial and social relationships can accrue and cohere. This aspect of the fixity of objects in space can in contradistinction be applied to objects that are not mobile but instead are fixed in space. The market for land and real estate acts in accordance to that fixity in which land and objects in space can be considered as immovable. This may have economic as well as social consequences both for the objects themselves or for surrounding areas.

This fixing of activities in space is for Simmel a crucial aspect of the development of forms and structures of social relations. He thus considers the fixity of space as a defining characteristic of social forms, and it may be said, of epochs. He writes of the distinctions that can be made between those forms of activities that are fixed around a point or are more fluid.

The typical contrast between forms of social dynamism is whether they merely signify a striving beyond that which exists socially and objectively, like the cycle of alternating pastures of pastoral peoples, or, on the other hand, whether they move around fixed points. Only in the latter case are they actually formed and only there do they gain a crystallisation point for the commencement of lasting values, even if these only exist in the persisting form of relations and movements. (Simmel, SoS: 148)

44

Thus it is possible to begin to identify objects in space or fixed spatial entities that may be said to have acted, at least at times in the past if not at present, as urban 'crystallisation points', around and through which, social interactions, values and functions are structured, coalesce or revolve.

A further aspect of the fixity of space is revealed when Simmel characteristically, returns to seemingly mundane, everyday interactions to postulate space as of fundamental significance both for sociology and for human actors in his presentation of the *rendezvous*. Simmel considers the spatial element to be of fundamental importance both to the event and to its survival as a sentimental memory. Indeed, Simmel argues that space rather than time is paramount for memory. For him, the nostalgic biography is written and remembered through the association of those spaces and places of important, pleasurable or eventful encounters. That is, space is invested with meaning and emotional attachment. For Simmel,

the *rendezvous* as a specifically sociological form, whose spatial determinacy is characterised linguistically through the ambiguity of the word: it signifies both the encounter and its location... Because it is more vivid to the sense, place generally exhibits a greater associative effect for recollection than time... the

place remains the focal point around which the remembrance weaves individuals into the web of interactions that have now become idealised. (Simmel, SoS: 148, 149)

This fixedness quality of space reflects considerations explored by later theorists of space concerned with establishing a historical-geographical materialistic analysis of the political economy of (particularly) urban space and the production of the socio-spatial organisation of urban capitalism. Fixing social forms in space allows for the organisation and management of urban social relations and for the development of both exchange values for land as well as use values associated with specific functions. The zoning of urban areas into leisure, residential, industrial, commercial, etc. is an attempt to fix portions of urban space into patterns of use.

spatial proximity and distance

Simmel's fourth aspect of proximity and distance is concerned with highlighting distinctions or possibilities between different forms of interactions as a condition of their relatedness to nearness and farness. Simmel writes:

A fourth type of external circumstances, which translate themselves into the liveliness of sociological interactions, is offered by space through which the sensory proximity or distance between people who stand in some relationship or other to one another. (Simmel, SoS: 149)

45

Whether interactions take place at a distance or in close proximity has a qualitative and perhaps quantitative aspect to them. If face to face interactions are limited because of the distance between actors, or actors and objects, spaces, etc., then the quality as well as quantity of social relations may be affected. If particular spaces have an exclusivity in terms of their being demarcated as sanctioned places for certain social interactions, activities and formations to occur then proximity and distance is clearly a factor in accessing potential opportunities for interactions. As Werlen writes, "[h]is [Simmel's] analysis could possibly be adapted to the relationship of agents to immobile objects and artefacts relevant to action" (Werlen, 1993: 170).

This idea of proximity and distance and its conditioning of interactions raise questions and issues concerning communications and social relations that are dependent on technology to cover distances. The invention of the telegraph had revolutionary consequences for the development of social and economic relations across space and time that is

mirrored in the claims made for the effects and possibilities of the virtual realities and networks associated with the internet and more modern information and communication technologies. The analysis of the location of objects, features and the socio-spatial organisation of the infrastructure of the city supports the assertion that proximity and distance are significant when considering access to and use of amenities as well as for the circulation costs of economic production. The development of urban features such as out-of-town shopping, recreation and sports centres mitigates against those who lack mobility or accessible and affordable transport.

mobility in space

Mobility in space is a related aspect to that of fixity. If an object or cultural institution, such as a museum, art gallery, recreation or educational facility, etc., is immobile in space then social actors must have to travel to it to use it or access its resources. They are fixed in location therefore, social interactions must necessarily occur in, around and through them in that they exist (in and of themselves) in an exclusive location that requires mobility on the part of the population to access its potentiality as a site of interaction, framed and fixed for this purpose. Whether a material object is mobile or immobile offers the possibility for explaining how social and cultural activities and formations can be given stability by their permanent location in a physical world that contextualises these relations through their interdependent arrangement and structure.

The immobility of a material object relevant to action thus obliges agents to go to it if they wish to utilise it in achieving a goal. This means that certain social relationships must be ordered around immobile material objects. The spatially defined location of the immobile material object thus becomes a socially important pivot of human interactions. Such a pivot may be represented by a single building or a whole town, according to the observational scale used. At all events it is clear that this fixed spot in the physical world becomes a 'pivot for the relationship and the social context' for all agents integrating this immobile material object into their actions. (Werlen, 1993: 169)

Thus, a spatial pivot may acquire real and symbolic contents and meanings, which acts as a unifying force for social cohesion in an increasingly competitive, fragmented and transitory existence. That is, they may in a secular sense, "awaken a consciousness of belonging among members of the denomination whose religious consciousness has long lain dormant in their isolation" (Simmel, SoS: 147). In other words, the mobility or not of individuals to access arenas or fora where

national, civic, class or communal solidarities can be displayed, expressed or promulgated in public is a factor in one's inclusion or exclusion from the social life of the collective. For Simmel

Modern life is able to bring about the consciousness of social unity, first, by means of those objective regularities and the knowledge of the common points of contact; second, through the institutions which are permanently fixed; and third, through written communication. (Simmel, SoS: 165)

This mobility on the part of populations raises questions as to the inclusion or exclusion to 'common points of contact' whether for social, economic, cultural, educational or leisure purposes, are located near or far populations that may be dispersed on the outskirts of cities in peripheral housing schemes or who may live in rural areas, and for whom access to transport may make mobility difficult. If populations are prohibited through lack of mobility then access to key areas of social life then disenfranchise them from participation.

SIMMEL'S ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-SPATIAL PROCESSES EXPLORED

In Simmel's somewhat formal consideration of those 'aspects of space' that he identified as significant for understanding the forms of interaction/sociation, it is clear that his awareness of space as a crucial element was also applied in his roles as a philosopher of culture and sociologist of modernity. Simmel's analysis of the spatial dimension of forms of sociation is a key operating principle in his varied analyses of the 'particularly abstract existence' that was, for him, the everyday life of the city and which constituted the basis of society where "Society exists where several individuals enter into interaction" (Simmel, 'How is society possible?' in Wolff, 1958: 314). What follows is a brief examination of those 'fundamental qualities' in Simmel's various investigations and analyses of the social spaces and experiences of modernity.

the city as space of modernity

The city was for Simmel *a* if not *the* key 'site of modernity' and provided a rich source of material for investigating the everyday 'web of interactions' that for him constituted society. Simmel's sociology of the city provides a well-known example of how his approach both to sociology and to space is applied in his analyses. In 'The metropolis and mental life' Simmel provides a social-psychological analysis of the consequences, of

the increasing transitory and fragmented tempo of urban experience and social relations in modernity. That is, the consequences and effects for the individual of the rapid growth and intensification of modern city living is rooted in his analytical perspective of the importance of everyday, however seemingly inconsequential, forms of sociation that take place in the spaces of the city and lead to the concomitant creation of a self-preserving blasé, urban personality.

The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli... With each crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life, the city sets up a deep contrast with small town and rural life with reference to the sensory foundation of psychic life. The metropolis exacts from man as a discriminating creature a different amount of consciousness than does rural life. Here the rhythm of life and sensory mental imagery flows more slowly, more habitually, and more evenly. Precisely in this connection the sophisticated character of metropolitan psychic life becomes understandable – as over against small town life which rests more upon deeply felt and emotional relationships. (Simmel, 'The metropolis and mental life' in Frisby and Featherstone (eds), 1997: 175)

48

The development of the blasé personality thus had, fundamentally, a spatial context. It is through this concentration in space that the city exerts these influences on the modern psyche. The city is the spatial form of modernity in and through which modern life is experienced and characterised. Simmel emphasises the speed, variety, quality and quantity of sensory and social experiences and interaction of urban living which marks the dichotomy between town and country life. In Simmel's analyses of the city he stressed the high levels of nervous stimulation, psychological bombardment of stimuli and the need to develop a social and psychological distancing. As Frisby puts it:

The sphere of consumption and the circulation of individuals as customers or as commodities is also concentrated in the metropolis... Not surprisingly, the impact of this reified world of the metropolis and the money economy upon individuals is all the greater because human subjects are themselves compelled to respond to their 'particularly abstract existence' only by attempting to distance themselves from it. Above all they must respond to the shock of 'the rapid and unbroken change in external and internal stimuli' that is experienced 'with every crossing of the street, with the speed and diversity of economic, professional, and social life', as 'the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions'. (Frisby, in Rojek (ed.), 1989: 80)

There is an obvious resonance in Simmel's analysis of the city as the site of increased experience and activity with Töennies' (1955) classification

of human relationships in which the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* has been represented as illustrating the rural/urban, pre-modern/modern qualities of social relations that Simmel recognised.¹³ For Simmel social relationships in urban modernity came to be increasingly impersonal, fleeting, fragmented and superficial. They took place within a large network of social circles that held no exclusive or undivided commitment and were based on specific roles rather than the qualities of the individuals themselves. In Simmel's study of 'The philosophy of money' he documents the increasing reification of social relationships through the medium of money and the concomitant decline of subjective culture at the expense of an increasingly objective culture dominated by monetary transactions. This concern with the distinctive qualities that made the modern city a new phenomenon with consequences for the individual and for the organisation, maintenance and regulation of modern society provided Simmel with the raw material for his analyses and investigations of the forms of sociation and was influential for later analyses of the city.¹⁴

figures in space

In 'The metropolis and mental life' Simmel identified the creation of a self-preserving blasé, urban personality. Also associated with the modern metropolis is perhaps the most celebrated and most studied of urban pedestrians, the *flâneur*. The *flâneur*, that self-conscious secret spectator, the 'undiscoverable, hidden man' of the crowd, the objective observer, who perambulates the streets, the spaces and places of the city in search of new sensations and experiences reflects and characterises aspects of Simmel's awareness of the spatiality of social relations in the city.¹⁵ Walter Benjamin's contribution to the analysis of the ambiguous figure of the flâneur as the sometime dandy and bohemian "urban stroller, observer, even idler" (Frisby, 1994: 86) is set within an analysis of the mundane experiences of the urban population, that is, the everyday life of the city which is influenced by Simmel. As Benjamin observes: "an intoxication comes over those who wander through the streets for a long time without any particular goal. The activity of walking itself grows in power with each step taken" (Benjamin, cited in Gilloch, 1996: 152). The streets and the movements and activities that occur there take on a new meaning and perspective through the creative eye of the flâneur. They become representative of the masses' private as well as public sphere. As Benjamin writes in the *Arcades Project*:

Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that – in the space between the building

49

fronts – experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls. For this collective, glossy enamelled shop signs are wall decorations as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois; walls with their ‘Post No Bills’ are its writing desk. Newspaper stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze busts, benches its bedroom furniture, and the café terrace is the balcony from which it looks down on its household. The section of railing where road workers hang their jackets is the vestibule, and the gateway which leads from the row of courtyards into the open is the long corridor that daunts the bourgeois, being for the courtyards the entry to the chambers of the city. Among these latter, the arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses.” (Benjamin, 1999: 423)

Both the flaneur and the blasé personality can be said to reflect aspects of social distancing whilst they observe or seek to preserve their individuality in the face of the tumult of modern urban existence. Indeed distance is a central concept for Simmel and in his varied analyses of forms of sociation it is evident that he was well aware that spatial relations are determining conditions as well as symbolic of social interactions. He writes of the ambiguities as well as the dynamism involved in socio-spatial interactions:

50

At the moment two persons begin to interact, the space between them appears to be filled and inhabited. This appearance of course rests only on the ambiguity of the concept ‘between’: that a relation between two elements which actually consists only of a certain movement or modification within the one and the other takes place between them in the sense of a spatial interposition. Although the ambiguity in question may give rise to errors, it represents a matter of quite profound sociological significance. The ‘[i]n-between’ as a purely functional reciprocity, whose contents stay within each of the parties to a transaction, also takes the form of a claim on the space which exists between these parties, actually manifesting itself in all cases between two spatial locations at which each party has a specifically designated place, one to be occupied by himself alone. (Simmel, in Levine et al., 1976a: 840)

Simmel explicitly identifies ‘the stranger’ as a figure that epitomises this in-between-ness and reflects aspects of his spatial analysis, that of nearness and remoteness, of fixity and mobility, inside/outside, etc. In the opening passage of ‘The Stranger’ Simmel writes that:

If wandering is the liberation from every given point in space, and thus the conceptional opposite to fixation at such a point, the sociological form of the ‘stranger’ presents the unity, as it were, of these two characteristics. This phenomenon too, however, reveals that spatial relations are only the condition, on the one hand, and the symbol on the other, of human relations. (Simmel, ‘The Stranger’ in Wolff, 1950: 402)

In identifying and analysing figures in space Simmel applies a spatial analysis that reflects his ‘aspects of space’ to characterise social forms that he viewed as indicative of modernity. For Simmel, what was also fundamental and indicative of modernity was the creation and experience of the mature money economy.

money

For Simmel, the city was not only the site of the concentration of stimuli and the magnification of possible social relationships and interactions it was also the locus for the expression of the mature money economy where money was the medium of exchange relations. In ‘The philosophy of money’ Simmel attempted to identify in the processes of exchange a means to clarify and deepen his conception of society. Simmel explicitly points to the relevance of exchange for society. Society is:

a structure that transcends the individual, but that is not abstract. Historical life thus escapes the alternative of taking place either in individuals or in abstract generalities. Society is the universal which, at the same time, is concretely alive. From this arises the unique significance that exchange, as the economic-historical realisation of the relativity of things, has for society; exchange raises the specific object and its significance for the individual above its singularity, not into the sphere of abstraction, but into that of lively interaction. (Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*: 136)

51

In exchange relations then, Simmel found a constellation of interactions that embodied what he intended by the notion of sociation. Not only is it the case that ‘the interaction between individuals is the starting point of all social formations’ but the exchange of possessions is:

obviously one of the purest and most primitive forms of human sociation; not in the sense that ‘society’ already existed and then brought about acts of exchange but, on the contrary, that exchange is one of the functions that creates an inner bond between human beings – a society in place of a mere collection of individuals. (Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*: 165)

If for Simmel society is the synthesis of specific interactions and is composed of these interactions then exchange is not merely ‘a form of sociation’; it is also ‘the purest sociological occurrence, the most complete form of interaction’. This sociological occurrence is epitomised in money, because money:

represents pure interaction in its purest form; it makes comprehensible the most abstract concept; it is an individual thing whose essential significance is to reach beyond individualities. (Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*: 168)

In the developed economy the function of exchange as a direct interaction between individuals then becomes 'crystallised in the form of money as an independent structure' that appears to exist over and above the individual but, for Simmel, money embodies the network of interrelationships that constitutes society. Frisby writes that for Simmel:

The social relationships that constitute society not only exist in space as a web, labyrinth or network. They also exist in time as fleeting relationships, as permanent relationships, as a constellation of relationships in flux. Money embodies this social reality that is in 'constant motion'. There exists, for Simmel, 'no more striking symbol of the completely dynamic character of the world than money... the vehicle for a movement in which everything else that is not in motion is completely extinguished. It is, as it were, an *actus purus*.' It is the spider that spins society's web. (Frisby, 1984/2002: 100)

It is in this sense of money as a spider spinning webs of reciprocal interactions that we can discern a spatial aspect in his analysis of the mature money economy of modernity. Money not only serves to connect it also adds to their distantiation across both space and time. Debts, possessions, shares, mortgages, leased property, etc. need not be materialised but can be managed by the capacity of money to be transferred. It is the aspect of social and spatial distance that Simmel again identifies as a key characteristic of money and of the experience of modernity. He writes that

The power of money to bridge distances enables the owner and his possessions to exist so far apart that each of them may follow their own precepts to a greater extent than in the period when the owner and his possessions still stood in direct and mutual a relationship, when every economic engagement was also a personal one and when every change in economic direction or position meant at the same time, a corresponding change in economic interests. (Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*: 333)

It could be argued that in this twenty-first century era of instantaneous electronic banking and financial transactions that this time-space distantiation is even more pertinent. Simmel also identified spaces of circulation and exchange as increasingly characteristic of the mature money economy of modernity. Whether in the new spaces created for consumption such as the department store or the increasingly fleeting and fragmented relationships that occurred in everyday transactions, money was the medium through and in which the means by which the increasing movement and circulation of people, goods and services was accomplished.

escape into space and spaces of escape

Simmel's exploration of micro-sociological phenomena, the forms of sociation, takes place within the everyday life and spaces of the city of modernity as well as the sometimes negative consequences for the human condition of their concentration, circulation and exchange. The spatial dimension of forms of sociation in modernity suggests there is also a need for spaces and places where the rapid circulatory system of the city operates at a slower tempo, allowing a temporary withdrawal from the pressure and strains of 'work' time and the domination of experiences mediated by money. It involves a consideration of the spatial dimension of human interactions in which Simmel also explores, as a necessary correlate and extension, the need sometimes to escape from this overwhelming intensification of interactions and sensory stimulation of increasingly objectified culture. Thus Simmel writes of the need to find new experiences and new places outside of the run-of-the-mill demands of the day in the development of modern forms of leisure and tourism. For example, in 'The Alpine journey', he explores how as a consequence of the conquest of distance the mountains become an accessible escape for the masses of the city.

A process which has been in the making for decades in the Swiss transport system has recently been completed. It has something more than an economic analogy to call it the wholesale opening-up and enjoyment of nature. Destinations that were previously only accessible by remote walks can now be reached by railways, which are appearing at an ever-increasing rate... Now there is the lure of the open road, and the concentration and convergence of the masses – colourful but therefore as a whole colourless – suggesting to us an average sensibility. (Simmel, *The Alpine journey*, in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 219)

Whilst Simmel accepts this 'socialistic wholesale opening-up of the Alps' as more or less a good thing, the effects of a temporary escape from the mundane routine is nevertheless only a temporary respite.

The uplift which a view of the high Alps gives is followed very quickly by the return to the mood of the mundane. (Simmel, *The Alpine journey*, in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 220)

Whilst the ability to afford a 'break' was and is still a necessary condition for travel outwith one's routine existence, those spaces and places conditioned by the need to exchange one's labour for money or familial obligation – tourism – then as now, involves a return. As more and more places become colonised by affordable and accessible travel the possibility

of escape seems to Simmel less worthwhile. However, he does identify that there is still, potentially, opportunities for enriching the psyche or the soul.

More precisely, the most general form of adventure is its dropping out of the continuity of life. 'Wholeness of life', after all, refers to the fact that a constant process runs through the individual components of life, however crassly and irreconcilably distinct they may be. What we call an adventure stands in contrast to that inter-locking of life-links, to that feeling that those counter-currents, turnings, and knots still, after all, spin forth a continuous thread. An adventure is certainly a part of our existence, directly contiguous with other parts which precede and follow it; at the same time, however, in its deeper meaning, it occurs outside the usual continuity of this life. (Simmel, *The adventure*, Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 222)

The adventure then involves risk-taking and stepping out of ordinariness, and for that time and those places associated with it, a journey begins and ends. Simmel uses spatial metaphors to describe how the boundaries and limits of 'normal' social life are suspended in 'the island' of adventure. As Simmel writes:

54

The adventure lacks that reciprocal interpenetration with adjacent parts of life which constitute life-as-a[-]whole. It is like an island in life which determines its beginning and end according to its own formative powers and not – like the part of a continent – also according to those of adjacent territories. This factor of decisive boundedness, which lifts an adventure out of the regular course of human destiny, is not mechanical but organic: just as the organism determines its spatial shape not simply by adjusting to obstacles confining it from right and left but by the propelling force of life forming from inside out, so does the adventure not end because something else begins; instead, its temporal form, its radical being-ended, is the precise expression of its inner sense. (Simmel, *The adventure*, Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 223)

There is a further example of the spatiality of Simmel's micro-sociological analysis "of finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning" (Simmel, *The philosophy of money*: 55) that supports the examination of the fragments of everyday life and activity, within space, as a means of theorising the uses and popular practices to be found in modernity. The essay 'The Berlin trade exhibition' may be considered as the expression of the modern idea of consumption as an escape or compensation from "modern-man's one-sided and monotonous role in the division of labour" (Simmel, in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 257). Simmel, in his consideration of 'The Berlin trade exhibition' of 1896, demonstrated that the simultaneity of the assault on the senses of such a number and variety of products, collected, displayed and presented in such a concentrated

experience, was crystallised into an almost inevitable experience of entertainment and amusement:

In the face of the richness and diversity of what is offered, the only unifying and colourful factor is that of amusement. The way in which the most heterogeneous industrial products are crowded together in close proximity paralyses the senses – a veritable hypnosis where only one message gets through to one's consciousness: the idea that one is here to amuse oneself... It is on the architectural side that this exhibition reaches its acme, demonstrating the aesthetic output of the exhibition principle. From another point of view its productivity is at least as high: and here I refer to what could be termed the shop-window quality of things, a characteristic which the exhibition accentuates. The production of goods under the regime of free competition and the normal predominance of supply over demand leads to goods having to show a tempting exterior as well as utility. Mere competition no longer operates in matters of usefulness and intrinsic properties, the interest of the buyer has to be aroused by the external stimulus of the object, even the manner of its presentation. It is at the point where material interests have reached their highest level and the pressure of competition is at an extreme that the aesthetic ideal is employed. The striving to make the merely useful visually stimulating – something that was completely natural for the Orientals and Romans – for us comes from the struggle to render the graceless graceful for consumers. The exhibition with its emphasis on amusement attempts a new synthesis between the principles of external stimulus and the practical functions of objects, and thereby takes this aesthetic superaddition to its highest level. The banal attempt to put things in their best light, as in the cries of the street trader, is transformed in the interesting attempt to confer a new aesthetic significance from displaying objects together – something already happening in the relationship between advertising and poster art. (Simmel, 'The Berlin trade exhibition' in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 255, 257)¹⁶

55

Similarly, Benjamin after Simmel, in his analyses and interpretation of the Paris exhibitions emphasised the fetishisation of the commodities on display in the fantastical spectacle of the exhibition as acting as a training ground through which the masses could be educated and entertained by the seeming limitlessness of technological innovation and production, the aestheticisation of consumption, and the celebration of civic, national and/or imperial power and status, amid the vicarious experience of the pleasure park. In these 'folk fairs of capitalism' the seeming distraction of the amusement park and the entertainments were an inherent component of the propaganda role of the exhibitions:

World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish... It arises from the wish "to entertain the working classes", and it becomes for them a festival of emancipation. The worker occupies the foreground, as customer. The framework of the entertainment industry has not yet taken shape; the popular festival provides this... World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity. They create a framework in which its use value becomes secondary.

They are a school in which the masses, forcibly excluded from consumption, are imbued with the exchange value of commodities to the point of identifying with it: "Do not touch the items on display!" World exhibitions thus provide access to a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. Within these *divertissements*, to which the individual abandons himself in the framework of the entertainment industry, he remains always an element of a compact mass. This mass delight in amusement parks with their roller coasters, their "twisters" their "caterpillars" in an attitude that is pure reaction. It is thus led to that state of subjection which propaganda, industrial as well as political, relies on. (Benjamin, 1999: 7, 18)

The World Fairs and Great Exhibitions then may be said to have been a showcase for production and consumption but become a place of pleasure and vicarious entertainment. They like the modern 'temples of consumption and consumerism', the shopping centres, malls and galleries become spaces of albeit temporary, distraction and escape.

a phenomenology of space

56

A final example of Simmel's exploration of the fundamental role of space in understanding everyday experiences and interactions comes through the reciprocity inherent in the social construction of space and the unique capacity of humans to shape, mould, connect and separate space. He uses the example of road building as an achievement that freezes "movement into a solid structure that commences from it and in which it terminates" (Simmel, 'Bridge and door' in Frisby and Featherstone, 1997: 171). For Simmel, this 'miracle' of achievement

reaches its zenith in the construction of a bridge. Here the human will to connection seems to be confronted not only by the passive resistance of spatial separation but also the active resistance of a special configuration. By overcoming this obstacle, the bridge symbolises the extension of our volitional sphere over space. Only for us are the banks of a river not just apart but 'separated': if we did not first connect them in our practical thoughts, in our needs and in our fantasy, then the concept of separation would have no meaning. (Simmel, 'Bridge and door': 171)

Thus Simmel sees the ability to overcome obstacles by separating them in our minds and imagining the conquest of space by the fantastic construction of human artefacts that transcend nature and yet at the same time aesthetically add a picturesque element. The practicality of spatial forms that accommodate and translate the acts of mobility, of unity and separateness, of distance and nearness is accomplished by road-making and bridge-building and yet their very materiality symbolises our desire for command and conquest of space. The phenomenon of the

human capacity to conquer space is similarly evident in Simmel's discussion of the door.

The human being who first erects a hut, like the first road builder, revealed the specifically human capacity over against nature, in so far as he or she cut a portion out of space out of the continuity and infinity of space and arranged this into a particular unity in accordance with a single *meaning*. A piece of space was thereby brought together and separated from the whole remaining world. By virtue of the fact that the door forms, as it were, a linkage between the space of human beings and everything that remains outside it, it transcends the separation between the inner and the outer. Precisely because it can also be opened, its closure provides the feeling of a stronger isolation against everything outside this space than the mere unstructured wall. The latter is mute, but the door speaks. It is absolutely essential for humanity that it set itself a boundary, but with freedom, that is, in such a way that it can also remove this boundary again, that it can place itself outside it. (Simmel, 'Bridge and door': 172)

Simmel thus shows again a clear and analytical approach to the phenomenology of socio-spatial processes that may be taken for granted and overlooked in everyday structures and forms yet which is fundamental for our investigation and understanding of them.

GEORG SIMMEL: THE FIRST SOCIOLOGIST OF SPACE

57

Simmel's sociology of space is an important beginning for a social theory of space. In seeking to address in a somewhat formal way through the identification and consideration of key 'aspects of space' he demonstrates an awareness of the need to provide an analysis of the significance of space for social relations. It reflects his conceptualisation of society as reciprocal interaction between individuals and his project of establishing sociology as the study of forms, not contents of sociation. Simmel's treatment of the significance of space as socially constructed but which also limits, or feeds into the social formations and interactions that can occur within it. This dynamic relationship, a symbiosis between social construction and environmental, that is, geographical determinism is illustrated in other more familiar work. It is possible to identify how Simmel's awareness of space was applied in his investigations of the consequences for subjective experience of modernity. As Lechner states, Simmel, "emphasises that in principle space is one of the most 'concrete' features of social life, one that helps to make social life 'real' in terms of human experience" (Lechner, 1991: 200). For Simmel, then, there are many forms of sociation that cannot be understood fully without taking into account both their spatial context and their use of space. In this it

can be said that Simmel is the first sociologist of space and his early work raises issues and themes that are examined, extended and expanded by later theorists of space.

NOTES

1 'The sociology of space' appeared in the 1908 German publication of Simmel's major work *Socziologie* although it had been published in earlier form in 1903. The first English translation appears in Frisby, D. and Featherstone, M., 1997, *Simmel on Culture*, London, Sage. Hereafter 'The sociology of space' will be referred to as SoS and the page numbers refer to Frisby and Featherstone's translation.

2 The contrast and similarities between Simmel's symbiosis of spatial determinism and social construction and Lefebvre's three inter-linked elements for the production of space will I hope become evident later (see Chapter 3).

3 See for example Foucault's emphasis on the importance of boundaries as well as power/knowledge of and over space (Chapter 5).

4 'How is society possible?' in Wolff, K. 1958, *Essays on Sociology*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, Ohio.

5 See Frisby (1992) and Frisby and Sayer (1986) for a detailed discussion of Simmel's various conceptualisations and uses of 'society'.

6 In Wolff (1958).

58

7 As Lechner puts it, although sociation 'fills in space' "[t]he spatial embeddedness of social configurations should not be confused with the actual causes of social processes. And yet, while he shows how space is in some ways socially formed, he does not treat space as simply a social construct. It retains a reality of its own. Simmel's overall position, then, lies somewhere between spatial determinism and social constructionism" (Lechner, 1991: 196).

8 Urry puts it thus: "Social life involves spending *time* with other people, and it involves crossing *space* to be in their company. Time and space are thus two central aspects by which 'nature' constrains social activity" (Urry, 1987: 215-16).

9 As Werlen states this exclusivity of space "means that if an object is considered only from the point of view of its location on the earth's surface, and all its other characteristic dimensions are ignored, it is always unique: at any given time only one object can occupy a particular position" (Werlen, 1993, 168).

10 Other later theorists of space also consider the boundary as a fundamental aspect or condition of space. See Foucault on 'Heterotopias and disciplinary spaces of learning, punishment, health, etc.' (Chapter 5) and Harvey on the political economy of space (Chapter 4) and Lefebvre on the planners and urban designers for the importance of the boundary for delimiting space for developing markets in land and for the design of cities and of particular spaces of leisure, culture, everyday life, etc. (Chapter 3).

11 This aspect of being able to open and close a space is also one of Foucault's six fold categorisations of Heterotopias giving the impression of isolation/exclusion but with a specified, and thus controllable, means of access. See Foucault, 1984 and Chapter 5 for a more thorough analysis.

12 Lechner considers that "[e]ven more important from a social point of view is the partitioning of space, since boundaries contribute to the integration, or 'centripetality', of a society. Bounded space makes any social order more concrete

and intensely experienced. But spatial ordering not only reinforces social order, it also lends greater clarity to conflictual relations. Partitioning thus influences relations within and across boundaries (which can be drawn more or less narrowly)" (Lechner, 1991: 197).

13 Tönnies posits *Gemeinschaft* as a perfect unity of human wills characterised by 'real', organic life and representing community, family, and private relations and *Gesellschaft* representing public life and society, characterised by the co-existence of independent people.

14 In particular, Simmel's influence on American Sociology and the development of the Chicago School in particular is well documented. (See Levine et al., 1976a and b.) Louis Wirth's theory of the industrial city aimed to present the analysis and findings of their major premise is what distinguishes the city from the country through the three interrelated concepts of size, heterogeneity and density. (See Wirth, 1938: 1-24.) For the Chicago School these were viewed as the key features of the city in their biologically based metaphor of the human ecology model of urban development and competition.

15 For an account of the Flaneur see Tester, K., 1994, *The Flaneur*, London, Routledge in particular Frisby, D. 'The Flaneur in social theory'.

16 For a fuller examination of Simmel's treatment of Exhibitions see Frisby, D., 2001, *Cityscapes of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge. For a consideration of World Fairs see Allwood, J., 1977, *The Great Exhibitions*, London, Studio Vista.

59