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PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SPACE:

FOUNDATIONS FOR A
CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

by

HELENE A. CLARK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of
New York

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Abstract

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SPACE:

FOUNDATIONS FOR A
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by

Heléne A. Clark

Adviser: Professor Susan Saegert

The field of environmental psychology has a practical orientation to the solving of problems in diverse settings. Early theoretical perspectives in the field showed much promise for major contributions to social theory, particularly with the development of the concept of place identity. However, environmental psychology has remained isolated from other social sciences, and has made virtually no impact on social theory outside the field. Nor has it contributed in a systematic way to the creation of better environments.

This dissertation suggests that the field has failed to articulate its epistemological basis, or to provide either a theoretical or philosophical grounding on which to base the normative claims of its research. The result has

been a neglect of theoretical development in favor of ad hoc empirical studies, which have not had a cumulative impact on either theory or practice.

Practical philosophy and critical theory can provide an epistemological basis for environmental research which is compatible with the interests of most environmental psychologists in environmental change, psychological and social factors, and interdisciplinary activity. In turn, environmental psychology has something to offer critical social theory, *if* we take on the development of theory in new, and radically different, ways. The physicality of the world, spatial relationships and the meaning of space and places have not yet been incorporated into many areas of critical theory.

The goal of this dissertation is to reconstruct environmental psychology as a critical environmental social science by 1) explicating its normative content and 2) linking critical theory to theories of built form, space and place.

By engaging in some of the difficult philosophical questions and practical conundrums which are troubling social scientists today, critical environmental social science may emerge with a unique contribution to theory and practice. What better field to effect material change in the world than one with an explicit concern for built form and the creation of place?

Dedicated to Clare Clark, William F. Clark,

Augusta Mast LeBerthon

and most especially,

Elmer Thomas LeBerthon

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This work, along with everything else I do, would never have been started or completed without the support of my husband, Joseph Center. He has contributed intellectually, emotionally and materially every single day, and has been excited and encouraging about my ideas even when I sagged.

I want to thank Susan Saegert and Rolf Meyersohn for their extreme dedication to this work, both during its development and in its final stages. Susan has juggled the roles of mentor, supervisor, colleague and friend through difficult and exciting times. Of all my debts of gratitude to her, I most appreciate the freedom she gave me to pursue my own ideas and interests, however outside the mainstream they were. Rolf, during dozens of meetings over the last four years, gave me a sense of self-confidence and assurance about pursuing this work. Our meetings provided the structure and process that I needed to move forward when I was stuck, or doing too many things at once.

I also want to thank Kathy Christensen, who started me on this topic by introducing me to critical theory as a second-year student. She looked for rigor and coherence in

this work, and that was the guiding influence as I put it in final form.

My friends and colleagues at the Housing Environments Research Group have sustained me more in the closing stages of this dissertation than I can say. Merely listing their names diminishes the importance each one had, which was immeasurable, but I think they see the evidence of their support in the fact that this dissertation is done. They are Jodi Imbimbo, Lynn Milan, Karen Peffley, Talya Rechavi, Stephanie Scott-Melnyk, and Mary Valmont.

My circle of support was wider than HERG, however. It included Brigitta Boveland, Alan Foster, Judith Kubran, Ron London & Kathy Mikulewicz, Les' Melnyk, Ruth Rae, Bill Roane and Rich Steinberg. Stephanie, Mary, Jodi, Talya, Ron, and Bill have, between them, been involved with the process of concluding this work on a daily basis.

I want to especially thank Harouna Ba for reading the entire first draft and making many significant editorial suggestions. As co-editors with me of _Environmental Theory Arena_, Harouna, Brigitta and Marie Gee have provided a forum to discuss and question theoretical issues, and inspired me through their work and their comments on mine.

Thanks are also due to Gary Winkel, Lee Rivlin and Eric Glunt for moral support and to Gretchen Susi for copy-editing.

Lastly, I want to thank the person responsible for starting it all - Arthur Reber. Ten years ago, Arthur suggested, in the form of a command, that I "look into" environmental psychology, and the rest, is now, history.

Many organizations, foundations and individuals have supported my work at HERG. The Urban Homesteading Assistance Board has been a research partner for six years. Funding has been provided by the SURDNA Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the New York Foundation, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Many thanks to all of them.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The field of environmental psychology, as part of the broader domain of environment and behavior studies, was founded to pursue the study of human action and cognition in real-world situations, without the pretensions of value-free science and with an explicit rejection of positivism. The goal of all of the environment and behavior fields has been to provide a social scientific basis for decisions made by designers, planners and policy-makers, based on the belief that in many instances places are constructed without background knowledge of human behavior in context. This lack of social science leads to, it is supposed, places that do not work optimally for their users.

By examining the founding assumptions and continuing primary goals of the field, it can be readily demonstrated that a core purpose for this field of research is change, and that it is assumed that the experience of place is fundamental to pursuing knowledge which can lead to changes in the environment that will improve people's lives. However, the field has not achieved any status within the social sciences in general, nor contributed to broader social theory. Perhaps even more seriously, the knowledge and changes that the field's founders had hoped for did not materialize beyond small-scale design changes. At least

one founder of environmental psychology is today so disillusioned as to call for the end of the field.[1]

Is there an alternative to the isolation of the field and the apparent lack of resonance of its research? The answer to this question is a provisional "yes". Yes, if the strengths and unique perspectives within environmental psychology can be linked, conceptualized and integrated with social theory and the rest of social science. One major component of this task is to provide a way for environmental psychology to theorize about social change, and the role of environmental psychological research in contributing to it. There are some exciting developments by researchers in environmental psychology and there is a great untapped potential to use environmental psychological concepts to add to a body of knowledge about how emancipatory social change occurs and how it is spatially constructed or constrained.

The purpose of this dissertation is to suggest a way for the field of environmental psychology to contribute to social theory, and in so doing, to play a leading role in the "spatialization" of critical social theory. However, a radical shake-up of some basic assumptions and reconstruction of the epistemological foundations of the field will be necessary for this to be accomplished. Fortunately for this project, many of the social sciences

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[1] see Interview with William H. Ittleson, in Environmental Theory Arena, Vol 3, No. 1,. p.1-7.

have undergone upheavals of their own in recent years and some lessons can be learned which are applicable to environmental psychology. Yet in other ways, environmental psychology is unique and will have to find its own path. My goal in the chapters that follow will be to identify those areas of theory from which a reconstruction of environmental psychology can benefit, and conversely, to then demonstrate how a reconstructed environmental psychology can benefit social theory.

Most of the social sciences today consider themselves to be in a crisis. This is partly in response to a) the challenges of both the conditions of postmodernity and the discourses of postmodernism, which have shaken core beliefs in the legitimacy of knowledge, b) to the rapidly changing political geography, forms and conditions of life, and modes of communication and exchange, under advanced capitalism; and c) as the normal historical practice of academic disciplines to undergo self-criticism, paradigm shifts and periodic flurries of calls to reconstruct the entire field.

In geography, one of the leading disciplines practicing environmental social science, the past ten years have seen heated discussion in all of the journals, at every conference and in countless books, on the philosophical foundations of the field, and the need to reconstruct geography in light of postmodern insights,

political and social reality, and the importance of an emancipatory intent.

Environmental psychology, and more broadly, the field of environment and behavior studies, is in contrast, amazingly placid. There is no sense of crisis in the journal articles, and the conferences consist mostly of paper presentations with various explanations of behavior in specific locations, such as a museum, hospital or park. Theorists working in environment and behavior, but who have been trained in other social sciences, tend to publish their work in the journals of their original field. This would be a productive dissemination of ideas from environmental psychology if the works were recognized as being developed from environmental psychology, but there has not been enough of a disciplinary identity for this to occur.

Given the developments in the real world and among scholars in the other social sciences, there seems to be something wrong with scholars who are not having some sense of an identity crisis. Some would say this is because the field of environment and behavior has never really established an identity in the first place.

Whatever the reason that environmental psychologists seem to be oblivious to recent developments in theory and in life, my purpose here is to argue that a reconstruction *is* necessary. And that reconstruction should broaden the scope of research to include the insights of not only

environmental psychology, but also geography, feminist theory, political theory, structuration theory and social theory in general. Combined, elements of these discussions could form the foundation for a vibrant environmental social science with an emancipatory intent.

An interdisciplinary social science that moves its theoretical focus from individual subjects to the integrated whole of person-in-environment represents the possibility of a major addition to social theory. This is not the 'contextualization' of psychology, but rather a philosophical shift which fundamentally affects the interpretation and legitimacy of theories of society. Yet, few of the theoretical discussions in environmental psychology are concerned with current debates about, for example, modernity, post-modernity, or post-structuralism, even though meaning and form in the built environment are central topics in these debates. I have not seen topics engaged within the environment-behavior field which are discussed heatedly in political theory and feminist writing, such as social justice, oppression and domination, political communities and subject position/identity, although many environmental psychologists consider their work to have political implications. The field suffers in two ways: 1) the contributions that could be made to social theory are left unaddressed, and 2) environmental research, not carried out with a social theoretical framework, often

fails to challenge or attempt to change existing forms of power and ideological dominance embedded in built form.

The various academic departments that have been established in the last thirty years to pursue the study of person-environment relationships, have students and faculty drawn from diverse disciplines both within the social sciences and from architecture and design fields. On the other hand, the discourses of the social sciences and architecture have passed by all but a few, and those individuals who have pursued an interdisciplinary theoretical interest are more likely to address their work to social scientists in other fields rather than within environmental psychology. They operate interdisciplinarily, but the field does not.

The development of a theoretical and epistemological foundation for the field of environmental psychology could begin with any number of philosophical orientations. I have chosen critical theory[2] and practical philosophy because of the importance of making normative propositions clear in a field where some type of environmental change is the goal of almost all research endeavors. Secondly, I focus on increased attention to the theoretical significance of space and place because a) it is an area where environmental psychology can make a unique

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[2] a more complete and precise meaning for the nature of a critical enterprise, and the role of practical philosophy, will emerge as critical theory is examined in depth throughout the course of this project.

contribution and b) it is, as yet, undertheorized, which leaves a gap in the critical theoretical perspective I am advocating. My purpose is to develop a particular epistemological perspective which can provide a basis for fulfilling the potential of the field to meet its goal of revealing and creating conditions for freedom from constraints and oppression through environmental analysis and change.

Environmental psychology has something to offer critical theory, *if* environmental psychology takes on the development of theory in new, and radically different, ways. The physicality of the world, spatial relationships and the meaning of space and places have not yet been incorporated into many areas of critical theory. Some critical theories of space are emerging out of the field of geography, and the challenges raised by postmodern discussions have given space a newfound primacy, or at least attention, over history. Daily experience in this historical period of late capitalism has also radically changed the relationships and awareness we all have of space, places and spatial factors such as distance. Environmental psychology's focus on individual experiences of place as part of daily life takes on new relevance and force as we discover that monumental societal changes are being directly experienced locally on a daily basis. If environmental psychologists can draw out these connections between the local and the global, not merely in a

descriptive way (although that alone would be very useful),
but in a way that indicates concrete practices which
challenge various forms of oppression, we will have truly
relinked theory and practice.

The task of this dissertation is two-fold: 1) to
demonstrate the appropriateness of critical theory for
environmental psychology to provide an emancipatory intent,
and 2) to begin the task of spatializing critical theory.

The plan to accomplish these two tasks is as follows:

1) Demonstrate the goal of creating better
environments as fundamental to the field of environmental
psychology, and present the main existing theoretical bases
on which change in the field is based. Because the purpose
of this dissertation is to connect the goal of the
environment-behavior fields to create better environments
with a theoretical perspective on emancipatory social
change, the focus on theory in environmental psychology
will be on those aspects which relate to the location and
contribution of environmental psychology to broader social
theory.

2) Demonstrate the potential of environmental
psychology to make a unique contribution to emancipatory
social change and social theory, based on its implicit
assumptions, its focus on environmental factors, and the
central role of human agency in much of its ontology.

3) Expand and shift the discussion of change from how
it is conceptualized in environmental psychology to a

theoretical presentation about emancipatory change from the perspective of critical theory.

4) Discuss the lack of a "spatial imagination" in some important (for environmental psychology) critical theoretical discussions.

5) Provide content and direction for adding a spatial component to critical theory by drawing on:

    a) existing theories of space and place from geography which can help understand individual action and experience, and

    b) examples from empirical research to demonstrate both how a critical environmental psychology might be operationalized with a spatial imagination, and how existing critical theories of space are not readily adaptable to practical and emancipatory research.

6) Conclude by drawing out new themes that have been revealed through a critical perspective, and indicate the implications for research practice of developing critical theories of place.

Throughout the dissertation, I will refer to an example from my own empirically-based research. Most of this research will be discussed in the three chapters entitled "Transformation of a Research Practice". The research I draw upon has grown along with the Housing

Environments Research Group (HERG)[3] of the Center for Human Environments, which was begun in 1988 by Susan Saegert, Eric Glunt and myself at the Graduate School of the City University of New York.

Since 1988, I have worked with, and studied the actions of residents of low income housing in New York City. This research has raised questions about representation, access to the public sphere, and the relationship between control of space, formation of identity and political challenges. It has also raised questions about the role of the research itself, which has often been a formative participant in the residents' struggles, by providing them with the knowledge, access and skills they needed to move their activities to another level. My suggestions for normative theoretical grounds for the field of environmental psychology, are based, in part, on the dilemmas and decisions that arose during this research.

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[3] all of the work described in the example was done as part of the research program of the Housing Environments Research Group (HERG) of the Center for Human Environments at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. HERG was founded in 1988 by Susan Saegert, Eric Glunt and myself . I serve, or served, as Project Director on several of the projects described and am currently Associate Director. In that capacity, I have had a unique opportunity to help shape the research program and much of the theoretical framework in which we place both what we study and what we do. However, my own ideas have developed in such a collaborative setting with others, especially Susan Saegert, that for the purposes of describing the empirical work which was engaged in by many, I will present it as the joint effort which it was. The "we" whose voice I use in the example is the voice of myself and Susan Saegert, as we both came to see the various research projects evolve into a unique type of practice, and includes, at times, numerous other individuals that contributed so much to our knowledge and perspective of events.

I have decided to expose the reader to the unfolding
of the transformation of my own views during my research at
HERG, because it highlights the difference which employing
the theoretical/epistemological perspectives suggested in
this dissertation makes in the practice of environmental
psychology; enough of a difference that as the ideas and
the research evolved it moved away from the limits of
environmental psychology and I came to see it as the
practice of a critical environmental social science.

The research context and events of my empirical work
moved forward parallel to my interest in theory development
in environmental social science, and the two have been
inextricably interwoven. While the purpose of this
dissertation is to emphasize the importance of a new
epistemological/theoretical perspective that can move a
moribund environmental psychology (with seeds of promise)
to an invigorated and indispensable critical environmental
social science (with practical effect), I am including my
own real research experience to, I hope, demonstrate the
power of this approach.

The description of how both the research and the
theoretical perspective evolved into a more forceful
explanatory model is, therefore, presented in a way which I
hope highlights how the ideas and practice moved each other
forward. It is my intention to "concretize" the import of
the theoretical chapters through example. To facilitate
this, I describe the research in three separate sections,

each section following the chapter which contains the
theoretical ideas that influenced that stage of the
research (and which were influenced by it). It is
impossible, in a linear text, to avoid placing some text
prior to some other text, and I choose to place the example
after each theoretical chapter because *it is* difficult to
understand the language of the example without reference to
the theory from which it derives. However, in reality, the
evolution of the theory and the practice went hand in hand
and influenced each other in a dialectical way. Practice
did not just "follow" from theoretical insights, but
created them. More importantly for this work, I hope that
by the end the reader has a sense of how theory and
practice built cumulatively to an understanding of the
empirical situation in a way that a traditional
environmental psychological approach would have missed.

The first section of the example describes how the
research was originally conceptualized as action research
to which we could bring the unique perspective of
environmental psychologists to assist in shaping urban
housing policy. The second section places the research in
a critical theoretical framework, which became necessary as
the political importance of what we were studying became
apparent. The final section presents an understanding of
the research, its context and our role as researchers, in
light of an analysis of the importance of place and
location, both geographic and political.

CHAPTER TWO

ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY - ITS LIMITS AND ITS POTENTIAL

Introduction

The field of environmental psychology has generated theories concerning differing aspects of how individuals transact with environments. Various theoretical perspectives have been advanced concerning the field's philosophical understanding of what being-in-the-world means[4]. However, perspectives on the nature of interaction with the environment, and theories about aspects of that interaction (or transaction), do not address two larger theoretical issues. The first is the subject of much discussion - does environmental psychology have a distinct theory or body of theories? The 1987 two volume Handbook of Environmental Psychology is an attempt to answer that question, and discussions about perspectives and paradigms seek to clarify how environmental psychologists go about their research, often by making values and world-views more explicit.

Useful as these are, I think a second, more fundamental question about theory, that would situate environmental psychology in its own socio/political setting, is being missed. Theoretical discussion has

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[4] Altman & Rogoff (1987), in The Handbook of Environmental Psychology, describe four world-views that address this.

looked inward, for theories *in* environmental psychology.
The question remains about how to incorporate an
environmental perspective (and all that implies) into
social theory, and conversely how to situate our own
research in broader theory. It is particularly ironic that
this question is rarely postulated, given the goal of
social change that most environmental research espouses.
Saegert's opening sentence in The Handbook states
"environmental psychology as a field is in itself a kind of
social change" (p.99). If this is so, and much
environmental research actively seeks to make it so, then
we need some concept of what social change is, how it is
accomplished and what its goals are. However, the most
explicit position on this is usually, as Saegert (1987)
says, to improve the "fit" between people and environments
(p.99).

I differentiate the current field of environmental
psychology from the critical environmental social science I
am proposing in the following way: environmental psychology
is an existing field within psychology, and is related to
an array of environment-behavior fields with varying
names.[5] This field has carved out a position for research
that is interdisciplinary, interested in social change and
in the role of the environment in human action. Yet it has
not developed an epistemological foundation that connects

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[5] a sample of related academic departments are: social ecology,
architectural psychology, environmental design, and even "man-
environment" relations.

it to the discourse of the social sciences and social theory. Environmental social science, on the other hand, is explicitly positioned within the discourses of the social sciences.

The focus in this dissertation on social theory arose from my belief that it had been neglected in the development and on-going practice of environmental psychology, and from my conviction that empirical work alone, however revealing, interesting and important, can never by itself provide a knowledge that is "emancipatory". By this I mean that the relationships of power and oppression that constitute and reproduce social institutions and practices across time and space cannot be revealed or changed without theoretical understanding. While theory grows from empirical work, meaningful empirical work cannot be done without a myriad of philosophical assumptions about the nature of existence, intersubjectivity and reality. Those assumptions need to be made explicit if we are to know what to do with the empirical results we find. Often, empirical studies based on very different assumptions are compared, and the result is two discourses that talk past each other, rather than add to a body of knowledge.

As Derek Gregory has remarked:

> ...social theory...is that medium within
> which anyone who seeks to account for
> social life must work. I say "must work"
> because empiricism is not an option. The
> facts do not and never will speak for
> themselves, and no one in the humanities or

> the social sciences can escape working with
> a medium that seeks to make social life
> intelligible and to challenge the matter-
> of-factness of "the facts." And I say
> "working with" because social theory does
> not come ready-made. ...It provides a
> series of partial, often problematic and
> always situated knowledges that require
> constant reworking as they are made to
> engage with different positions and places.
> (p.12).

To be precise about what I mean by social theory, I am referring to: "overlapping, contending and colliding discourses that seek...to reflect explicitly on the constitution of social life and to make social practices intelligible" (Gregory, 1994, p.10). By "critical" I mean those social theories that seek to make social life intelligible for the purposes of improving it. Critical theories "think of their own function as one of interruption and intervention in the representation and negotiation of social life" (Gregory, 1994, p.10).

Early definitions of environmental psychology

Practitioners and theorists in the field of environmental psychology often discuss the role of the researcher and the effects of the research on participants and outcomes. Moreover, attempts to define environmental psychology by reference to its assumptions, methodology, research topics and paradigms characterized the early years of the field. Later, discussions concern "worldviews" (Altman & Rogoff, 1987), synthesis with other disciplines, and the search for theory within the field.

Useful as this self-reflection has been, it is also part of the problem. Philosophical world-views have not been linked social theoretical concerns, but have looked inward, even at the same time as the field is often defined by what it is not, such as positivistic, value-free, laboratory-based or individual-centered.

In the first issue of the _Journal of Environmental Psychology_, Canter and Craik defined the field as "that area of psychology which brings into conjunction and analyzes the transactions and interrelationships of human experiences and actions with pertinent aspects of socio-physical surroundings" (p.2). Whatever term was chosen, the field of study in general was "the study of man-environment relations."

Craik (1973) ascribed the novel value of this area of study as lying "in its systematic analysis of the human behavior that occurs in and responds to environmental settings." (p.404). For psychologists, Craik believed that a taxonomy of descriptive properties of places was an absolute requirement for research in environmental psychology. A number of researchers did develop scales for assessing environments. For example, the Living Room Check List and the Ward Atmosphere Scales, list dimensions of the settings which researchers can check against behavior to quantify patterns of use.

Stokols explanation of the history of what he called, in 1977 the "study of human behavior in relation to the

physical-social environment" (p.1) within psychology is
that it was one of the fastest growing areas of
psychological research in the late 1960's and early 1970's
(Stokols, 1977a). He pinpoints the emergence of this area
of study with the publication of a special issue of the
Journal of Social Issues in 1966 entitled "Man's responses
to the physical environment." (That title would suggest
that neither the critical capacity nor the attention to
political and cultural spheres that environmental
psychology may promise was yet evident).

Therefore, Stokols, in 1977, defines the new area of
research, which he calls environment-behavior, not as a
field but rather "a set of interrelated areas of inquiry
whose conceptual and methodological continuities are
beginning to emerge. These continuities may eventually
provide the foundation for a new, theoretically coherent
discipline bridging the behavior and design sciences"
(Stokols, 1977b, p. 9). Later, in the Introduction to the
1987 Handbook of Environmental Psychology, editors Stokols
and Altman begin with this definition: "Environmental
psychology, or the study of human behavior and well-being
in relation to the sociophysical environment..." (p.1).

Nearly two decades later, no unifying theory has
emerged. In current debates which argue about the merits
and problems of unifying, universal theories (see e.g.
Nicholson, 1990; Rosinau, 1992), the diversity and even
fragmentation of environmental social science may be seen

as a virtue. But the "local" is always connected to something non-local, and within social theory, as within political practice, local can mean isolated if those connections are not understood and forged.

According to Stokols (1977b), there are four major conceptual areas in the new non-field. One is an ecological perspective on human behavior in relation to the man-made (sic) and natural environment. Second, the study of how psychological and social processes mediate interactions with the environment focuses on expanded conceptualizations of perception, cognition, learning and group processes. Third, not a theoretical area at all, was a focus on using the research to solve community problems. Fourth, again non-theoretical, Stokols noted the interdisciplinary nature of the field based on the complexity of community problems.

The beginnings of the field, which can be traced to ecological psychology, follow both the methods and categories of the physical sciences, and focus primarily on behavior. For example, the definition of ecology is the "study of the interrelations of organisms and their environment." The definition of environment is "all external forces to which organisms are actually or potentially responsive." Behavior, following this analogy to biology, is "those responses made by organisms that either promote or impair their collective survival in the face of environmental fluctuations." (Stokols, 1977b, p. 7-

8)   It is not surprising that using these definitions, theoretical and research foci concerned adaptive mechanisms, and basically, the survival of the species.

However phrased, the emphasis of the field was focused on describing behavior either as it was affected by a setting, or in more sophisticated terms, as it "transacted" with the setting. As such, it was a broadening of traditional psychology - what Glunt (1988) has called the contextualization of psychology.

Interest in understanding human behavior in context was not, however, new to the new field of environmental psychology. That interest could be traced throughout the history of psychology, as Glunt (1988) has shown. What was new were the changed assumptions about the nature of human activity, the explicit goal of creating change, an interest in connecting to the practical design professions, and perhaps, a move away from the individual subject.

I contend that the field has been troubled since the outset because of contradictions between its definitions and behavioral emphasis on the one hand, and its epistemological and ontological assumptions and direct goal of changes to the environment on the other hand.

Theories in environmental psychology

The purpose of this section is to examine two questions: 1) What are the philosophical, epistemological and theoretical foundations upon which research in the

environment and behavior field is built?; and 2) What is the relationship between environmental psychology and social theory? This chapter will look out the window from the inside - what do environmental psychologists say about social theory? Using this question as the starting point, the ambiguities about what is theory and what is philosophy are less important than how they are recognized and tackled within the field(s).

There are two basic types of theoretical discussion that are relevant to environmental psychology's relationship to social theory. The attempts to explicitly define that connection represent one type, and the large body of work concerned with defining the field of environmental psychology and its assumptions about knowledge is another. My goal is to present work within the field that exemplifies its theoretical bases, value orientations, and relationship to social theory, philosophy and practice.

From this point on in this chapter, I will use the term environmental psychology when describing the work of others, rather than environmental social science, to more accurately reflect the origins and self-identification in the field. Most of the theoretical statements and positions I examine in this chapter have been developed by environmental psychologists talking about the field of environmental psychology, although they may include diverse departments within their scope. As Kenneth Craik said in

1973, "environmental psychology" was the name of choice for the field because it seemed to be "theoretically neutral."[6](p. 403)

For the purposes of reconstructing some foundational set of theories or philosophies that sets environmental social science in general, and environmental psychology in particular, apart from other realms of social science, I am drawing, representatively, I hope, on the following, which come almost exclusively from within the field of environmental psychology: 1) works that are widely disseminated within the field, such as that published in the 1987 Handbook of Environmental Psychology, Annual Reviews, and the two major journals in the field, the Journal of Environmental Psychology and Environment and Behavior, 2) original work in the field--the early formulations by founders of the field on the need for, nature and content of, and theoretical substance in environmental study, 3) works that purport to summarize the field or be definitive and have wide circulation, and 4) works that may not reach a wide audience or are unpublished, but provide insight, analysis or a point of view that is representative of environmental research in some way. This last category has been chosen selectively based on my awareness of them and I try to treat them

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[6] other terms, such as ecological psychology and architectural psychology were already associated with theoretical perspectives within psychology, and geographers were employing what Craik called "local terms" such as behavioral geography to refer to the same research area.

differently from the other three categories in that they do not speak for the field, but rather assist me in speaking about it.

In addition to reviewing explicit theoretical connections, I want to examine assumptions implicit in much of environmental psychology's goals and methods. In so doing, the lines blur between theory and philosophy. Reflections about the nature of the field are more properly described as philosophical and epistemological. The strengths and potential of the field can be found here, in the foundations for a critique of society which begins with a critique of traditional social scientific practice and paradigms. From this, the possibility of defining environmental psychology as a critical social science emerges. At that point, however, theory needs to reappear to make it possible to connect philosophy to socially and spatially situated social practice.

The struggle for a set of theories unique to, and foundational for, environmental psychological research has been difficult and fruitless. There is no agreement even that such a theoretical base is desirable, and less agreement about whether it is possible (see e.g. Zube & Moore, 1987 & 1989).

Yet, something distinguishes the field and the research which goes beyond the "focus on man-environment relations" (Craik, 1973, p. 403.) Much very fruitful work has identified assumptions of environmental psychological

research that have helped redefine the epistemology of research. For example, Ittleson, Proshansky, Rivlin & Winkel (1974) list eight assumptions, which are:

1) the environment is experienced as a unitary field,

2) the person has environmental properties as well as individual psychological ones,

3) there is no physical environment that is not embedded in and inextricably related to a social system,

4) the degree of influence of the physical environment on behavior varies with the behavior in question,

5) the environment frequently operates below the level of awareness,

6) the "observed" environment is not necessarily the "real" environment,

7) the environment is cognized as a set of mental images, and

8) the environment has symbolic value.

Glunt (1988) finds these assumptions useful in delineating the scope of the field. However, when examined, these assumptions do less to limit a realm of study and define a distinct discipline than they do to offer a paradigm shift for all social science.

The assumptions listed above, if taken seriously, have enormous import for any social science research and for social theory. To employ some critical analysis of the statements made about the field itself, some "unmasking" needs to be done of the foregoing definitions and

assumptions. For example, "there is no physical environment that is not embedded in and inextricably related to a social system," is an epistemological-ontological view. Had the authors at that time been focusing on the relevance of this as ontology rather than as a guiding principle for the study of physical environments, the implications for social theory would have been clearer. The real promise of environmental psychology to contribute to social theory lies, however, in the converse of that statement. Posited as "there is no social system that is not embedded in and inextricably related to a physical environment," we can present the challenge of understanding society in a more material and spatial way than theories thus far have been able to integrate. In either case, these are views about the nature of being, or the nature of knowledge about being. They do not lead directly to theoretical propositions, nor do they point to any particular theoretical road to take. They can however, allow us to see what theories are inadequate or incomplete for an understanding of human activity. This is the beginning of the field's function as a "critical" social science. However, as Bernstein (1989) has noted in his critique of Giddens, perspectives on the nature of being, or human action, are insufficient without a normative component.[7]

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[7] see Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of what constitutes critical theory, and for further analysis of the critical theoretical aspects of environmental psychology.

Searching for a theoretical definition and structure in environmental psychology that is multi-disciplinary, Proshansky, Ittleson & Rivlin (1976) and then Proshansky (1974) recognize limits to the possibility of specifying theory as an "elaborate rational system...with a network of assumptions, propositions and concepts leading to testable empirical generalizations." Instead, they seek to limit their search to a concept of theory that was the "systematic use of words, ideas, concepts, and the relationships among them as a guide to thinking and research" (Proshansky, 1974, p. 544.).

Even with such a practical and modest goal, Proshansky in 1974 found "little evidence of such analysis in the literature of individually oriented environmental psychology" (p. 545). According to Holahan in 1986, the situation was not much different. Writing in the Annual Review of Psychology, he claimed that research in environmental psychology was hampered by a lack of theory of the person or the environment.

One of the major contributions in environmental psychology has been expansion of the concept of place-identity. Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983) tackled the previously incomplete ideas about the formation of self-identity (defined as the conscious sense of self, rather than the general sense of self, which includes both conscious and unconscious perceptions and beliefs) within psychology, and the phenomenologically focused concept of

place-identity emphasized by humanistic geographers. Previously, psychology had considered individual and social processes as constitutive of identity, and disregarded the effects of the built environment.

Many of the descriptive studies of place identity look at the role that certain experiences of places play in people's lives and how they feel about them. Few are able to get beyond the level of self-report, making it much more difficult to develop theories about identity formation, which does not occur in a fully conscious or articulatable way. Further, studies of place identity usually examine the role of place in a fairly passive way. They either look at how people experience places and what memories or feelings they have about them, or they look at how people act on certain places, such as how they decorate them. A few studies, such as Wolfe's examination of the role of lesbian bars (Wolfe, 1990), take a more historical/political look at how places influence identity construction. More such work, which includes an active and dialectical view of how people exist and act in and across places as part of their effort to create, construct or shore up their sense of identity are needed.

In contrast, the social context of identity formation is often examined. Both sociologists and political theorists discuss identity formation as it occurs by people identifying with a group (see for example, Young, 1990). Much of the literature, in fact, on the rise in

"nationalisms" explains the phenomenon by the perceived
need to strengthen individual identity by strengthening
group identity. Group identity has to be socially
constructed in the first place for the explicit purpose of
providing a group identity with which an individual can
identify (Jackson & Penrose, 1993).

We have theories about identity developed in a
social/political context explaining everything from the
increase in the number of parades in New York City to the
Bosnian/Serb conflict to the breakup of the Soviet Union.
But the equally rich concept of place identity isn't
invoked anywhere outside the environmental psychological
literature.

There is a curious development within environmental
psychological research in terms of theories that are
explicitly spatial. By explicitly spatial, I mean such
areas as territoriality, privacy, and human spatial
behavior. All of these are concerned with developing
theories about how human beings use space, and what
psychological function access to, and use of space, serve.
At the same time, however, environmental psychology has
made virtually no contact with the burgeoning and rich
theoretical developments of space and place in social
theory.[8]

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[8] these are similar in some respects to the work on place done by
phenomenonological geographers. That work is also often criticized
for not making connections to social theory.

Quite early in the new psychological focus on people and environments, spatial factors entered the scene. Robert Sommer published _Personal space: The behavioral basis of design_, in 1969. Explicitly concerned with the relationship between people and space, the topic usually referred to as "human spatial behavior" or, after Robert Sommer's book, "personal space," remains strangely unconnected with those social theories that incorporate spatial dimensions. While work within environmental psychology has been insular, in anthropology, Hall's landmark work _The Hidden Dimension_ connected spatial distance to culture, communication, and theories of learning. Related to human spatial behavior, there have been the many studies on territoriality.

While these two general areas, human spatial behavior and territoriality, along with important derivative interest in crowding, privacy, conflict and stress, have provided vital empirical evidence for theories that place human psychological and behavioral functioning in a world with spatial properties, they can be taken much further. All of these theoretical areas have much to contribute to theories of society, not just to theories of the individual.

As the field has matured, articulation of underlying assumptions has been transformed into a more sophisticated discussion of paradigms and world-views. Saegert & Winkel (1990) identified four paradigms that have guided research

in the field, and associated each with what they term
certain "metatheoretical stances." A paradigm, in Saegert
& Winkel's usage, is a "general conception of person-
environment relationships." Each is characterized, by
varying definitions of the environment, the person, and by
the locus of change for people and environments.

The paradigms are: 1) the adaptation paradigm, which
views all behavior as motivated by a goal of biological and
psychological survival; 2) the environment-as-opportunity
structure paradigm, which views the environment as a set of
opportunities among which a goal-directed human being can
choose; 3) socio-cultural paradigms, which seek to place
the individual within broader contexts, such as political
or economic systems; and 4) a "synthesis" paradigm, which
grounds research in its historic and geographic
specificity, and searches for changing transactions among
persons and environments rather than replicable forms of
interaction.

As Saegert & Winkel claim, the adaptation paradigm is
the most widely used in environmental psychology. It is
most compatible with traditional psychology, as follows the
line begun with ecological psychology, mentioned above.

The socio-cultural paradigm would seem to be the most
appropriate paradigm for pursuing connections between
environmental psychology and social theory, as it is
directly concerned with macro-level social, cultural,
political and economic systems. However, work within this

paradigm has so far failed to *theorize* about the relationship of the human/social agent to social structure. Rather, it has relied on more contextual descriptions of the research and its embeddedness in multiple levels of societal forces.

While Saegert & Winkel propose the synthesis paradigm as most capable of handling the problem of replicability by suggesting an alternative epistemology, its most significant contribution is a more theoretically precise conceptualization of change, and of the role of human agency acting within environmental constraints in creating that change.

In the 1987 <u>Handbook of Environmental Psychology</u>, two sections comprising eight chapters are devoted to questions of theoretical perspectives in the field. Wapner (1987) contributed a chapter to the <u>Handbook</u> in which he first posits the need for an overarching theoretical perspective, and then provides one, which he calls "a holistic, developmental, systems-oriented environmental psychology." (p. 1433)

In explicating the principles and assumptions of his overarching approach, Wapner reviews and validates some of the epistemological assumptions of the field. Particularly, he emphasizes the importance of a transactional perspective, following Altman's (1981) definition "that environment and behavior are an integral or transactional unity, such that behavior and environment

mutually define one another." (p. 1435) They must be understood as a single unit of analysis, according to transactionalism. Hence, the challenging of the traditional idea of the subject.

Further, he is explicit about the goal of change, when he states that a theoretical perspective:

> should accept the value that inquiry and praxis are interrelated scientific goals. More concretely, an integrative perspective should be concerned with knowing about the nature of person-in-environment transactions so as to help people improve the quality of those transactions, to enable them to enrich their experience of the world in which they live, to change those environments that hamper their functioning, and to build environments that optimize the quality of their lives. With such goals, no exception can be taken. (p. 1438)

The goal of environmental change

Environmental psychology's raison d'être has been the fostering of positive changes in the environment. Almost every article on the history or definition of the field explicitly states this goal in some way. Most state it in general terms, e.g. Saegert and Winkel (1990), "environmental psychology has long been concerned with bringing about positive changes in person-environment relationships." (p.441)

Yet rarely is change conceptualized beyond a generalization. A notable exception to this is Saegert's 1987 article "Environmental psychology and social change" which analyzes the types and processes of social changes to

which environmental research has been applied, and the emerging research within the synthesis paradigm identified by Saegert and Winkel (1990).

Darley and Gilbert described environmental psychology as a problem-centered rather than a theory-centered set of activities that emerged in *response to societal and political events* (Darley & Gilbert, 1985). According to Stokols, 1978, environmental psychology has also been characterized as an appendage of social psychology which reflected an interest in applying the theories of social psychology to the solving of community problems.

Environmental psychology is characterized as an "applied" area of research. However, Stokols explicates what he views as a reciprocal relationship--while some environmental psychological research uses the theories and methods of social psychology and applies them to community environmental problems, theories developed within environmental psychology can contribute further to social psychology (Stokols, 1978).

Canter, Stea and Krampen (1988) identified numerous social scientific domains that have as their common interest the transactions between people and their physical context, which they group together under the rubric of environmental social science. Comprising many academic departments of which environmental psychology, social anthropology, urban sociology, behavioral architecture and some branches of cultural geography are just a few, they

identify environmental social science as fundamentally interdisciplinary.

Their work focuses on theory in environmental social science. They identify a political perspective of "anarchism," meaning that they see the field working toward "direct influence of people over the decisions that are of immediate relevance to them." (p. xiii). They believe this anarchism is reflected by "user participation." Other political goals of their perspective include "protection of the biosphere" and "the desire by researchers to respond directly to pressing architectural and planning issues of critical significance around the world." These issues include, for example, housing for underdeveloped areas, and responses to the "crises brought on by rapid urbanization and uneven development." (p. xiv).

An example of an unresolved conceptual area, according to Stokols (1987), is that of the "ecological context of behavior and the complex transactions between people and their everyday environments." Early environmental psychologists such as Barker (see 1968), Ittelson and Proshansky tackled these concepts. However, how far from the assumptions of social psychology did they move as they explored these complex areas? These early works continued to apply a scientific method to the study of atomized concepts of individuals and behavior, and never explicated the concept of environment as anything more than the immediate setting as given or perceived by an individual

who then gauged his or her behaviors accordingly based on the cues of the setting.

This type of research remained detached from articulating a philosophy of the subject or the object, or their relationship to each other, detached from articulation of theories of knowledge, and detached from the social theories which add dimension to both the person and the environment by analysis of relationships of power, human action, ideology, and the interrelationship of societal parts.

In Chapter Four, I will suggest some theoretical underpinnings which can ground the concept of change by linking it to a normative emancipatory ideal as explicated within critical theory.

Action research as a means of change

Ironically, the epistemology of environmental psychology may be best seen through one of its methods, rather than its theories. Action research, originally formulated by Kurt Lewin in 1946, is closely associated with the goal of change that characterizes environment and behavior research. Action research has special relevance for this dissertation because it both reflects some of the epistemological assumptions of the field and because it combines research with practice. It also demonstrates how the field has been limited in its theoretical development and ineffective in confronting those practices that perpetuate domination and exclusion.

Kurt Lewin defined action research as research which led to social action, and which comprised a triangle of research, action and training. A clear objective of action research for Lewin was the solution of social problems (Wisner, Stea & Kruks, 1991). Participation of people at the "grass-roots" is often central in an action research approach.

There are important epistemological implications about the production of knowledge involved in adopting action research. For one thing, unlike empiricism or positivism, action research assumes that the values of the researcher not only can be part of valid research, but must be part of it. Viewing scientific activity as one form of purposive human action, all of which is value-laden, action research defies the false separation of theory and practice inherent in positivism, for example.

Going further into examining how knowledge is produced, action research also aligns itself with a pragmatist view of knowledge being the outcome of action, not its antecedent (Dewey, 1929). For a social science to have a goal of emancipatory change, both of these epistemological views are necessary. Otherwise, research aimed at influencing change would have to do so *separately* from practice. This is, in fact, how research aimed at change is often carried out--research produces knowledge which at some later point can influence change. Policy research is a common example, as are many post-occupancy

evaluations. Much of the change-oriented research done within the environment and behavior fields is of this variety--research produces knowledge for actors or institutions who may learn from it and implement environmental changes.

Action research, on the other hand, assumes that knowledge is produced through activity and is iterative-- action and research can spiral upward together (Lewin, 1946). Action research implicitly takes on Marx's 11th thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point is to change it." (Marx, K & Engels, F., trans., 1947, p. 199).

Because of the focus on action and practice, participants usually act along with the researcher in conducting the study. Although action research and participatory research are not identical, most often they overlap, and action research projects typically involve a grass-roots component. In the fields related to the study of environment and behavior, action research usually tackles a local problem, sometimes specifically design-related, and engages a team of participants and researchers to mutually define the problem, devise a way to study it, and then plan a course of action.

Examples of action research may include working with neighborhood residents to solve community problems or working with a "user" group to design a building or park. Wisner, Stea and Kruks (1991) provide diverse examples of

action research which include self-built housing, local soil conservation, health care planning, improved grain storage, and resettlement after a landslide.

Limitations of action research

While action research is compatible with research oriented toward change, and compatible with a view of knowledge production that combines theory and practice, it does not itself provide any theoretical framework for deciding what changes should take place. In fact, it leaves the decision about what changes can and should occur to the results of the participatory process. This means the type of change is inherently limited because it must arise within the limits of participation, which are well-documented (see e.g. Arnstein, 1969; Pateman, 1970). They include lack of participation by all members concerned, structural lack of opportunity to participate for "excluded" groups, no real power on the part of the participants, external opposition, and a focus on local solutions and problem definitions.

Finally, participatory research is limited to the conscious awareness and knowledge available to the researchers and participants. A trend in Latin American action research, for example, has been to deal with this problem head-on by focusing on people studying their own situations through a process of "conscientization" (Freire, 1973). The goal of this type of action research is to go

underneath ideology and dominating social and material relations in order to gain a true understanding of one's oppression. It is this version of action research that is particularly useful for the critical environmental social science I am proposing.

While one strength and limitation of action research is its affinity for participatory processes, there are other limitations as well. Like participation, each of these limits is, in another way, a strength. The distinctions in practice have become fairly muddled, so action research is considered to be the "radical" or "progressive" approach to environmental studies. This is partially deserved, for the epistemological reasons mentioned above. It rejects the separation of values and practice from the production of knowledge, and includes people in studying and solving their own problems. However, it is not necessarily "progressive" in substance or outcome.

Action research is a *technique* and not a theory or even a method of theory development. As a technique, it is not necessarily "critical" in terms of exposing relationships of power or ideology (i.e. false consciousness). Action research is often presented as revolutionary because it implies change, but actually even maintenance of the status quo requires action. Change is a constant, and can either maintain existing systems or challenge them. As William Ittleson, a founder of

environmental psychology, said in a recent interview: "Change will occur and there's not a damn thing we can do about it. The environment's going to be changed and somebody's going to direct it". (Ittleson, 1995, p. 6) Action research moves the actors directing change towards the grass-roots, but it does not directly tackle difficult issues about power and exclusion and does not direct change in any particular way. "Thus action research is no more necessarily progressive, reformist nor revolutionary than policy is nomothetic or descriptive research necessarily reactionary. All of these forms of research are simply instruments that may be employed for progressive or reactionary purposes" (Oquist, 1978, p. 161). As we all know from the proliferation of exclusionary, gated neighborhoods, and the many not-in-my-backyard issues, locally controlled change, even when power is really in the hands of the community, is not always progressive.

This points to the last limitation of action research I want to mention. It focuses on the local. Again, this is a strength in that it can be a truly grass-roots method, and few social sciences have turned to research that builds on local knowledge of daily life. However, because of the exclusively local nature of its practice, it does not help make the vital connections to the global factors and relationships which effect the possibilities of local areas. It is through relating the local to the global, relating everyday life to structures of advanced

capitalism, that we can develop theories about what changes will be progressive. Action research can be used in this way, as Latin American examples show, but within environment and behavior, it usually has not been.

Action research as a way of doing research can only become praxis - practice informed by theory--if it is done with theoretical content. It is the addition of this theoretical content that I want to address in the next chapter. Critical theories of society can provide substance and direction to the practice of change.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSFORMATIONS OF A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE - Part I[9]

Low income cooperatives are one part of the housing mix in New York City. In some ways they are unique to the housing crisis and market of New York, and in other ways are part of a long history of "social housing" in the United States. They are part of the web of property relations, economic disinvestment and government intervention within which poor people all over the United States are trying to find a safe place for themselves. It is with this housing stock and its residents that my research with HERG research began.[10]

There are, as of 1995, over 800 limited-equity cooperatives in New York City and more will be created if the City doesn't eliminate the program that allows residents to purchase their buildings. They began as a direct response to landlord abandonment, which left

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[9] portions of the following sections have been adapted from the author's previous work, including Clark, H. (1993). Sites of resistance: Place, "race" and gender as sources of empowerment, in Constructions of race, place and nation. P. Jackson & J. Penrose (eds). London: University of London Press; Clark, H. (1994). Taking up space: Redefining political legitimacy in New York City, Environment and Planning A, 26, 937-955; and Clark & Saegert (in press) Cooperatives as places of social change, in The hidden history of cooperatives, A. Heskins & J. Leavitt (eds).

[10] this research had a history which began in the early 1980's with a study by Jacqueline Leavitt and Susan Saegert to document and analyze the accomplishments and processes of tenant ownership. The results of that work is reported in their book, From Abandonment to Hope: Community Households in Harlem (1990).

approximately 50,000 occupied units of housing in the hands
of the city (Brower, 1989). These units were, and are,
occupied by a large proportion of single parent families
and elderly. They are located in the city's poorest
neighborhoods and are over 90% African-American or Latino
(Bureau of the Census, 1990).

This occurred during a public sector (federal,
especially) withdrawal of funds for housing and services,
and a fiscal and housing decline during which New York City
lost 500,000 units of housing, with a net loss of 57,000
units between 1970 and 1987 (Stegman, 1987), almost all of
which were for low income minority families.

To save their homes, avoid displacement and improve
their living conditions, tenants in some buildings
organized for the right to run their buildings themselves.
Most tenants found that they were faring little better
under city ownership than under neglectful landlords. The
city was totally unprepared to become landlord to hundreds
of multiple dwellings with tens of thousands of units in
need of new boilers, windows, roofs, plumbing and years of
deferred maintenance. Twenty years later, the city still
owns and manages thousands of units, and has not been able
to do more than minimal maintenance, and often not even
that. A recent study in the Bronx and Harlem showed
conditions in buildings owned and managed by the city to be
in the worst repair of all non-profit ownership
alternatives. Resident-run cooperatives were reported to

be in the best repair (Henderson, Saegert, Sullivan, Sierra & DeRienzo, 1993).

Tenants and the leaders who struggled for years to create stable, secure homes did surmount overwhelming obstacles to achieve their goals, including lack of resources, poor living conditions for years, the problems of keeping people together in the buildings, and racism encountered in meetings with city officials. However, ultimately they were only able to succeed when the city created a program that allowed legal ownership by tenants, and when they had the necessary technical assistance to learn about building management, bookkeeping and how to navigate government bureaucracy (Leavitt & Saegert, 1990; Kolodny, 1973; Lawson, 1986). Yet, tenant demands were instrumental in the creation of a city program for cooperatives.

Although much of the credit for creating a program for resident ownership goes to tenants, it was a combination of strong tenant organizations and broader economic circumstances that made low income ownership possible. The buildings had no economic value to the private sector, and therefore none to the city. Sale of the buildings back to a private landlord was not feasible, since most buildings could not turn a profit; they certainly couldn't be both profitable and adequately maintained, as previous rounds of sales and foreclosure made clear.

With the private sector abandoning low income housing, government was faced with a crises. It now owned a large proportion, and often the worst, of the low income housing stock, and was continuing to acquire more as more private owners ceased to pay taxes. Tenant demands to buy and run their buildings offered an expedient way to get rid of buildings. However, while expedient, it also meant some cost on the City's part - both buildings and tenants needed some investment before they could become viable cooperatives, and this prevented the city from actively pursuing large numbers of co-ops. However, the ability to get buildings back into the private sector and on the tax rolls was advantage enough to get a program started.

We knew the history of how limited-equity cooperatives came to be formed, and they seemed to provide a viable answer to the city's problem of what to do with properties that couldn't bring a return on investment and for residents who didn't want to be displaced. However, we didn't know how cooperatives survived in the long run. In conjunction with a technical assistance provider,[11] we decided to work closely with residents to find out how well their cooperatives were working after five or ten years in existence.

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[11] the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, which is funded to assist residents in creating Neighborhood Networks, and which has a 20 year history of assisting tenants to organize and become limited-equity cooperatives.

Our initial approach would be most accurately labeled action research, as described in the previous chapter. We devised a methodology of attending cooperative Board meetings and interviewing individual residents, with the dual purpose of finding out how they were doing in terms of problems and successes, and of having the research process help cooperative members to see issues clearly and develop long-term plans. The combination of research and technical assistance meant that when we approached residents and they asked us for help with some pressing problem, in many cases we were able to at least direct them to the right resource. True to the action research model, as residents learned more or solved some problems through their interaction with us, their views and chances of long-term survival changed, therefore altering our "findings" as we went along.

Residents were interviewed about their experiences and housing conditions in cooperatives. A "management audit" was conducted to find out how the cooperatives were faring in terms of financial and physical condition, as well as resident participation. Building meetings were attended and archival research on buildings was added where needed.

The results of this research has been reported in many places (see for example, Clark, Saegert, Glunt & Roane, 1990; Saegert & Clark, 1989; Chapin & Glunt, 1990). To summarize briefly, we found that resident satisfaction was extremely high, but that satisfaction went down as we moved from apartment to building to neighborhood. While

buildings had all but eradicated drug and crime problems, residents were still very frustrated with the decline of their neighborhoods. Nonetheless, affective ties to the community were strong, with many social and nostalgic bonds. The average resident we interviewed had lived in their building for 17 years, and many had lived in them for over 30 years.

We also found that building conditions were generally rated as very good, although some repairs made by the City prior to sale to the tenants had been poorly done, creating long-lasting problems. Management was highly rated overall and most residents felt they were better off after cooperative ownership.

The fact of ownership had created the most profound difference for residents. They expressed feeling in control, secure, responsible and an enormous sense of accomplishment. Their relationship to the city's bureaucracy had changed, and in real terms they had shifted power into their own hands through acquiring legal right to their buildings.

Not only did we come to realize the importance of cooperatives in terms of shifting the balance of power, but Leavitt and Saegert's (1990) earlier work had identified a style of organizing that was both gender and place-based. The fact that tenant leaders were almost always women led Leavitt & Saegert (1988, 1990) to develop an analysis of the organizing techniques they used that recognized the

role of their domestic experiences and social orientations.
Leavitt & Saegert call this form of organizing the
community-household model. It is based on the idea that
women applied skills they had learned and used to sustain
their own families to the larger sphere of their building.
For example, women built tenant associations that were an
expansion of already existing social relationships, but
expanded them to include more people and discuss building
issues. They often met around kitchen tables, and made
building-wide decisions with the same ethic of personal
care that they applied to friends and family. Questions of
rent payment and eviction were discussed in terms of the
situations of the tenants involved and alternatives were
searched for that placed priority on supporting residents
overall lives, while ensuring good decisions for the
building as a whole. Many of the meetings I have attended
included food made by different residents who equated
eating their dish with recognition of their role.
According to Leavitt & Saegert's model, the level of
organization can expand beyond the building to include the
neighborhood and the city.

Not everything about resident ownership was working
smoothly, however. Every building had some problems with
social conflicts, and every building had problems with
competing demands for scarce resources, often stretching
their ability to be both technically efficient and
understanding of residents situations, such as illness or

job loss. Most had been able to achieve a balance that residents found fair, but this opinion was not universal. We began to see that it wasn't whether or not a building had conflict or competing demands that determined its success, but rather how it was handled.

All of the issues above--the relationship to overall power, the role of gender and the merging of the domestic (home and household) with the public (real estate and bureaucracy), the conflict between the ethics of the residents and the technical demands of building management, and the marginal and often, invisible position of low income resident ownership as a form of housing, led us to believe that our research model was not adequate to understanding all of the diverse forces that were at play. We began to see the actions of residents as potentially important in understanding possibilities for changes that would improve their lives and perhaps demonstrate an example of an emancipatory practice that could be used in other contexts. A description of what was happening that was limited to the local instance of how well or poorly limited-equity cooperatives functioned seemed to miss the potentially transformative events that were occurring as traditional concepts such as ownership, public and private were undergoing shifts in meaning.

Our action research model also didn't seem to account for the relationship between changes in power or meaning and the act of appropriating space. We were left with many

questions and the belief that the problems of cooperatives and their successes had lessons about "emancipatory" practices and the resistance of the system that they encountered. It was there that we began to search for a framework for understanding the phenomenon of limited-equity cooperatives that could place them within the broader context of social movements, patterns of capital investment and disinvestment, and see what we could learn from this example that might be shed light on other struggles elsewhere.

Ultimately, critical theory, particular as explicated by Habermas and feminist theory, provided a conceptual framework that moved our understanding of limited-equity cooperatives from individual and local examples to context-specific instances of broader tensions between power and marginality.

Part II of the "Transformations" in Chapter Five demonstrates the application of some critical theoretical concepts to the study of limited-equity cooperative housing.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CRITICAL THEORY

Introduction

"Critical theory sets out not only to describe, but also radically to criticize and qualitatively transform social reality" Roderick (1986 p. 23). Thus, it is theory with a practical intent. Environmental psychology, as discussed in Chapter Two, has a practical intent in creating changes in the environment. However, a theoretical foundation that is rooted in an explicit epistemology of change is lacking. Critical theory provides such a foundation, and the epistemology which it supplies is explicitly emancipatory.

In this chapter I will provide a basic definition and explanation of what makes theory "critical" and demonstrate how this is an appropriate perspective for environmental psychology to become a critical environmental social science. The purpose is to provide an epistemological and ontological basis from which the practice of reinserting values into science is not only legitimized, but helps guide choices about what types of changes can and should be the outcome of environmental social science research.

"The legitimacy of any statement resides in its contribution to emancipation" (Lyotard, 1984, p.66, characterizing the claims of critical theory). This interest in emancipatory social change is the basis of

critical theory. However, emancipation of individuals requires a critical understanding of collective social life and the organization of the spaces and places in which it occurs. This is where environmental psychology can make a major contribution - by linking the emancipation of individuals to features of collective life, and the material contexts in which it takes place.

The following statement by Anthony Giddens provides both a definition of emancipation and a possible guiding principle for critical environmental social science: "Emancipation means that collective life is organized in such a way that the individual is capable...of free and independent action in the environments of her social life". (Giddens, 1991, p. 213) In the remainder of this chapter I will define and demonstrate how a critical theoretical perspective can provide environmental psychology with a theoretical and epistemological grounding which enables research with an intent of emancipatory social change.

There is much precedent for turning to a critical theoretical perspective. Feminists, as well as geographers and psychologists interested in the emancipatory possibilities of their traditional disciplines have looked to critical theory for guidelines, (as have some in all the social sciences, urban planning, law and education) and have presented a view of that application and combination-- hence the many very fruitful works in "critical geography"

(e.g. Soja, 1989, Harvey, 1989, Gregory, 1990) and the more isolated "critical psychology" (Sullivan, 1990).

These works in geography and psychology provide an interesting frame of reference from which to present environmental psychology as a critical social science, but unfortunately, the mere combination of critical geography and critical psychology do not bring us closer to a critical environmental psychology. There are two quite separate reasons for this. One derives from the way in which critical geography and critical psychology have been conceptualized thus far. The other concerns the nature and origins of environmental psychology itself.

First, both critical geography[12] and critical psychology begin with a traditional empirical discipline, both rooted in positivism and aimed at describing laws of human activity. They then attempt to shift the goals of theory and research to create an emancipatory intent and a link to social action and practice in the discipline that was before lacking one.

In Critical Psychology and Pedagogy: Interpretation of the Personal World, Edmund Sullivan sets an emancipatory goal for the field of social psychology. The basis for

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[12] much of the work that I am labeling "critical" geography does not necessarily label itself that way. It includes geographers working in a marxist framework and Giddens, not a geographer at all, because his concept of structuration theory is both critical and spatial. It is a title of convenience enabling me to refer to a diverse body of work, that has in common a theoretical analysis aimed at "unmasking" relationships of power, and recognizes a spatial aspect to the creation and maintenance of systems of domination.

meeting this goal is an explicit interest in liberation. It requires that the interpretation of human action recognize the role of power. Such a cognitive interest in emancipation necessitates going beyond a hermeneutic approach, which traditionally does not recognize the authority structure inherent in meaning formation, to a critical one. In this context, this means developing a logical account of the manner in which power both limits the carrying out of intentions, and the way in which it is the single most important factor in transforming intention into activity.

While the reconceptualisation of psychology as a normative-based rather than descriptive social science leads to interesting implications, particularly in methodology and analysis, it is ultimately a dead end for environmental psychology. This is in part because environmental psychology began with a normative cognitive interest, and the working out of the theoretical justification, professional appropriateness or social need of such an orientation is therefore somewhat anachronistic with respect to that field. That is not to say, however, that the normative goals of environmental psychology have been thoroughly or explicitly examined. However, what is more essential for this field at this time is to identify and explain the content of the normative goals and their connection to the mode of investigation.

Furthermore, it does not help at all in the incorporation of spatial, physical and place-based aspects of life. Therefore, reconstructing environmental psychology as a critical theory is a very different task from posing a critical perspective for traditional psychology. This is in part because of the importance of physicality, place and spatial relations, and in part because of the previous differences between environmental and traditional psychology.

The origins of the discipline of environmental psychology are founded in an explicit intent of change, a rejection of positivism (although an ambivalent one) and an explicit practical orientation (see Saegert, 1987 for a good review). Unlike critical geography, which usually elucidates the link between social and spatial practices for specific geographic areas (e.g. "urban," "neighborhood," or "nation"), environmental psychology is concerned with elucidating and changing these practices at the sites in which they occur at the level of human action and resistance. Because, and in spite of, environmental psychology's troubled heritage of the concept of the individual subject, research in environmental psychology can itself effect the political practices which it studies.

However, most research in environmental psychology today is oblivious to either its political potential or its effect in challenging or sustaining structures of domination. This term "structures of domination," is used

widely to mean the legitimated and persistent social relationships of power. I use it when talking about environmental psychology in two senses: both in its usual sense, and in a more literal sense, because one part of the subject of environmental psychological study is built form. What no other field has yet examined in a critical way is the role of built form and its social production in maintaining or undermining oppression and domination.

Current discussions about critical theory, practical philosophy, and political theory can assist in this task because they reclaim the possibility of a critical stance and normative social science, in light of the critiques of postmodernism. At the same time, those critiques suggest ways to reclaim the norms of modernism without the flawed definitions of the subject, of rationality, of emancipation, of the public sphere.

An analysis of the origins and perspectives of environmental psychology will yield many points of contact between its origins and the early Frankfurt School, particularly Horkheimer's distinction between traditional and critical theory (Horkheimer, 1935). A major aspect of that distinction is the assumption of a normative stance in critical theories. For example, a) both environmental psychology and critical theory consider the psychology of the individual to be an important component of any social theory, and pay attention to cognition and meaning, b) both recognize human experience and phenomenological

understanding as valid, (though incomplete) forms of knowledge, c) both use a variety of methodologies, including but not exclusive to, empirical techniques, d) each has an interdisciplinary focus based on a perspective of complex interrelationships, e) both believe in the embeddedness of values and interests in the pursuit of research (Habermas, 1971), and f) both critical theorists and environmental psychologists have an interest in the nature of the relationship between individuals and social structures.

Nonetheless, however philosophically compatible critical theory and environmental psychology are, there are two chasms that leave them very far apart. One, although environmental psychology rejects some of the goals, methods and narrow focus of traditional science and seeks to participate actively in environmental changes, it has no link to broader social theories, (except as an individual researcher might choose to employ them). Second, as broad and interdisciplinary as critical theory is, it ignores a physical dimension. Critical theory does not address the spatial nature of human activity, either ontologically or functionally. Nor does it address the significance of places in the formation of consciousness, social integration or system organization.

Origins and definition of critical theory

Critical theory, originally developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1930's and 1940's, was intended by its founders to expand and reconstruct Marx's critique of capitalism by recognizing the importance of culture in human action. Furthermore, as distinguished from traditional social theory, critical theory had the explicit goal of using theory as a form of political practice, which could unmask forms of domination in society and thereby provide a basis for emancipation from oppression.[13]

As I will be using it, the body of work which falls under the rubric of "critical theory" has a central concern with the interrelationship of humans to the structures of our larger world. It is in this relationship that human beings can either achieve their freedom or be prevented from it.

One of critical theory's notable characteristics is its intrinsic self-reflectiveness and the possibility of constant revision. Critical theory is not concerned merely with description but with emancipation. What does this mean? Horkheimer differentiates critical theory from the traditional theories of the social and natural sciences by its object and its activity. The object of critical theory, according to Horkheimer, is society itself, and a

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[13] Horkheimer's 1935 essay, Traditional and critical theory. In Critical theory: The Frankfurt School. New York: Continuum, provides the original explanation of the goals of critical theory.

"critical" activity is one type of human activity which has society as its interest (Horkheimer, 1935). He says:

> the aim of this activity is not simply to eliminate one or other abuse, for it regards such abuses as necessarily connected with the way in which the social structure is organized. Although it itself emerges from the social structure, its purpose is not, either in its conscious intention or in its objective significance, the better functioning of any element in the structure. On the contrary, it is suspicious of the very categories of better, useful, appropriate, productive and valuable, as these are understood in the present order, and refuses to take them as nonscientific presuppositions about which one can do nothing. (p.207)

Critical theory is characterized by opposition, and by the recognition that the entire social, economic and political order was created by human work, and can be recreated by it as well. Since all of the present structures of society which we normally take for granted in our daily lives are the product of human action, they can therefore all be subject to change, planning and rationality.

Critical theory is normative. It is based on value judgments about what is good for society and the value espoused by critical theorists is freedom from domination, with full opportunities for human development. Further, this is not an abstract ideal, but the object of the practice of critical theory. Critical theorists see a role for theory in obtaining their social and political goals, and in fact, believe these goals cannot be achieved without

theoretical self-reflection about society which can expose otherwise hidden relationships.

Critical theory also places its hope for society in the exercise of reason. All critical theory, from the Frankfurt School to Habermas, assumes the goal of a rational society as being equated with an emancipated society. The critical social theories of the 1930's sought to unite the claim of reason with the ideas of emancipation and the best social order. While the concept of "rational" has undergone major critique from feminist theorists and reconstruction from Habermas, it nevertheless remains a cornerstone of critical theory.

It is these two characteristics, a normative intent and a belief in reason, that differentiate critical theory from postmodernism. Without a goal of, and belief in reason, the analyses of critical theory would be the deconstructions of postmodernism. Yet, there is ground for accommodation between the two, as many postmodern theorists are also interested in developing an epistemology of emancipation, albeit with reconstructed versions of truth, reality, the subject and reason (see e.g., Rosenau, 1992).

Critical theories can be distinguished from traditional ones in how they are tested as well. Whereas traditional theories are verified or falsified by empirical observation of facts which are supposedly "neutral," I believe the verification of a critical theory can only be accomplished through political practice. What constitutes

"political" is currently a matter under much debate, but I take a rather broad definition, and certainly include determination of identity, meaning and categorization as political.

Critical social theory lies in between practical philosophy and social science. It shares social science's interest in analyzing the totality of society in a scientific way, but shares practical philosophy's interest in providing a philosophical linkage between morality, universality and reason.

Practical philosophy

The modern importance placed on rationalism has come under recent attack and appears to be all but discredited by postmodernism, and often seems incompatible with fighting oppression or giving credence and voice to those not heard in modernism's discourse. As Martin Jay (1991) has said, "...virtually any defense of rationalism is turned into a brief for the automatic suppression of otherness, heterogeneity and nonidentity." (p. 99)

Yet, one doesn't have to give up on the possibility of rejecting "totalizing discourses", changing one's views about truth and knowledge and embracing the local and the situated while at the same time maintaining a critical and emancipatory intent. Seyla Benhabib (1992a) provides a successful example of learning from postmodernism and feminism without abandoning the emancipatory and

"unmasking" potential of the modern project by rediscovering practical philosophy.

Three themes for critique, based on postmodern and feminist challenges, are raised by Benhabib (1992a), and prompt the reevaluation of some of the concepts of modernity. They are:

1) the ideal of reason,

2) the concept of the autonomous male ego as both abstract and disembedded, and

3) the ability of a universalist reason to deal with the multiple and diverse contexts of life which practical reason encounters.

While acknowledging that each of these three themes are problematic, Benhabib (1992a) does not agree that they define the universalist tradition in practical philosophy, and believes that it is still possible (and desirable) to have a claim to universal reason. She attempts to reconstruct the concepts of modernity, rather than rejecting them. As an alternative, Benhabib (1992a) suggests a universalism that is "interactive not legislative, cognizant of gender difference not gender blind, contextually sensitive and not situation indifferent". (p. 3)

This critique is relevant to the claims of a critical environmental social science to retain an emancipatory intent without embracing a metahistorical and disembedded subject. It is particularly important for critical

environmental social science as it provides a philosophical foundation for a reconstructed view of the subject as acting in concrete situations with others. By adopting this philosophical view of the subject, we have not precluded developing an understanding of action and identity construction that is place-based and social, which are the goals of critical environmental social science.

The implication of practical philosophy as understood by Benhabib (1992a) on research, includes therefore, a revised construct of the subject, and an interactive (discourse) model for establishing truth and norms, and attention to context.

The focus on discourse is central for Benhabib, and for critical environmental social science, as it situates action, and provides a procedural rather than a metaphysical view of truth and reason. From its origins in Greek philosophy until positivism, practical philosophy maintained that questions about what constituted the best social and political order, and the good life, could be answered rationally. With the advent of positivism and value-free science, practical philosophy lost its claims to reason (Benhabib, 1986).

What distinguishes Benhabib's version of practical philosophy from that of Aristotle is its reliance on moral and just *procedures* rather than moral contents. This is a significant distinction, because if the content of what is moral is decreed by what some one or group defines as a

"good and just life" then there is no rational basis outside the rationality of a ruling group for determining morality.

The focus on moral goals and rationality places critical theory in philosophical territory. Opponents of critical theory often complain that it isn't theory at all, rather it is philosophy. It is certainly true that both the empirical analyses and practical intent of critical theory are rooted in questions of philosophy. Therefore, for critical theory to have any meaning, its moral ground must be established. Practical philosophy explicates the meanings of morality and the conceptions of justice upon which critical theory can be based, not by defining the content of what is moral or good, but by turning to rational rules for establishing what is good. As Benhabib has said, " the task of practical philosophy...is not to define the good life, but to discover those rules of justice which guarantee the coexistence of self-interested individuals" (Benhabib, 1986, p.334).

Combining the assumptions of communicative ethics-- that human needs and wants are culturally and socially mediated, and that concepts of justice are therefore always reliant on understanding the particular historical, culture milieu (rather than universal)--the task of practical philosophy is to provide a critique of culture and society (Benhabib, 1986).

Taking this idea that practical philosophy must contribute to a critique of culture in order to develop its connection to justice, we can go further by suggesting that built form, places and spatial patterns of social life influence the subject matter of discourse as much as all other cultural traditions and socialization processes, of which they are an intrinsic part.

It is in the realm of a procedural practical philosophy that critical theory can be given its legitimacy to pursue reason and emancipation, in an age where both are often considered anachronisms from a patriarchal, oppressive Enlightenment era.

Philosophers and social theorists have long argued about how claims to knowledge can be justified, if at all. The shift to intersubjective communication from individual consciousness has also meant that instead of basing knowledge claims on essential structures either of the mind or reality, recognition of the social nature of such claims and the importance of understanding their basis in the material conditions of life, has come to the fore in philosophy and epistemology. Searle (1981) and Roderick (1986) both conclude that so far that recognition has not produced a theory of social action.

Jürgen Habermas and communicative action

Critical theory lacked a philosophical foundation for its normative orientation prior to Habermas's development of communicative ethics. Habermas has attempted to propose normative goals or standards for critical theory that would not rely on universal or abstract concepts of what is true or good. (Habermas, 1984). Undertakings to create a normative basis are not at all simple, as they must come to terms with the ontological dilemmas about universality, identity, subject and self that have been brought to light by feminist theory and postmodernism. There was no basis, under the critique of modernity and ideology, to claim any superior position, as all were products of their society. Habermas locates a foundation that meets these challenges in the processes of communication between individuals. (Habermas, 1987).

In addition to providing a philosophical basis for establishing norms, Habermas is also interested in providing a rational basis for emancipatory practices. However, rationality had already been associated with the oppressive structures of bureaucracy by Weber, and with technical mastery by Horkheimer and Adorno. Because they saw rationality as synonymous with technical mastery over both things and individuals, rationality came to be viewed as incompatible with emancipatory goals (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1935).

Therefore, before it was possible to resurrect the much-maligned idea of rationality, it was necessary to reconstruct it by identifying a new form of rationality. Habermas locates such an alternative form of rationality in the intersubjective communicative practices of everyday life.

Communicative rationality "carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech" (Habermas, 1987, p. 10). What makes communication rational is its reference to "criticizable validity claims" (p. 14). That is, communicative acts can be validated by reference to meaning, authority, and context, and discursively argued to justify their validity.

What differentiates communicative rationality from instrumental rationality is a) that it is oriented toward intersubjective understanding, rather than achievement of a technical goal and b) that it is legitimated by reference to norms of everyday life, rather than by objective facts (Habermas, 1987)

The previous negative force of instrumental rationality, so critiqued by Adorno and Weber, was assigned its proper place as the purposive rationality through which the guiding mechanisms of the system accomplished their goals. Habermas claims that instrumental reason assimilated itself to power and with that it ceased to hold any emancipatory potential (Habermas, 1987).

Instrumental rationality follows the imperatives of the economic and political system, so can only serve to maintain that system. . It is inherently incapable of transforming existing structures, as it exists to reproduce them. As such, if existing structures are oppressive or unjust, instrumental rationality cannot bring about liberation, it can only constrain it.

However, Habermas has presented instrumental rationality as a one-sided view, finding the rationality of communication embedded in daily interaction. Communicative rationality, according to Habermas, contains emancipatory potential (Habermas, 1987). Just as instrumental rationality inherently reproduces rather than challenges structures of oppression, communicative rationality reproduces meaning. This form of rationality does not produce control over things and individuals, it creates the norms and values of culture and exists to achieve meaning and understanding.

From the above definitions, one can see that these two forms of rationality are paired, conceptually, with two social spheres. Habermas identifies the spheres as the system and the lifeworld, terms already used by sociologists. However, Habermas reconstructs them to work together in a dialectical way. In Habermas's usage, the "system" is the sphere of economic, political and bureaucratic structures through which a society is organized. The "lifeworld," on the other hand, is the

sphere of daily life in which the symbolic structures of a
society are reproduced. Symbolic structures are defined as
the cultural media through which members of the society
communicate, and include language, images, and meaning. In
normal daily life, these symbols serve as an unproblematic
background. It is when they become problematic in some
that that discourse is required to reach an understanding.
It is through the use of these symbolic means that
individuals reach understanding with each other and decide
on actions. These symbols form the background of daily
life and experience, and allow for the reproduction of
society (Habermas, 1987). The lifeworld contains the norms
and values of individuals and groups. It is in the
lifeworld that social constructions, such as beliefs about
racial differences, gender roles or personal identity are
reproduced and guide actions, and where challenges to their
legitimacy can first arise. Although we experience system
and lifeworld as one, they are useful as conceptual
categories because it is within their dialectical
relationship that we can best understand oppression.

The system and the lifeworld are mutually reinforcing
and interdependent. However, the goals and values of each
are different and often clash. In Habermas's theory of
society, it is the encroachment of the more powerful
sphere, the system, on the areas of life more appropriately
not decided by system logic which results in both

oppression and the undermining of the legitimacy of the system (Habermas, 1975).

The difference between lifeworld and system rationality leads to a difference in decision-making processes. Decisions made to sustain daily life in all of its social and cultural aspects follow a separate logic from those made to achieve an economic goal. As individuals, we all operate primarily with a lifeworld orientation to sustain our living environment, while landlords operate primarily to achieve an economic goal, i.e. profit. Each type of decision is necessary and informs the other, but they are reached through different processes and serve fundamentally different aims. Whereas decisions made as some sort of social contract require intersubjective understanding, decisions made to meet technical needs require efficiency, cost-effectiveness, appropriate tools, and often power.

Actions of people in the various environments of interest to environmental psychologists, understood through the lens of the logic of decision-making associated with the lifeworld, may be more or less dominated by system logic, and critical environmental social scientists may use this theoretical framework as one way to expose oppressive as well as emancipatory practices. This framework is an example of how critical environmental social scientists may take the interests of environmental psychologists in

change, daily experience and use of place and view them in a critical way.

Communicative action and resistance

The way in which communicative action can be system transformative lies in the interaction between the system and lifeworld. Communicative rationality is embedded in subjective, linguistic practices and is part of the lifeworld in which social and cultural identities are reproduced. Instrumental rationality, previously considered the only form of rationality, is, according to Habermas, only appropriate for decisions made to guide the steering mechanisms of society, such as the accumulation of money and power which late capitalism is based on.

It is apparent that Habermas places a great deal of emphasis on rationality. In fact, one of his goals is to restore reason as fundamental to any concept of emancipation. One can assess the degree to which communicative action is emancipatory by how well it meets a set of rational criteria. We all engage in communicative action on the *reasonable* presumption that our dialogue meets this set of rational criteria, which Habermas calls the Ideal Speech Situation. However, in actuality, the Ideal Speech Situation is never met, and all rational criteria are not present. Therefore, the Ideal Speech Situation provides a practical, but counter-factual vision of emancipatory politics. Simply put, the more closely

that actual circumstances approximate the Ideal Speech
Situation, the more closely social and individual life is
free from domination. Conversely, as actual social
practices move further away from the Ideal Speech
Situation, the more dominated the discourse is, and
therefore less emancipatory. The Ideal Speech Situation
has the following features: Each party has an 1) equal
opportunity for expression of needs, interests and
interpretations, 2) equal opportunity to initiate
discussion, 3) equal opportunity to make claims, challenges
and recommendations and 4) equal opportunity to command and
resist command, be accountable and demand accountability.
In short, the Ideal Speech Situation assumes an equal
balance of power between communicators and freedom from
constraints imposed external to them.

While the Ideal Speech Situation has been criticized
as being an abstract and impractical concept because it can
never be achieved in reality, it in fact provides a
procedural basis and standard for emancipatory practices.
It is not an ideal category in the sense of an idealism
that transcends practice, rather the ideal is, according to
Habermas, immanent in every communicative act. If we did
not assume the basic features of the Ideal Speech
Situation, we would not bother to talk at all.

The Ideal Speech Situation posits, (counter to any
actually existing reality), complete equality among
participants in dialogue to initiate and express

themselves, equal relations of power, and freedom from external constraints on communication. How far any public sphere or its decisions are from rational in this sense can be judged by how well the Ideal Speech Situation is met.

Colonization and oppression

Habermas has conceptualized oppression as arising from the inappropriate dominance of the system and the instrumental rationality that guides it. Where system imperatives control aspects of life that should be directed by action rooted in normatively based consensus, the result is what Habermas call "colonization of the lifeworld" (Habermas, 1987).

An example of colonization is personal decisions which are made based on constraints of the system, such as a family being penalized through taxes (or other measures) for having or not having children. In any client relationship with a governmental agency, rules may control the ability to have income, status or rights.

Households have been characterized as buffer-zones, or mediating zones, between what has been called, variously, the outside world and the individual, the public and the private, or the system and the lifeworld. Critical environmental social scientists may be interested in the household as a sphere of competing needs, essential to both the reproduction of persons and culture and to meet the needs of the system for socialization.

Oppression, in Habermas's schema, is the direct result of colonization. Modern society is characterized by the overtaking of people's lifeworlds by domination based on system imperatives. Instrumental rationality is where it doesn't belong. Freedom from domination requires resistance to colonization and restoration of the normative principles of communicative rationality.

However, many feminists have noted the total absence of gender in Habermas's analysis and his categories (see e.g. Fraser, 1985). Full discussions about oppression require identification of its forms and locations (Young, 1991 & 1993). The next section examines some of the ways that feminists have critiqued Habermas, focusing especially on the reconstruction and expansion of Habermas's concepts to include more nuanced, accurate and concrete representations of oppression.

Feminist critiques of Habermas

Originally critical of Habermas for his reliance on concepts of universality and rationality, and for his indifference to gender, feminists and socialist-feminist critical theorists have recently been offering more subtle critiques of Habermas. To paint the results of this trend very broadly, they have found that Habermas has offered the best starting point for deconstructions of the idea of the public sphere, that he has the most detailed analysis available of late capitalism, and that although often

obscured by gender-blindness, provides social theory with an emancipatory intent. Therefore, many feminist theorists are reconstructing rather than eschewing Habermas, by making explicit how indifference to gender actually leads to errors in his social explanations and perpetuation of dichotomies of domination, such as "public" and "private", "system" and "lifeworld", "symbolic" and "material reproduction" and "family" and "economy" (Fraser, 1994).

Feminist theorists, and socialist-feminist theorists[14] in particular, have transformed critical theory in a number of ways. Calasanti & Zajicek (1993) provide an example of this transformation by comparing the perspectives of socialist-feminist theorists on the public and private spheres with critical theorists. They use the example of public and private because problematizing these categories provides an opportunity to expand the marxist analysis of capitalism to include gender, and domination based on gender and race.

Mouffe (1988a) has argued that the multiplicity of relations of subordination and domination that affect an individual can only be grasped and challenged if social agents are viewed not as unitary subjects, but as having multiple subject positions. Therefore, any claim to

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[14] I focus on socialist-feminist theorists because they begin with a project common to critical theorists, which is a continuation of the Western Marxist tradition through expanding its categories beyond political economy to include society and culture for the critical theorists, and gender for the socialist-feminist theorists.

political transformation must necessarily entail a transformation of the concept of the subject, and an expanded idea of citizenship. It must also be transformative in Habermas's sense of radical proceduralism, where mutually agreed upon norms are the basis for action, and the underlying rationality of decision-making is grounded in the lifeworld, rather than system needs.

In addition, the dissolution of assumed boundaries between public and private, that allows both the skills and the spheres of life of women and oppressed groups to enter arenas of political change, is a vital component of an emancipatory democracy (Fraser, 1995; Benhabib, 1995).

The gender, class, and ethnic stratifications of society which position people in certain relationships to the system, and therefore structure the nature and possibility of actions is not addressed by Habermas. To account for the importance of gender, class and ethnicity (and other socially constructed group identifiers), when developing theory, it is useful to integrate Habermas's theory of communicative action and the discursive rationality underlying it with a feminist reconstruction of the public sphere.[15]

The major problem with both Habermas's conception of the public sphere, and its particular applicability for the

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[15] Benhabib (1986), Fraser (1992) & Mouffe (1988b) find Habermas's (1989) own theory of the public sphere as a place of discursive will formation the most compatible with a feminist analysis of the public sphere, although Habermas is silent on gender.

Neighborhood Networks I describe in the case study, is its preset judgment on what topics are appropriate for public discourse and decision-making. As Fraser (1992) and Benhabib (1992b) insist, placing certain topics off-limits continues forms of oppression by not considering them valid for public scrutiny. This perpetuates oppressive practices by relegating them to what is uncritically called "private," such as domestic violence or matters relating to privately-owned property (Fraser, 1992). Network participants, have achieved significant change in their housing situation, by building on the domestic sphere and its organization, not by separating it from their public activities.

Following Fraser's (1992) conception of what a public sphere would be like under conditions of true democracy, public groupings need to be held up to evaluation by how well they function as "strong," self-determining, subaltern counter-publics. By "strong," Fraser refers to a public that is connected in some way to actual decision-making, and is not merely a forum for public opinion which is distant from any power to enact it. By subaltern, she refers to the multiplicity of diverse publics that can serve as staging areas to determine group needs of groups that are dominated by structures of inequality in the larger public, and serve as areas of identity and needs formation. Finally, "publics" must internally decide what topics constitute areas for action, and not accept

externally imposed definitions of either topics or procedures appropriate to community groups within standard channels for so-called community participation in the processes of urban planning, which itself follows a liberal conception of planning and political participation as independent from economic or power relations.

As Okin (1991) points out, precise definitions between public and private have been absent from traditional political theory, but that has not stopped it from assuming them as basic categories. What goes on in the private sphere is considered outside the purview of political scrutiny and therefore intervention. Feminist theory has explicated how this has upheld a gender-structured society and aided domination of women (e.g. Pateman & Stanley, 1990).

Another problem with Habermas's public sphere is his assumption of an autonomous individual. Following Kohlberg's evolutionary theory of moral development, Habermas (1984) privileges detached, autonomous moral judgment. He does not consider the possibility of a moral vision based on connections to others rather than autonomy. Cameron (1991) has criticized Habermas because he "renders himself deaf to moral reasoning in a different voice" (p.33). This may explain why Young doesn't follow through on the useful implications of the theory of communicative action, although she agrees with its premises.

If we elide Habermas's social evolutionary account from his theory, which doesn't damage the emancipatory potential of communicative action, and replace it with an empirical basis, we can construct a theory of restructured political practice which arises from lifeworld experiences of gender, marginalization, race, places and place identities, and a myriad of other social "locations." A feminist theory of communicative action can provide the connection between structures of oppression and group identity which Habermas cannot. Such a theory must critically examine and appropriate the categories of public and private, explicitly recognize the structuring of society by gender and other cultural and class stratifications, and connect the structures of oppression with the language of oppression as specific themes of discourse.

Although Habermas overlooks this gender-structuring, a feminist analysis of the theory of communicative action would associate women with the lifeworld and men with the system based on the gender division of labor. Since it is in the dominating form of integration between system and lifeworld that colonization (oppression) occurs, according to Habermas (1987), and these spheres are not gender-neutral, their theoretical similarity to the spheres of public (men) and private (women) becomes critical. As Habermas conceptualizes the crux of sociological and political theory to be in the relationship between system

and lifeworld, Pateman (1983) has said "the separation and opposition between the public and private spheres in liberal theory and practice.. is ultimately what the feminist movement is all about". (p. 281)

Since liberal theory rests on the distinction between private (family) interests to be overseen by women, and public (universal) interests, the inclusion of women in public participation inherently produces a conflict. According to liberal theory, women cannot be political in the sense of deliberating the common good based on a principle of justice, when they are first and foremost committed to the "private" interests of their family (Nelson, 1984). Clearly, inclusive, democratic practice is incompatible with such a model.

I suggest it is time to further develop the theoretical and practical significance of joining the gender-neutral conceptual framework of Habermas to feminist inquiry into social constructions and political possibilities. As Young (1990) says, because the normative claims of communicative action are grounded in the needs, feelings and desires of individuals, the sharp dichotomy between public and private is broken down. A restructured public life does not require eliminating the distinction between public and private. Rather, "the distinction should not be constructed as a hierarchical opposition corresponding to oppositions between reason and feeling,

masculine and feminine, universal and particular" (Young, p. 119).

Theoretically, expansion of the ethics of the lifeworld to drive decisions in the civic realm does not necessarily conflate public and private, but it does challenge the identification of women, domestic concerns and maintenance of social relationships with the latter, and men, rationality and politics with the former.

The need for "spatialization"

The model that feminist critical theorizing has created by going to the root of social categories and reconstructing them is, I believe, applicable to the task of spatializing the concepts discussed above as well as many others originating in political or sociological theory. Feminist theory adds to critical theory by going to its roots and reconceptualizing the importance of gender and the significance of its neglect when developing theories of capitalism, action and cognition. Both feminist theorizing and critical theory gain by the encounter. It is my contention that the concepts of place and space have had the same undertheorized and ignored status within critical theories of society that gender had before feminism. I hope to add a missing dimension to critical theory in the same way feminist theorizing has-- not by tacking on some additional element, but by demonstrating that with place and space recognized,

theories of society become transformed. And, as with the feminist analysis, without space and place, those theories are not just incomplete, but can never accurately reflect social forms.

Much feminist writing begins with calling for a need to "locate" the female subject. Such location has provided much insight into social relations, by specifying the positions women and others occupy vis a vis power, and by connecting women and others to the actuality of their experiences, which are structured across gender, race, age, income (and other) lines. However, it is also important to locate the female subject in a more physical sense. Geographical segregation of poor women and female-headed households is a reality in urban areas. Women and low income residents lack access and opportunity to appropriate physical spaces to pursue personal projects.

What is critical about critical theory is its search for the seeds of liberation for human self-realization, which it bases in the triumph of reason within existing society, and in its own capacity to contribute to such emancipation, carried out through an analysis of society from the point of view of where, how and why reason and freedom do not exist, and do not institutionally exist. It understands human beings in the Heidegerrian sense of "being in the world," and individual psychology as being rooted in the real, material world. In the mix of

practical philosophy and spatial relationships a critical environmental social science can emerge.

One major strand of the socialist-feminist approach is to emphasize the situatedness of women's experiences, and to articulate concrete social relations which are patriarchal and oppressive. Calasanti & Zajicek (1993) point out that for many socialist-feminist studies, critical theory begins with:

> the *concrete* experiences of those
> caught in various webs of oppression...
> and provides a framework within which
> experiences can be *located* (italics
> mine). (p. 91)

In Chapter Six, I examine some theories of space and place, and some ways of conceptualizing critical theory in terms of physical site and location, so that the import of "situatedness" can be theoretically incorporated into critical environmental social science.

Since the goal of critical theory is an "unmasking," then we, as environmental social scientists, should take seriously Berger's (1974) comment that "it is space, not time that hides consequences from us," (p.40) in modern life, and begin to provide critical theoretical analysis of how, why, and where our experiences and use of space and time inhibit or enhance the goals of greater freedom and self-realization.

To accomplish this, space must descend from the level of only the philosophical or abstract into actual distance, relationships between places, and the human constructions which contain and define the spaces in which we carry out our lives. As such, analysis of the built environment must accompany analysis of space in order to, literally, concretize the concept and the experience of space.

Habermas's framework, which takes us far in understanding social and power relations, lacks an understanding of the importance of physical context in structuring these relations. A related omission is silence about the roles of gender, race, class and age in both how the lifeworld is experienced and therefore reconstituted, and in the social and political positions of various groups in relation to the system sphere. The invisibility of the identity of social agents is reversed when we conceptualize the lifeworld as having a physical, material dimension. It is then that we see real people in real places, according to their position in a segregated and unevenly developed world.

Castells (1983) and Young (1990) both characterize new social movements by their concern for issues of identity and the ability for all groups to participate in order to achieve a public sphere that could, at least theoretically, achieve social justice. They differentiate these with the earlier social movements, such as labor unions, which were organized around distribution of material resources. While

it is useful to recognize historical changes in the formations of group identity and demands, it is a false dichotomy to posit identity issues as extricable from imbalances in distribution.

In the example presented in the "Transformations" chapters, formation and legitimation of identity are tied into appropriation of resources, and the resource most needed to secure participation and group identity in low income neighborhoods is space. Therefore the relationship between space as a source and technique for the exercise of power and domination is an essential component of understanding the formation of identity and subject positions.

Places and control over space are a significant and *necessary* factor in resistance to oppression and marginalization, and in the formation of individual, group and political identities. Understanding the degree to which communicative practices are free of coercion, distortion and inequality requires an understanding of the context of that action (Benhabib, 1986).

Although existing critical theory has not adequately dealt with the spatial dimensions of human action and consciousness, there are some areas that are ripe for theoretical development. The next chapter presents some of the theories and concepts about space and place that can inform critical environmental social science, and

demonstrates how the "spatialization" of the lifeworld and the public sphere could work.

The next chapter illustrates the change in research perspective brought about by the application of the critical theoretical concepts discussed above to limited-equity cooperative housing.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSFORMATIONS OF A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE - Part II

System and lifeworld

To best understand the basis of actions taken by residents to form limited-equity cooperatives, it is critical to place them in the context of the values, norms and daily life experiences out of which they arise. It is equally important to be able to relate these actions to the broader political and economic structures which residents hope to either change or make work for them.

The critical theoretical concepts of system and lifeworld served as useful starting points for understanding the conflicts and tensions of cooperatives as well as their strengths. The processes of real estate disinvestment and marginalization of neighborhoods which were forces beyond the control of residents and in this conceptual framework, are the "system." On the other hand, the actions of residents to save their homes which were based in social cohesiveness, with their primary aim of achieving security and decent living conditions, seemed to be positioned within the norms of the lifeworld.

My experience with residents, and the earlier work by Leavitt & Saegert (1989,1990) on the initial organization, development, and maintenance of limited equity co-operatives immediately raised the radically different

perspectives of residents, landlords and policy-makers.

Tenants who chose to stay on in deteriorating neighborhoods and salvage their abandoned buildings shared a common lifeworld, as they shared much of their experience of colonization by the system. Tenants' actions were based primarily (not always) on intersubjective communication grounded in the values that they held important. Government and landlord actions were based, on the other hand, primarily on economic viability.

To conceptualize how those different perspectives could be oppressive or liberating--to connect those perspectives to power relations--a "critical" approach was necessary. Understanding the differences in perspective and priority was vital if we were to break out of the mold of viewing housing and housing programs from the point of view of policy, efficiency, and economics, hiding the lives and experiences of residents.

The privileging of the system over lived experience is revealed when we seek explanation for events by recourse to the perspective of the economic system alone, rather than residents' experience and action. An example is the common use of the term "abandonment." The impetus for limited-equity cooperatives was crisis, and that crisis was what is usually called abandonment. Abandonment has been defined by urban theorists in different ways, however, with certain common assumptions. P. Marcuse (1986) has defined abandonment as follows:

> Abandonment of a unit occurs when its owner
> loses and economic interest in the
> continued ownership of the property beyond
> the immediate future, and is willing to
> surrender title to it without compensation.
> Physical condition is a good, but not
> sufficient, indicator of abandonment: some
> units that appear physically abandoned may
> instead be on hold pending re-use, and
> others that have actually been abandoned by
> their owners may still be maintained in
> tolerable condition by their tenants.
> Abandonment of an entire neighborhood
> occurs when public and/or private parties
> act on the assumption that long-term
> investment in the neighborhood, whether in
> maintenance and improvements or in new
> construction, is not warranted. It is only
> a matter of time before residents of an
> abandoned unit or an abandoned neighborhood
> are displaced. (p.154)

Thus "abandonment" is a term that applies to the capital investment status of a building or neighborhood, rather than one that describes whether or not residents continue to live there.

The second aspect of the abandonment definition that is significant is the assumed inevitability of the lived experience ultimately following the investment logic. Displacement of the tenants from their homes is "only a matter of time" according to P. Marcuse. Limited-equity ownership defies this inexorable course. So, in the case of housing issues, "abandonment" is a system term, that leaves out the daily lived experience of residents in "abandoned" neighborhoods.

How can we explain the invisibility of the tenants in our characterization of their housing and their neighborhoods? How can we account for their creation of an

alternative to their inevitable displacement? To do so, it is necessary to come to terms with the difference between the realities of the economic marketplace and the realities of lived experience. At the same time, the limits set by one upon the other, and their interdependence, are crucial. "System" and "lifeworld" as conceptualized by Habermas, allow us to do that.

Choices about the location, quality, permanency and daily management of their homes is severely circumscribed for low income people, (and many middle income people as well). In this sense, system constraints infringe on freedoms. Publicly owned and administered housing eliminates some of the uncertainties of poverty and housing shortage in return for a set of rules under which the tenant must live. However, publicly owned housing is not itself isolated from system imperatives. In both cases, the relationship of the resident to her/his housing can be disempowering, as the organization of daily life which is intimately integrated with one's home, is guided by forces outside the logic of its residents.

Homeownership, on the other hand, is presented in our society as the ideal for achieving individual autonomy, self-expression and freedom. However, numerous closer examinations of homeownership have revealed a multitude of ways in which it traps individuals and families, and works

against collective practices or consciousness (see e.g. Hayden, 1984; Jackson, 1985; Rae, 1992).

Whether investigating low income housing or privately-owned homes, we find a different view of the phenomenon when we look closely at lived experience and the construction of meaning attached to the home. We go further when we examine the historical/economic function of housing as part of the distribution of capitalist investment. In short, an analysis of both the lifeworld and the system imperatives that housing fills reveals a broadened understanding of individuals' relationships to the system.

This differentiation, conceptually, of the system and the lifeworld, is useful to critical environmental social science because it provides a framework for connecting the local to the global. We can achieve an analysis of the processes and problems of different types of resistance under different conditions within this framework because it allows differentiation between local social practices and the needs of the system to reproduce its structures of authority.

The intersection of system and lifeworld

Cooperatives served a very different purpose for government policy-makers than they did for residents, yet disparate goals could be met. Government officials saw cooperatives as taking the responsibility for deteriorating

buildings off their hands. Residents saw them as long-term homes. Because of this difference, cooperatives were not viewed by city government as primarily a permanent housing resource for low income people, and less as a political movement involving individual and neighborhood empowerment.

Residents also used the socially constructed meanings of self-help and self-sufficiency to be able to speak within the existing set of dominant social relations, but used the resources and legitimacy granted by the system to change the meanings of these terms to coincide with their collective norms. Leaders learned the technical skills, such as bookkeeping and building management that were required to interact with the official bureaucracy, and were also needed to keep the building functioning as a type of system itself. However, the building as system remained grounded in the norms of lifeworld. In buildings where this connection was lost, cooperatives encountered serious problems, particularly with factionalism and conflict as legitimacy was compromised.

Limited-equity cooperatives provide a vivid example of the intersection of system and lifeworld, as the forces of the housing market and public policy affect the choices of each individual household. Cooperatives may provide a way to exemplify the system-lifeworld relationship, and a means to free the lifeworld from system domination. In order to understand and support this potential, it is necessary to

move the traditional locus of analysis from the system of housing provision to the process of cooperative existence.

Communicative and instrumental rationality

Housing cooperatives, like all social systems, maintain themselves through a combination of instrumental action and communicative action. In this regard, housing cooperatives can be thought of as buffer institutions, locations in which both system and lifeworld goals must be met. Greater liberation would be achieved in circumstances where material life was determined more by lifeworld imperatives than by system rationality. Without this link, the goals of the lifeworld are merely words and ideas.

The values of daily life that guided the actions of tenants could be seen in many ways. For example, evictions only occurred after repeated efforts to work out a good arrangement for the resident and the cooperative failed. More often, if the leaders learned that a resident was ill or out or work, they let them go several months without paying maintenance, or worked out some installment plan. When drug use made a resident undesirable, the leaders and other residents often considered how long other family members had lived in the building and tried to avoid eviction. However, when drugs or some other disruption endangered the social cohesiveness and security of the building, evictions were vigorously pursued.

Resale policy provided another example of decisions based on values other than profit. Although city policy was unclear and unenforced, almost every limited-equity cooperative that has been created has voluntarily chose to enforce a policy for resale of units that keeps them affordable for low income families. Usually, residents can sell at a price that would recoup any investment they made, and little more.

Because residents assume that decisions about managing the building are based in shared values, disagreements about priorities were seen as more than differences of opinion. Often, if residents felt that leaders made a bad decision, they believed that it was a violation of their shared values. In this way, the close connection to values imbued all decisions with more weight than they would have had were they merely technical decisions.

Residents in limited-equity cooperatives who use the normative values of their daily life, which emphasize the maintenance of social relationships as a means of surviving on the margin, or periphery, of the dominant centers of advanced capitalism, are engaged in challenging the norms and symbols of that dominance. For example, American ideology glorifies home ownership, which symbolizes individuality, economic success, a stake in society and a host of traditional values. Tenant organizations, struggling to avoid displacement and homelessness, made use

of that ideology to sell the idea to bureaucrats that they should be allowed to purchase their buildings. Promoted as providing home ownership, cooperatives could be presented as socially and politically desirable, although the meaning of ownership in that context was very unlike its traditional meaning. Cooperative residents view ownership as a source of political legitimacy, secure tenure, collective control, and permanent low income housing (Glunt, Clark & Saegert, in press). They do not view it as a commodity from which they may profit, or a symbol of individuation.

Following a different logic, the rationality of real estate markets is goal-directed to create maximum profit. Housing controlled directly by the residents who live there has a set of primary goals which arises from the need to make housing decisions compatible with the logic, norms and values of daily life. Unlike the technical rationality geared to profit-making, communicative rationality constructs norms, values and social interactions which make living together in a building or community feasible.

However, it is important to emphasize that these are abstractions. In practice, we all make decisions each day to accomplish various goals, and some are instrumental and some are geared toward understanding. Instrumental goals are absolutely necessary where we must accomplish a mechanical task or earn money, for example. Residents in low income neighborhoods are no more or less likely to

employ communicative rationality than is anyone else, including their landlords. It is, rather, a complex situatedness on the margins of the system, that creates an opening to bring the practice of communicative reason into spheres that were previously system-driven. It is for this reason that their actions may be emancipatory, if they succeed. It is also this situatedness that critical environmental social scientists need to explore further, because, as I will discuss later, emancipatory practices are as much about where one is as they are about what one does.

Because this theoretical framework includes a conceptual and practical view of daily life, it can help us understand how people interact with bureaucracy, economic forces and political realities and the significance that social constructions of gender, class, age, and place play in forming their actions.

Resistance and emancipatory potential

The basis for the private/government provider's actions are not incorrect, rather they are rational for the task at hand. What is rational for one concerned with the investment potential of home construction and what is rational for one concerned with sustenance of their home and social world are two different things. The recognition that these are different *forms of rationality* is the first

step towards recognizing the emancipatory potential inherent in resident control.

By focusing on the logic of the lifeworld, new questions about cooperative organization and functioning emerge. To answer these questions, it is necessary to look at the daily lived experience of residents as well as their political and economic context. My thesis is that the extent to which cooperatives are empowering depends on the continuing exercise of communicative rationality in the decision-making process. As cooperatives mature, the pressure on leaders to place the demands generated by the system above the goals of intersubjective understanding increases.

The communicative rationality of the lifeworld can provide a basis and logic for resistance. In this respect, the daily communicative acts that sustain this form of housing can contribute to a profound philosophical shift in social integration which threatens the legitimacy of system imperatives that violate intersubjectively developed norms and values.

The struggle to create cooperatives can be seen not only as a victory in a specific place, but as a resistance to the system based on an underlying difference in logic and goals (see Clark & Saegert, in press). As an example of an expansion of communicative rationality, tenant-created cooperatives limit the domination of the system *and*

its logic, and strengthen the legitimacy of alternative and collective practices.

Using critical theoretical concepts, it is possible to understand limited-equity cooperatives as a form of resistance to colonization by the system, based in part on the degree of difference a particular cooperative organization exhibits from the technocratic logic of the economic system, and in part based on the role that cooperative housing plays within the larger system of housing provision for that country.

By analyzing limited-equity cooperatives from a critical theoretical perspective, new dimensions of the forces at play were revealed. The categories of system and lifeworld, communicative and technical rationality, and colonization and resistance all were found to be inextricably tied to space and place. In practice, actions and effects of actions take place, and each of the critical theoretical concepts that helps explain the forces at work, also needs to be rooted in space. Spatial factors and specific places create and limit the actions of both tenants and landlords, and shape the actual form which colonization and resistance take. When described as abstract theoretical categories, the intrinsic spatiality of these terms is not apparent. However, in acting on and experiencing differing rationalities and the forces of the

system and the lifeworld in daily life, a gap is exposed between the theory and practice.

Habermas defines the lifeworld as the realm of symbolic reproduction of society. Yet, in the cooperatives, norms are created and sustained through direct interaction with the material world—in this case, the home and building in which it is housed. A theoretical perspective of the interaction between the material world and the development of lifeworld norms is needed to bring theory into line with lived reality.

The next chapter develops some concepts about space and place that help expand a critical theoretical perspective in ways that make it both more theoretically comprehensive and more useful. Through incorporating theory about places where action happens and the spatial factors that structure much of social relations, we can bridge that difficult but persistent chasm between theory and practice.

CHAPTER SIX

**THE ROLE OF SPACE AND PLACE IN CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL
SOCIAL SCIENCE**

Introduction

In very different ways, environmental psychology, feminism and critical geography have theorized about the interaction between people and places. Environmental psychology has primarily provided research on how people tend to behave in different settings, and how people experience the places they inhabit. In addition, place identity was a founding concept for the field of environmental psychology.

Feminism, on the other hand, has been less interested in specific places than with spatial metaphors that represent political situation, such as location, position or public and private. Through examination of these and other spatial concepts (used as metaphor), feminists have traced and exposed the historical landscape of power which privileged men. Feminist theory is also concerned that theory build on concrete lived experience. Like environmental psychologists, feminists have taken on identity construction as a theoretical topic of importance, but without theorizing the role of place.

Critical geography has been most fruitful in demonstrating the spatial manifestations of capitalism, and

in explaining patterns of development through the dynamics of capital accumulation.

Each of these disciplines have made contributions to critical environmental social science, but have suffered from a lack of integration with each other, and the failure of critical theory to pay serious attention to place. In the sections that follow, I discuss three themes for developing theories of space and place which, I believe, help establish an integrated critical theory of place.

The particular points I hope to bring out in the sections that follow are:

1) Space is a constituent of social action. Drawing on structuration theory, factors such as location and distance can be theorized in terms of how they limit or provide opportunities for action.

2) There are many conceptions of what space is, and these are ontological distinctions from which follow different empirical and theoretical directions.

3) Differences between places are an essential feature of the movement of capital, and therefore the way in which a place shapes identity or action is tied to processes of capital accumulation. Critical geography has led the discussion and analysis of the role of space in capital accumulation, postmodern (or perhaps advanced global capital) formations across space and structures of domination encoded into places and spatial forms.

Structuration theory

Giddens has specified many of the physical and spatial dimensions of human action in his formulation of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Using many concepts from time-geography,[16] space in structuration theory is constituent of a theory of social action by virtue of the replacement of the domain of study away from either the experience of the individual actor or societal totality, in favor of social practices ordered across space and time.

Although Soja believes Giddens still subordinates space to history, structuration theory is physical at its heart, and is one of the very few theories that explicitly articulates the importance of physical presences and place, rather than merely says how important it is (as I think Soja does). He does accord to Giddens the accomplishment of "giving place to being in an ontological sense, at least in his (Giddens's) later work, The Constitution of Society.

Certain concepts which are fundamental to structuration theory have a spatial aspect. One of these is co-presence. This is a micro-level construct of individual action, which is required for primary social relations, and therefore action. Such individual social

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[16] Giddens defines and summarizes the principles of time-geography, as formulated by Hägerstrand, in "Time, space and regionalization", in Social relations and spatial structures, edited by Derek Gregory and John Urry, 1985.

relations become social institutions through "distanciation." This is the extension of social practices across space and time that allow for system development.

A second activity is spatial in its situatedness. This is "routinization," which is the repetitiveness of activities undertaken in a like manner day after day, and is the material grounding of the recursive nature of social life (Giddens, 1984). Routinization requires not only that activities be situated, which is obvious, but that such situation feed into practical consciousness in terms of being familiar, and communicating tacit meaning to actors that enforce their routine activities.

In a related way, the concepts of "positioning" and again, "co-presence," are physical characteristics intrinsic to human action. Positioning may mean the physical location and gestures of the individual, but more broadly can refer to contexts of social action.

Drawing on the ideas of time-geography, structuration theory gives attention to physical constraints that derive from properties of the body and the environment. From the time-geographers, Giddens has recognized the co-importance of space with time in the carrying out of social practices. Such practices occur not only historically, but geographically, and neither history nor geography can escape co-dependence.

The recognition of the importance of spatial factors has implications for method in the social sciences, and

geographers such as Marston (1988) and Pred (1985)[17] have combined structuration theory with situated, place-based analyses through discourse reconstruction and time-geography. Structuration theory calls for the kind of interdisciplinary focus on the nature of settings that environmental psychology relies on.

The space of everyday life changes concomitantly with the spatial transformations wrought by global economics and historical processes. As the function and spatial morphology of urban areas are transformed, for example, so are social organization and daily life. While urbanists and geographers have described and analyzed the development of the city, (and its interdependency, expansion and losses to suburbia and exurbia) psychologists, environmental social scientists and sociologists have not made the connection between the changing landscape and theories about human action.

Some geographers, (most notably Harvey, 1985 a & b, and Smith, 1984) have developed the theoretical linkages between forms of social organization, economic motivation and particular processes in the built environment. Further integration is needed to link these processes to transformations in environmental perception and cognition, and identity formation. As Gottdiener says (1985),

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[17] Marston (1988) conducted a case study examining the role of social practices in maintaining an ethnic Irish neighborhood and creating a political consciousness. Pred (1985) used time-geography to examine the spatial changes to a Swedish town that created, and were created by, changing social practices.

"spatial patterns and social processes are dialectically related rather than being linked through cycles of cause and effect" (p.9).

One of the reasons structuration theory is easily applicable to empirical situations, is that its constructs are clear. "Space" is clearly defined, as is what is meant by distance, or presence. A persistent problem in developing theories of space and place further has been a confusion of terms, and a lack of specificity about which meaning is being invoked in a given discussion. The next section looks at some distinctions between space and place that are important for understanding social action.

Space vs. place: The importance of ontological clarification

One way that critical social theorists have been hampered in their analyses of oppression, capitalism and resistance (or challenges to existing social/political/economic structures) has been through lack of attention to space. This "overlooking" of space has been attributed to its mistaken identity as something dead and fixed (Foucault, 1980). In order for environmental social scientists to contribute to specific practices that challenge existing balances of power, we must understand exactly what we are talking about, and not conflate different types and definitions of space. Similarly, we

need to clarify our use and analysis of place, and its relationship to spatial facts.

Both space and place are important to social theory, and while obviously related, or co-existing, the words don't represent the same thing, especially as currently used. As interest has increased in studying the local and the everyday, places have taken on increased importance. In this usage, as in the term "social production of place," place is viewed as the manifestation of social process. Places always have meaning, because people have acted in them and inscribed them with meaning.

"Space" has developed a negative connotation among social scientists, because it doesn't necessarily reflect any human action or meaning. It is either an abstract, mental category, and considered "empty" , or it is taken to belie a positivist perspective that signifies purely quantitative properties, such as distance. "Place," on the other hand, is used to signify human situatedness in certain spaces, and emphasizes qualitative, rather than quantitative, aspects.

While the new interest in place, and its meaning-laden, social properties is a major step forward, there are also spatial properties to social action which need to be considered, without resorting to positivist laws that are outside of social relations. Structuration theory, for example, integrates spatial factors with a dynamic view of human agency (Giddens, 1984). Environments have

characteristics which are not completely subsumed within
their meanings as places, such as the physical properties
of space, and the derivative property of uniqueness (no
environment is reproducible exactly, because of the nature
of location, which is immovable.) Environmental
characteristics are not merely derivative of, or similar
to, the those of culture, economic or politics, although
they affect each of these.

Part of the problem with theorizing about space in
social theory, and therefore engaging in critical and
reflective research practices that integrate space and
place, is a gap between how space is understood as a
philosophical category and how it is understood as an
empirical category. The interest of phenomenological
geographers and environmental psychologists[18] in studying
how places are experienced may seem to provide a bridge
between philosophical and empirical conceptions of space,
but this is not the case. Instead, phenomenological
research tends to retreat into the mind of the individual
and, while interesting and probably fruitful from a
psychological standpoint, does nothing to "spatialize"
social theory.

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[18] see Dwelling, Seeing & Designing: Toward a Phenomenological
Ecology, edited by David Seamon, 1993, State University Press of New
York, for an example of the phenomenological approach to
environmental social science.

Lefebvre, in The Production of Space, suggests that it
is possible to have a theory of space, in general, that is
inclusive of the different (ontologically speaking) types
of space that exist (Lefebvre, 1991). His goal is to unite
physical, social and mental space.

Henri Lefebvre and the social production of space

Harvey's explanation of the necessary spatial
organization of capital (e.g. in Harvey, 1985a) is
supplemented by Lefebvre's insight that capital not only
requires spatial expansion, fragmentation and
homogenization, but that through its spatial relations,
social relations are mystified. Because of the apparent
"naturalness" of where places are, and because places and
space separate us, the construction of those places by
people, and the relationships forged which produce
capitalist space, are hidden from view.

> By focusing on spatial patterns as products of
> deep-level forces residing in modes of social
> organization, we can do away with all obsolete
> theories that reify the physical features of
> space themselves but that ignore the
> instrumental and hierarchical manner by which
> all settlement spaces are integrated through
> the actions of systemic forces. (Gottdiener,
> 1985, p. 215)

Lefebvre, a marxist geographer, has not only expanded
on the latent spatiality of Marx. He has opened up the
concept of space to varied definitions, and argued against
the duality between mental and physical space. Lived space

is both concrete and abstract--it is socially created, "a
product literally filled with ideologies," (p.3) and it is
also physical, geometric and material. Lefebvre attempts
to clarify, epistemologically, the different ideas the word
"space" represents. Before Lefebvre, no really varied
understanding of space existed, and in particular, its link
with social practice and economic structure was not
revealed at a philosophical or epistemological level.
Lefebvre, in his Introduction to The Production of Space,
defines his task by noting: "conspicuous by its absence
from supposedly epistemological studies is.. the idea.. of
space," although the term is used all the time (Lefebvre,
1991, p.3).

By focusing on social space as a product of human
practices, Lefebvre can provide a bridge between critical
geographers and environmental psychologists. By viewing
places as more than merely a particular instance of capital
accumulation or, on the other hand, a bounded site filled
with "behaviors" and experience, critical environmental
social scientists can examine what human practices create
what places. Furthermore, we can then ask who these places
come to seem "natural" and "given" once they are created,
thereby hiding from us the practices that brought them into
being.

The "social production of space" has become somewhat
of a catchword in much recent social scientific literature,
but often watered down from its original implications as

intended by Lefebvre and exemplified by Harvey (1985a) and Smith (1984). For the purposes of this chapter, I take "social production of space" to signify the following ideas noted by Lefebvre (1991):

1) the shift of the concept of space from product to producing

2) social space is a social product and "the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (p.26).

This definition lends itself to a critical theoretical analysis of social practices from a materialist perspective. It focuses on how social relations construct space, and how power and domination are part of those relationships. Yet, how space is a social product which is concealed, needs to be revealed through a critical approach.

According to Lefebvre, the concealment of space as social product is accomplished by the twin myths of realism and transparency, which represent space as neutral and passive geometry. Instead, space is both site and outcome of social, political, economic struggle. This version of the "social production" idea is the one used to produce the political economy of space developed by David Harvey, Neil Smith, Ed Soja and Doreen Massey (Keith & Pile, 1994).

Lefebvre specifies social space as the situated location of daily social practice. Conceptualized as an arena where communicative and technical rationality co-exist, and where the structures of power determine which rationality predominates, social space can become both a category and a real place from which critical environmental social scientists explore practices that challenge the unjust implementations of power and domination.

Opportunities for resistance lie in "differential space." Differential space is the "spatial expression of contradictions" in capitalism (Keith & Pile, 1994, p.24). While we are all more familiar with the economic contradictions of capital, such as the need to maintain an army of unemployed at the gates to keep wages down, or the sacrificing of long-term benefits for short-term gains, we actually experience spatial contradictions as well. Harvey has explained these very well (1985a & b) in his discussion of investment patterns in real property. In short, contradictions within capital's needs result in neighborhoods, cities, regions, and nations suffering economic neglect and deterioration.

Abstract space, according to Lefebvre, carries within it a seed for creating "differential" space. The contradictions of capitalism are that seed. In Habermasian terms, openings in the system (abstract space) for

communicative rationality may come about through internal

contradictions of capitalism, creating pockets where

lifeworld concerns are not thoroughly colonized

(differential space). Differential space seems to have

much in common with the lifeworld in that it "restores

unity to what abstract space breaks up--functions, elements

and moments of social practice". (Lefebvre, 1991, p.251)

An analogy to Habermas's conceptual categories of

system and lifeworld would appear to work here. Lefebvre

identifies what he terms "abstract" space with the space of

capitalism, and as such, it is also hegemonic space.

Abstract space, or hegemonic, capitalist space is created

through the production of built form:

> The section of space assigned to the architect--
> perhaps by 'developers', perhaps by governmental
> agencies - is affected by calculations that he
> may have some intimation of but with which he is
> certainly not well acquainted. This space has
> nothing innocent about it: it answers to
> particular tactics and strategies; it is, quite
> simply, the space of the dominant mode of
> production, and hence the space of capitalism,
> governed by the bourgeoisie. It consists of
> 'lots' and is organized in a repressive manner
> as a function of the important features of the
> locality. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 360)

Here, Lefebvre actually mentions the system of

organization of property used throughout the industrialized

world--individual lots, usually privately-owned which are

the basic unit for buying and selling, construction, zoning

and land use patterns. It becomes easier to concretize the

"spatial contradictions of capital" when we look at actual spatial divisions used in everyday practice.

While it is useful to state that abstract space carries the seeds of differential space, meaning, apparently, that capitalism has inherent contradictions which can be used as opportunities for resistance, it is still necessary to theorize about what those contradictions are and, for environmental social science, where are they found?

What are the social practices which create what Lefebvre calls differential space? How do those practices arise in the first place, without differential space? How do people appropriate space; what are the processes?

Lefebvre is hampered in answering these questions in terms of practice because his view of the move from abstract space to differential space is teleological. As Keith & Pile (1994) note, Lefebvre tends to have an idealist view of moving through history from one type of space to another. Ultimately, his categories for space are not analytical, they are historical, rooted in the idea that capitalism has a teleology of abstract space, with homogeneity as its goal. According to Lefebvre, there has been a succession from natural to absolute to abstract space, which will give way to differential space. Similar to both (materialist) Marx's and (idealist) Hegel's progressive view of history, this teleology obscures from

importance the specifics and very varying outcomes, of practice. Differential space, or challenges to existing social/economic/political structures don't, in fact, come about without critical examination of constraints and opportunities followed by specific, and not only situated but site-specific, action.

If we look at Lefebvre's project in reverse, we can say that one of the major obstacles to integrating space in social theory derives from the distance between the space (places) of social practice and idealized space.

Distinguishing "space" from "place"

Complicating matters still further, is the fact that space itself can be differentiated. A space--signifying a particular location - is different from "space" as a construct, just as 6 o'clock is different from the concept "time." As Lefebvre describes, there are also different spaces--representational space, representations of space and spatial practice.

It is understandably difficult to break apart the two concepts of space and place, and not wholly desirable. However, conflating them completely means missing some characteristics of each that are intrinsic parts of human existence. Relph (1976) has noted that one difference is that space is always a fixed location, whereas a place may actually move. He uses gypsy camps or nomadic villages as examples. The camp or village moves to different

locations, but is always the same place. The actual
location may see a series of radically different
settlements over time, all of which are different places
occupying the same physical space (Relph, 1976).

Doreen Massey has noted that conceptualizations of
place often treat them as filled and fixed with meaning,
bounded, and nostalgic (Massey, 1994). Because of the
interest in place and place attachment that characterizes
much of environmental psychology, the problems that arise
from this view of place are particularly important and
limiting. Views of place that imbue them with an identity
run the risk of overlooking the multiple and dynamic social
relations that constitute a place. Most importantly
perhaps, there are dangerous consequences that arise from
romanticizing places as bounded and enclosing meaning. It
eclipses the linked social relations that extend beyond and
into the place, and thereby positions the place outside of
history (Massey, 1994).

A concept of place as being dynamic and linked to
external social relations makes it possible to deal with
concepts such as scale and time, and therefore to extend
the interpretation of specific social practices across time
and space. When we view people in places as having social
relations that extend beyond the place in question, it is
possible to escape the problems of focusing on purely local
phenomenon. These interpenetrating social relations

connect the given place under study to other places, and to the larger system. By adopting this concept of place, we have a means of connecting our local site to more global forces.

The difference it makes if we understand places as interpenetrated by social relations can best be seen by example. Foucault's (1972) explanation of power requires an unbounded concept of place. For Foucault, power is neither person- or institution-centered. Rather power is described as a series of threads that run through society, not just vertically (top to bottom), but horizontally, and which run through all social relations. An individual or an institution may exercise power, or be a point of power, but analysis of power as being generated and held in this way will miss the power embedded throughout social life. According to Foucault, as the threads of power cross, they become more dense (Tilley, 1990). If we see these threads of power connecting places, we can better understand both the social production of place, and how place is implicated in domination.

For critical environmental social science, the perspective of power as interwoven dense threads across place can help analyze the social relations of a place. Also, because in this understanding of power, it comes from below, from the smallest groups in the smallest settings, an analysis of power within everyday life and the places of everyday activities is compatible with a theoretical and

practical approach that integrates place. While this could be, (and usually is) presented in purely social terms, by focusing on social relations, the ways in which power is sustained, projected or resisted is tied to the opportunities, constraints, and messages (symbolic content) of specific places and built form. These can then be linked to larger scales of domination. Power is one construct, or relation, which can provide a link between the local/everyday and macro level structures of domination.

Theories about social action need to recognize the importance of space as both a philosophical and abstract category, and its empirical quantitative elements without reducing it to either, and integrate these more "absolutist" or universal properties into the "place" discussions about social process and meaning.

The next two sections examine the potential links between critical theory and space, including critical geography's perspective on space as it can be useful to a broader critical environmental social science.

Critical theory and space

While critical theory and environmental psychology are compatible in epistemological, methodological and even normative assumptions, critical theory has never engaged the built environment, which is one of environmental

psychology's two main objects of study (the other, equally problematic, object of environmental psychology is human behavior).

Critical theory has been described by many of its practitioners as viewing society as the totality of conditions under which individuals reproduce their existence. However, surprisingly, other than work, the material conditions of social reproduction have been undertheorized, with the physical dimensions of space, built form and location ignored by most critical theories.

Environmental social science has a great opportunity to add to critical theory in at least two ways. Because of its links to architecture and design fields, and its particular interest in built form, it has a research perspective that is situated in real places. As an interdisciplinary field, it can, potentially, synthesize developments in theory and practice into a critical social theory that is comprehensive. Secondly, neither geographers or sociologists have the built environment as their central concern. Recent contributions by critical geography and sociology, in addition to the debates brought on by postmodernity, bring us to the brink of meaningful theoretical discussion of the built environment.

Areas of resistance described in most of the critical theory literature are represented as organized around needs for identity, or sometimes ideological social movements. However, resistance can also be place-based and the

possibilities for empowerment may be different in struggles over specific places.

As John Forester (1985) has said,

> Habermas's reformulation of relations of power in terms of lifeworld colonization or penetration suggests a far wider range of sites of resistance,...including homes, the public sphere, schools....(p. xv)

Critical theories of space: Critical geography

The field of geography has suffered in its relationship to critical theory. While critical geography is a flourishing sub-area within the field, it has had a primarily one-sided relationship with critical theory. Unlike feminism, which has transformed critical theory in its encounters with it, critical geography has rather developed a sub-specialty of its own. Ed Soja subtitled his 1989 book Postmodern Geographies, as the "reassertion of space in critical social theory." However, while he effectively demonstrated the many mentions of space and locality in postmodernism, and illustrated it with an empirical analysis of Los Angeles, he failed to develop a critical social theory with space, place or built form integrated in it.

Examining the impact of the period of postmodernity as well as the discourse of postmodernism, Soja's aim in Postmodern Geographies is to "spatialize the historical narrative, to attach to durée an enduring critical human geography."(p.1) It is also to "recompose the intellectual

history of critical social theory around the evolving
dialectic of space, time and social being." (p.1) He
believes postmodernism includes an epochal transition in
critical thought--critical social theory exploded into
fragments, and this is part of post-modern restructuring.
Using the organization of the text itself to demonstrate,
(the chapters can be read in any order) he cites the work
of Lefebvre, Foucault, Berger, Harvey, Poulantzas and
others to argue that relations and meanings are tied
together through a spatial rather then temporal logic.

Soja believes *the* crucial insight in the resurgence of
spatial thinking is the recognition that space is both
outcome and medium, which we are blocked from seeing as
simultaneously a product and a shaping force. This is of
course, a crucial point, but already recognized and
incorporated by many environmental psychologists and
certainly by many geographers.

However, rather than seeking an alternative
explanation of process, a more fruitful direction is to
specify a social theoretical framework which can encompass
interlocking processes occurring within different spheres.
Habermas's theory of communicative action is an example of
an analysis of process that does not have an economic core
of determinism, yet is compatible with a marxist political
economic approach while not at all limited to it. I
believe there are possibilities of meshing the theory of

communicative action with marxist theory on the production of the built environment.

Whether all aspects of space are socially constructed or are "real," the important point for critical environmental social scientists is that places *and* space provide the means for us to meet and intersubjectively agree with others on what we will take as real, for the purposes of guiding our actions. I separate "places" and "space" again to avoid conflating, and thereby neglecting, the difference between places as sites socially produced and meaningful, and the spatial facts of position and location[19] which are essential to our ability to construct what is real and to act.

Critical geography has sought to integrate space into social theory by providing a spatial analysis of capitalist processes. David Harvey (1973, 1985a & b, 1989) and Neil Smith (1984, 1986) clarify and explain societal forms of inequality as dependent on specific places or spatial distributions for their existence. Both employ a marxist analysis that views spatial relationships as constitutive of and resulting from processes of capital accumulation.

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[19] see for example, Hannah Arendt's description of the importance of location to participate in the public sphere in The Human Condition, 1958, University of Chicago Press; Giddens's discussion of the elements of structuration theory in Constitution of Society, 1984, University of California Press and Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy" in Habermas and the Public Sphere, Craig Calhoun (ed). The MIT Press, 1992 for various perspectives on location and position in terms of social action.

Harvey's conceptualization of space as an economic
construct, which poses space as an active theoretical
variable in capital accumulation, accords theoretical
importance to space, but without incorporation of the
details of social practice as they reproduce the system.

In Smith's analysis of gentrification there have been
attempts to conceptualize the expansion and contraction of
the housing market as spatial expressions of social
processes (Smith, 1986). Landlord and institutional
abandonment of the living spaces of the urban poor, and the
subsequent reclamation of that space by its residents, is
also an inextricably place-based and spatial representation
of both the processes of capital and the resistance to it.

Another way in which the processes and active social
construction of space is obscured is, according to Smith &
Katz (1993), through the use of metaphor. They note how
commonplace it is to use spatial metaphors to describe
political and social reality. The terms location,
position, locality, mapping, colonization and
decolonization are all cited as widely used terms in
contemporary cultural discourse. Smith & Katz contend that
it is the apparent familiarity and fixity of space that
makes it desirable as metaphor. "Notions like subject
position, social location and locality borrow this
concreteness of spatial definition to impose some order on
the seemingly chaotic mélange of social difference and
social relations" (p. 69).

While metaphors for places are useful communicative tools, we need to pay more attention to the actual role of space and place in maintaining social forms. As Lefebvre (1991) has argued, space needs to be seen as socially constructed.

Castells & Henderson (1987) believe that such place-based movements are "organized according to a logic of power which is distinct from, and at odds with, the global logic which increasingly penetrates and determines the lives of local populations." (p. 15) To illustrate the polarity of daily life and the global economic system Castells & Henderson coin the phrases of "placeless power" (the global economy) and "powerless places" (communities), by which they juxtaposes the growth of communication technologies that allow the transfer of capital without the need for face-to-face or place-based contact with the local social relations of lived experience.

The different logics Castells & Henderson speak of could easily be thought of as parallels to instrumental and communicative action. In fact, they say that while internationalization relies on the flow of communication, communities are organized around "their own communication codes on the basis of an historically specific territory." Is this the communicative rationality of the shared lifeworld?

If we do draw this parallel, then we can begin to spatialize the effects of the two means of coordinating

action. Considering a "dominant logic based on flows" to be a form of colonization, we can then concretize its abstract nature by identifying a spatial manifestation. One possibility is that the very form of conflict and defense has become increasingly localized as Castells maintains. In this way it is seen as physically reduced to common territory and shared, physically dependent communication means.

The importance of place and appropriation of space in successfully changing relationships of power suggests that the distinction between symbolic reproduction and material reproduction made by Habermas, and that between struggles over identity instead of distribution made by many urban theorists (see, for example, Castells 1983), is not as clear cut as recent discussions indicate. Struggles for identity may be simultaneously struggles over rights to space. For example, gay and lesbian oppression has included lack of public (or even) private spaces to meet, making the development of a an individual, let alone group, identity difficult and invisible (Wolfe, 1990).

The important point for critical environmental social scientists, who are interested in working with real people on emancipatory practices, is that neither Lefebvre's typology of place nor Harvey's and Smith's theoretical explanations work by themselves to point a clear path. They must be integrated into the practice of critical

environmental social science, along with the interest in people and built form that comes from environmental psychology.

To be precise about why no one perspective from critical geography paves the way for critical environmental social science, I cite one example of individual strengths and limitations of the theorists being discussed in this section, Lefebvre and Harvey/Smith:

David Harvey and other economic geographers have contributed an analysis of the relationship between economic processes (capitalism) and built form. This is crucial for understanding development patterns, the marginality and cyclical nature of neighborhoods, and the "system" constraints on action. However, by themselves, Harvey's (and Smith's) analyses don't help us much to practice research in an emancipatory way at the level of individual and group actions. They aid social transformation by exposing taken-for-granted patterns of investment and disinvestment as integral parts of the capitalist process.

On the other hand, Lefebvre, while contributing a key insight about social process, has been criticized by Harvey (see Gregory, 1994) for being vague. For Lefebvre, in the lived world there is a dialectic between conceived space (representations of space) and lived space (spaces of representation), which leads to a way out of the past and to a different future. While this is a view of an

emancipatory project, as Harvey says, it is rather vague. This vagueness prevents us from operationalizing Lefebvre into a specific research practice. We are given several insights by Lefebvre, some of them philosophical, some epistemological/ontological and some theoretical, and left to do with them what we will.

One of the things we may do is use ideas about where opportunities for resistance lie, in terms of their physical location, and then, as environmental social scientists, examine how people can and do act in these locations. We can assist them in understanding their location and their possibilities so that they may act to take advantage of opportunities to challenge their oppression, disadvantages or lack of resources.

So, in terms of places, where do opportunities for resistance lie? For Habermas, as described in the previous chapter, opportunity is found wherever lifeworld norms and communicative action can operate without being colonized. In more concrete terms, this often means in areas that are outside the core of economic production in society. Areas that are peripheral to the economic system tend to be ignored or neglected, creating hardships for the people located there, but also, perhaps, a "space" that is less dominated by the system. However, this does not minimize the *greater* domination experienced by people living in neglected areas through racism, poverty and lack of power.

It is encouraging, though, that people in such circumstances more often than not find ways, however stressful and insufficient, to cope. And it is in these practices, and the values that underlie them, that some potential challenges to existing social constructions about gender, race and poverty may take root.

The theory of Jürgen Habermas spatialized

Habermas's concept of communicative rationality (1984, 1987) is useful to critical environmental social science for a number of reasons, some of which were referred to in the previous chapter. It signifies a shift from the philosophy of consciousness which couldn't move beyond the individual and isolated subject, and it legitimizes people as opposed to structures and is therefore compatible with environmental psychology's focus on people. Most importantly in my view, it leads to a need to understand the social and spatial context of communication. As Roderick (1986) says, "the 'linguistic turn' leads to the necessity for taking a 'social turn.' However, the 'social turn' isn't the last turn needed on the road out of the philosophy of consciousness. Just as the 'linguistic turn' leads to the necessity for taking a 'social turn', the 'social turn' leads to a necessity for taking a 'place turn.'

This is where a critical environmental social science can make an important contribution to social theory. In

fact, the turn towards language opens a door to do just that, in its focus on social practice not as an end product, but as something to be inquired about. If social practice is the object of analysis rather than given, its location is a key and integral aspect of that practice, as well as its possibilities for expansion, liberation or domination. However, Habermas has so far only thematized social practice in a social way, by distinguishing between the spheres of purposive rational action and communicative action.

The "lifeworld"

It is possible to find linkages between geographical theories and traditional critical theory, and the concept of the lifeworld as developed by Habermas has certain points in common with more materially-oriented theories. To use just one example to illustrate the potential for discussion, Soja says, in Postmodern Geographies, that "power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life." (p.2) Here, the background nature of space, and the physical places of life are functionally very similar to the lifeworld. The role of both spatial relationships and specific places should be defined as part of the lifeworld.

The lifeworld also provides a way of linking the structural to the personal, and hence connect the goals of environmental psychology with broader social theory.

Space enters into our lifeworld at many levels--
experientially in the movement and sense of our own bodies,
perceptions of nearness and farness, and of the order of
things located in the world. It also provides definitions
of the possible and impossible, such as if one thing is in
a certain place, it can't be another place at the same
time. Distance influences the formation of social and
economic relationships, and the need to overcome distance
has long been a driving force behind many human inventions.
A combination of structuration theory with Habermas's
concept of system/lifeworld is one step toward
operationalizing the inclusion of space and place in these
social abstractions.

The empirical testability of Habermas's concepts has
been both a goal and a controversial issue. By expanding
the theoretical understanding of the lifeworld, we may also
help move it from an abstractly theoretical construct to a
more grounded one, providing possibilities for empirical
application and testing.

Habermas associates the lifeworld with the symbolic
structures of society and the reproduction of inner nature,
and associates the system with the material structures of
society and the reproduction of outer nature (Habermas,
1984). This is, I believe, the beginning of two problems.
One, it precludes understanding the continuity and
intersection of the material and social nature of the
lifeworld. The material aspect of women's actions,

undertaken within the sphere of the lifeworld, are therefore obscured. My research at HERG (described in the "Transformations" chapters) in low income housing suggests that communicative action does more than reproduce social norms. Rather, by serving as the basis for action, it can simultaneously remake the physical habitat and the personal and group identities of the residents. The emerging norms and the nature of the physical habitat are tied to the identities of the residents. Thus, the distinction Habermas makes between conflicts over distribution and conflicts over social norms fades.

The second difficulty with associating the lifeworld exclusively with the reproduction of symbolic structures is that it vitiates the role of places and materiality in the lifeworld, and conversely, ignores the role of the lifeworld, and therefore, communicative action, in the reproduction of places. In other words, Habermas's concept of the lifeworld needs a materialist analysis which incorporates space and place.

Habermas's description of the lifeworld is purely social, and therefore its contents are found in culture and transmitted through communication, most often verbal. However, the lifeworld can, and should be, conceptualized also as having physical dimensions. Built form, place and spatial attributes such as distance and presence, are not only background to the social integration process. As various theoretical developments (e.g. critical geography,

structuration theory, urban semiotics) attempt to show, they are constitutive of social action and consciousness as well.

Furthermore, I would argue that the unproblematic characteristic of the lifeworld described by Habermas is applicable to places as well as to cultural norms. Places which are encountered in daily life are also no longer taken for granted as a natural background to life when they are problematic. Often, problems experienced in the lifeworlds of poor people are most directly noticed in relationship to the places in which they live, and their location relative to other people and sources of production. It is the most often problems of the material nature and distribution of the system, *as experienced in daily life,* which come into discourse. And it is problems of material distribution, spatial location and the conditions of places that require resolution. Of course, discourse alone can't solve distributive problems. However, through changes about who and what is allowed in the public sphere of discourse, existing system practices may be delegitimized and challenged.

Habermas has explained what he terms social pathologies as resulting from a colonization process--of system needs infiltrating and overtaking the natural communicative processes of daily life (Habermas, 1987). One form of resistance to colonization can be found in social movements, which seek to recover (or create)

conditions where identity and "lifeworlds" can develop free from domination by constraints that distort and limit them. Other forms can be found in situated practices, such as in the marginal neighborhoods and housing stock of the case study.

The conceptual category of "lifeworld" has been used by some theorists, especially phenomenologists, to focus on the everyday life of individuals. Habermas has treated it most rigorously by defining it as the sphere of life in which culture (the symbolic structures) is reproduced, and specifying both how the lifeworld interacts with social and bureaucratic institutions (the system), and the mode of reasoning and communicating which takes place within a lifeworld orientation. Because of the ability to connect the lifeworld, both theoretically and in practice, to the system sphere and to rationality, Habermas's definition of lifeworld contains an emancipatory dimension not present in any of the phenomenological approaches (Habermas, 1987).

The lifeworld is relevant to a discussion of space and place for two reasons: its focus on the details and reproduction of society through everyday life, which are always located somewhere; activities and routines take place; and because of the material nature involved in much cultural reproduction. However, the role of the built environment and the material world in general must be conceptualized as integral to symbolic reproduction.

The taken-for-granted nature of the unproblematic
lifeworld, which Habermas views as being called into
discourse only when it ceases to be taken-for-granted as
the result of a problem or contradiction, is applicable to
both the space (neighborhood, city, etc.) and places (home,
work, school) of the lifeworld as well. Of course, these
are not purely physical either, as they contain, construct,
limit and produce social and cultural activities. However,
their physicality is relevant, and often central, to the
perception of problems that are brought to the level of a
discourse for resolution. An example would be the loss of
one's home, or more subtly, the placement and arrangement
of homes to support nuclear families with male workers.
The appropriateness and ideology behind the single-family
home has been called into question as certain household
types, such as single-mothers or unrelated adults or
individuals find existing housing forms to be in
contradiction with other aspects of their lives.

Habermas also "locates" forms of resistance to
colonization (such a geographical term!) in communities of
interest, such as ecology or women's rights. However,
because he overlooks the place-based nature of some types
of problems, he therefore overlooks the place-based nature
of certain types of resistance.

The lifeworlds of most people, and most especially
those without resources to overcome distance through
technology, still exist physically, in communities and

depend on face-to-face contact and social support. The problems, though they reflect national and international scale system organization, are experienced at the local scale, in the form of homelessness, crime, and deterioration. The question of scale, recently taken up by geographers, may provide an interesting way to analyze the lifeworld in a more physical sense, while maintaining the conceptual relationship between system and social integration.

"Scale" has become an important term for geographers, as the effects of actions in one place are often felt far away. The quickness which long distances can be traversed in communication or travel under advanced capitalism, mean that phrases like "global" economy or "global" village take on concrete meaning in time and space. Scale refers to what "piece" of the globe we are particularly interested in at any one time. For example, the effects of a multi-national corporate takeover will be manifested differently depending on whether we look at how it effects a regional economy, or how it effects a particular town where a plant closes, or how it affects the international balance of trade. Scale is often invoked to explain connections between what is happening locally and what is happening globally. The local scale could be variously defined as well: it could mean a few blocks, a community, or a city, for example. What is important about scale is to be specific about the geographic boundaries intended when

discussing effects, and how areas are linked across different scales, by social and economic relations.

These points are intended to indicate some perspectives that help construct a critical theory of place, and which distinguish the current practice of environmental psychology from the critical environmental social science it could be. The next chapter examines the impact on my own research practice when the importance of place as constitutive of social action became apparent.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRANSFORMATIONS OF A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE- Part III

It is critical that if cooperatives are to be seen as collective agents of social change, that they not be analyzed only as local resistances or local successes. They must be understood both as real, material, meaning-filled places, and as one form of social and spatial practice within the system of advanced global capitalism.

Resident ownership of low income housing is only one step in a process that began with the economic and housing crises of the 1970's in New York City. Far from being unique to New York City, these crises were (and are) the structural result of global economic restructuring. Sassen (1991) described the remarkable similarities occurring in London and Tokyo, as global capital becomes concentrated in a few world centers. This restructuring has led to increased polarization between rich and poor, expanded areas of concentrated poverty and physical decay, increased homelessness, displacement, crime and informal forms of work (Sassen, 1991).

It is in a context of economic restructuring and uneven development (as discussed in Chapter 6) that limited-equity cooperative housing developed. Tenant ownership in this form came as a response to the threats of displacement that economic restructuring brought in the form of properties abandoned by private landlords and owned

in default by the City. Tobier (1985) identified a "ring of poverty" in New York City, that runs across northern Manhattan, the South Bronx and northern Brooklyn. Not coincidentally, almost all landlord-abandoned, city-owned property lies within this ring.

Overwhelmingly, the buildings that landlords walked away from were in the city's poorest neighborhoods. Therefore, city-owned buildings and the cooperatives that some of them have become, are densely geographically concentrated in minority neighborhoods. Recent data collected in two New York City boroughs showed that approximately 95% of landlord-abandoned buildings house African-American or Latino tenants (City-Wide Task Force, 1993). Different neighborhoods have different mixes, with more Asian or White tenants in some parts of Manhattan, however the 95% figure is fairly representative.

The geographic concentration and correlation of poverty, minority residents and city-owned housing also presents a map of neighborhoods with the most severe problems in provision of city services, drugs and crime. Residents who have saved their buildings and made them drug-free, only have to step outside to realize that while their building is a safe haven, their blocks and neighborhoods continue to deteriorate. However, they do have the experience and accomplishment of successes at the building level which they believe they can apply

collectively to the more intractable problems outside their doors.

Many city-wide issues face residents living within the ring of poverty identified by Tobier (1985) disproportionately. The increase in homelessness and implementation of new water and sewer taxes are just two examples that bear directly on limited-equity cooperatives. The stock of city-owned housing which could potentially become tenant-owned or managed, and that which has already become cooperatives, is the only available source of housing for very low income people before homelessness. That is why it is often referred to as "housing of last resort." When a tenant loses an apartment that is among this stock, the next step is most often into the shelter system or to the streets. Moving elsewhere is usually not an alternative, as there is no other housing available.

In the neighborhoods within the ring of poverty, homelessness is an ever-present threat, and the ability to make city-owned housing viable is the only protection against that threat. Financial or maintenance problems that threaten the existence of buildings owned by residents can result directly in a loss of housing units and more homelessness. Unlike middle or upper income cooperative housing elsewhere in the city (or anywhere), financial crisis for low income buildings is more than a financial loss, or impetus to move. It means permanent loss of housing for low income tenants.

The leaders of most of the cooperatives that HERG has studied were women who were long-time residents of their community and building, and the majority were black. Their positioning within the lifeworld, and marginalization from the system, was compounded by gender, race and income. However, it was this positioning that allowed the exercise of communicative practices. Landlord-abandoned housing was, for the time being, of no interest or value to the system, and therefore not totally under its domination. "Positioning" in this sense, is not merely a political metaphor, although it is that too. They are, literally, positioned in the ring of poverty defined by Tobier (1985).

Leavitt & Saegert (1990) had found that the style and success of organizing was rooted in aspects of the social life within buildings, and on a gender-based response to threats to home and community. Women leaders used skills developed in maintaining their home and meager family incomes to organize their neighbors. They built on long-standing networks of social involvement and interdependency, as well as their commitment to staying in their buildings, where these social networks had been built and nurtured (Leavitt & Saegert, 1990). Leavitt & Saegert developed the idea that the co-oping experience was by no means gender-neutral, but based on a model of social relations and values that was linked with domestic life and the skills and experiences of the women who emerged as leaders. Their actions and experience stemmed from the

realities of their material existence, and from the location of their homes.

Location within the neighborhood was as important as location of the neighborhood. Women extended the social ties that had been essential in maintaining their households to define and achieve the collective goal of building survival. While this expansion of the household outward required an increased flow of communication within the social network, it also involved simple acts that effected the physical environment, such as housekeeping, chasing drug dealers off the stoop, cleaning the halls and repairing the building themselves.

The actions and orientations of women in the cooperatives we studied underline the continuity between the material and social nature of the lifeworld. Whereas Habermas tends to equate the system with the outer world and the lifeworld with the inner world, this distinction seems more or less absent from the perceptions of the home held by co-op residents of formerly landlord abandoned buildings, especially women.

Habermas's emphasis on communication tends to focus the idea of the lifeworld on the reproduction of social norms and values. However, through this process individual and group identities emerge and the physical requirements of reproducing life are fulfilled in a socially acceptable mode. The examples of how people organize and act in cooperatives demonstrate that the process of communication

does not simply reproduce norms. Rather, by serving as the basis for the co-ordination of action, it simultaneously remakes the physical habitat and the personal and social identities of residents, thus affecting the nature of future norms and the quality of every day life. These emergent norms and the nature of the physical habitat are tied to the identities of residents. Thus, the distinction Habermas makes between conflicts over distribution and conflicts over social norms fades. Residents both expect heat and hot water at affordable prices and to acquire these goods through democratic processes and in ways that conform to the social norms of the building.

The initial abandonment of buildings by the system enlarged the scope of lifeworld rationality and action. The limited-equity cooperatives that emerged became zones of interference in which lifeworld directives and system imperatives daily contest actual territory through the words and actions of residents.

The material and social functions of the household under conditions of landlord abandonment in New York help reveal the problem of equating the material dimension of life solely with the system. Since households living in landlord-abandoned buildings had been required to employ some collective survival strategies previously, and since they frequently shared other aspects of social identity such as race, gender, residential and occupational histories, and since they inhabited a shared material

lifeworld, the communicative rationality of the lifeworld could be substituted as the steering mechanism for the material production of the shared habitat. If the lifeworld were devoid of any conditions for material reproduction, the buildings would have become abandoned in fact as well as in system terminology.

Power is inscribed in material life through the rights to use and control space. If domination of space is in itself both a form and a source of power, then non-profit housing cooperatives can be seen as either the giving (by the state) or the taking (by residents or workers) of power for low or moderate income people. The particular history and development of cooperatives varies in different countries, and is most often a recognized form of social housing in Europe and Canada. However, in the United States, low income cooperatives differ from either market-rate cooperatives or their European counterparts in that they have arisen as a housing of last resort where the system has abandoned the market. They are, in my New York City example, the outcome of people and places being discarded by the system, and then re-used, through struggle, as homes and bases to build a legitimate social identity.

Transformation from marginalization and oppression is accomplished in part by the appropriation of rights to control space. In this example, the legal right to own,

occupy and manage apartment buildings collectively was empowering in a number of ways. In the sense of social and political positioning, building ownership conferred legal authority, security of tenure and permanency in the community. Psychologically, many residents involved in the struggle developed a personal sense of achievement, skills, self-esteem and political effectiveness. Saegert (1992) has linked this empowerment to personal development that is tied to an environmental context. She has described how personal and group identities were linked to the successful outcome of the struggle for rights to stay in and collectively control housing.

By making a connection between an organizing and acting orientation that is rooted in norms, values and maintenance of social interconnectedness, and the gaining or re-gaining of control over space or allocation of resources we can begin to locate those activities that are potentially socially transformative.

Expanding the public sphere

However, a deeper transformation may occur if the communicative, collective practices found in the cooperatives change more than who controls a particular site. Using Habermas's conceptual framework of system and lifeworld, it is possible to understand these practices as transformative of the underlying logic of political decision-making (Habermas, 1987). The norms of the

lifeworld, in which women leaders placed value on maintenance of connections to others and the totality of people's lives, underlied technical decisions about rent, maintenance and operations in the most successful buildings. The grounding of decisions in such norms reflects the different logic that such decisions are based on, compared to the logic of the system, where a technical goal, such as achieving a profit, guides decision-making.

Not only we as theorists came up short when we didn't make full use of the importance of place in understanding what was happening in cooperatives. Residents too expressed frustration at their isolation from other buildings with similar experiences and their inability to move their successes to another scale. Later, they expressed amazement when they learned that several other buildings on their own blocks, their neighbors, were either limited-equity cooperatives also, or eligible to become one. This knowledge was both depressing and empowering. They saw clearly how geographically concentrated landlord abandoned buildings were in their poor neighborhoods, and they realized how invisible their successes had been, because limited-equity cooperatives look, from the outside, just like every other building. They had no "public" identity, and not even a means or code by which they knew each other.

On the other hand, the density of like buildings made the idea of acting in concert to improve neighborhoods and

gain political power a possibility. Making that a reality was another step in the intertwining of research and practice. Residents learned about their proximity to each other because of the research. They required technical assistance and some help gaining information to begin outreach and plan meetings. In short, residents had interest in acting together, but only sometimes did they have the means to make it happen. Therefore, the creation of local networks of cooperatives was a joint goal which included my organization, HERG, the city-wide technical assistance provider we and the cooperatives worked with (UHAB), funding from foundations and the ingenuity and motivation of residents.

Networks are defined as groups of residents who live in limited-equity cooperatives within walking distance of each other and want to work collectively on problems facing their neighborhoods and their buildings, and at the same time create a political voice to be heard at City Hall. That definition, in practice, faces constant revision, as residents choose to include buildings that are not yet cooperatives, but could be, and sometimes even accept local residents who want to work with them, but are not living in the same type of housing. These changes in practice raise questions, in turn, about how that affects their formation of a group identity, and whether that identity is based on their form of ownership or not.

Because of the central issues of identity formation and legitimation, and the desire to have a "voice" which can influence public policy decisions, it seemed to make sense to place networks in the theoretical context of public spheres in Habermas's sense, as places of discursive will formation. For evaluating both how democratic and effective networks are, Habermas's emphasis on the creation of procedures and criteria by which to judge the rationality of any consensus through adherence to the "ideal speech situation" is invaluable.

However, the place-specific nature of the difficult process of forming new "counter-publics" as described by Nancy Fraser is not captured in theory. It is, however, acted on all the time. We know something in our practice of creating the public sphere, or being prevented from entering it, that we do not yet know in theory.

Each network has focused on taking on local projects which could both produce an outcome, like a garden or day care center, and even more importantly serve as an organizing tool for people to get to know one another. In most cases, the local projects involve specific sites of land, on which the residents can make a legal claim.

A project to publicly identify cooperatives with awnings, and reclamation of a vacant lot for a community garden are two examples of networks choosing to work on expanding their control and legal rights to specific sites as well as create and legitimate a public identity. I have

argued elsewhere (Clark & Saegert, in press) that one of the most empowering aspects of cooperatives has been the ability to attain permanent, legally recognized control of the land and building. The presence of residents of these buildings is no longer subject to the political or economic exigencies of neighborhood change. They are there to stay. However, their newfound legitimacy is not outwardly visible. A keen observer may notice that certain buildings look a bit cleaner than their neighbors, but cooperatives basically blend in. This is why residents don't know that many nearby buildings have undergone similar histories. The plan for awnings, while seemingly superficial, would make a public statement about the permanence, legitimacy and commonality of low-income cooperatives. A community garden would secure the first space outside of one's own building that residents could lay legitimate, and visible claim upon. Other networks are discussing securing space for day care, and one is planning an outdoor wall mural. New spaces can function as locations for new public spheres.

Working together on aspects of the built environment serves a dual purpose. While networks appropriate space that increases their political presence, responsibility and rights, the process forms new group identity. As Chapin & Glunt (1990) proposed, working with others to change the physical environment, even in a small way, provides an opportunity for people to learn of each others' skills, and

to learn and expand their own skills. It also provides a reason for continued meeting. As people collectively alter places, the meanings they hold shift also. In this way, collective, participatory work is dialectically connected to place attachment.

The development of networks as strong public spheres that determine their own boundaries, provide a place to bring forward issues of concern to local residents, while at the same time challenging existing assumptions about their roles and identities.

The particular public of a network results in bringing in both different and similar interests. This is consistent with what Fraser & Nicholson (1988) find to be common in contemporary political movements, where actions are more often taken based on alliances rather than unity. For networks, the larger the scale, the more the practice takes on the character of an alliance. In individual buildings, while residents certainly have multiple subject positions, and have experienced oppression in multiple ways, there was great unity of purpose and a singular common interest. At the neighborhood level, there are more common and diverse interests. At the city-wide level, networks that act to influence city policy or larger market forces will truly be an alliance, rather than a homogeneous group.

The focus on sites that was central to the cooperative movement and is again important to networks is indicative

of the importance of places in establishing political rights and in creating, maintaining and changing group identity.

Many networks are focusing their efforts on specific aspects of the built environment. Again, as in the co-ops, efforts are centered on appropriating a space. In one neighborhood, it is a vacant lot which they hope to gain control of and turn into a community garden. In another, it is to provide awnings for each cooperative in the area. While awnings seem like a minor issue for neighborhoods plagued by horrific drug problems, crime, joblessness and lack of services, their symbolic and political value is enormous.

In a tangible sense, limited-equity cooperatives have transformed the living space of their residents. Every study of the cooperatives has shown dramatically improved building conditions, often complete elimination of drug and crime problems within buildings, and resident satisfaction higher than in other housing programs (Saegert, 1993; Clark et al, 1990; Kandel & Sheehan, 1990). At the most basic level, they have provided secure homes.

For the residents involved in organizing networks, this tangible change led to an increased sense of accomplishment, empowerment and self-esteem (Saegert & Clark, 1989; Clark et al 1990; Saegert, 1992). They moved to another, more political level as a direct result of their transformation to active political participants. The

security of safe homes, and the linkages formed through technical assistance provided a structure of opportunity that didn't exist before. Access to local political leaders also increased, when the permanence and voting power of residents became known. Cooperative residents, and therefore network members, according to self-report, and more reliably, Board of Elections data, are registered to vote in much larger proportions than their neighbors. This is significant when viewed in light of the point Nelson (1984) makes, that political participation and voting are lowest among low income single women with children, who make up a disproportionate number of residents in city-owned buildings, low income cooperatives, and poor neighborhoods, and the separation inherent in liberal political theory between their interests and political activity.

However, the potential for social transformation lies in the success of the process as much, if not more, than in the products. The ability to appropriate legal rights to space is a crucial product which conveys more than space. It conveys political presence and legitimacy. However, alone it is only locally transformative. It is in the transformation of identity from marginal victim of the system to active citizen, and most importantly, in the expansion of the legitimacy and role of communicative action rooted in normative values that any truly emancipatory or empowering change can be realized.

The process and results of creating a public sphere which can lead to social change can be seen in the following example: A one-day community conference in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, was organized by local residents living in limited-equity cooperatives or city-owned buildings, who are trying to form a network. This type of housing does not have much visibility in New York City, among either the general public or in policy circles. It has virtually no presence locally, although there are high geographic concentrations in several poor neighborhoods. Bedford-Stuyvesant is one of the neighborhoods with a large number and proportion of city-owned buildings, and of limited-equity cooperatives.

The conference organizers (local residents and a technical assistant) began by contacting leaders in other buildings that are either cooperatives or in a program to become cooperatives, and by contacting a city-wide not-for-profit technical assistance group to help them.[20] They secured a local space and invited the City's Housing Commissioner, as well as other speakers, to appear on a panel about limited-equity cooperatives. The Commissioner is very difficult to get at any event, much less a small local forum (there were about 50 people present throughout the day). However, certain things occurred that may have brought her there that day. One, the local space secured

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[20] the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

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was at a visible and historical location, Restoration Plaza in Bedford Stuyvesant, and the Commissioner lives a few blocks away. Second, as a result of the newly forming coalition of limited-equity cooperatives and networks citywide, as well as the prominence of this issue on the agenda of many housing advocates, they had a new visibility. Third, because they represented numerous buildings in a very small area, they appeared for the first time as a local force. Finally, the Commissioner received the invitation the day after she had announced a new city-wide program to sell city-owned housing to private local entrepreneurs, an announcement which she had made to the press from the very same location--Restoration Plaza.

Whatever the reasons for the Commissioner's appearance, what occurred that day was that limited-equity cooperatives became visible as a unified and political group. Another well-known and well-liked local politician came to speak and to everyone's astonishment, had not ever heard about tenant ownership, or most of the problems of city-ownership. He left that day knowing quite a bit, and with numerous constituents setting up follow-up appointments.

There are at least two ways in which the creation of that new public sphere for that day created some measure of social change. The most direct result was the admission of a group of buildings with approximately 140 residents to the program for tenant ownership. Representatives of this

building attended the conference because they had been fighting a city plan to demolish their homes for three years. They were opposed by the Department of City Planning, the Housing Department and a powerful coalition of Brooklyn churches that had earmarked the site for new construction. Repeated attempts to meet with officials had failed to change their fate. At the conference, the representatives not only publicly asked the Commissioner why their buildings were going to be demolished to build new housing, when the residents objected and the buildings were habitable. They also had a private discussion with her after the event concluded for over an hour about their situation. As a result, she reversed her position, agreed to "handle" the other agencies, and entered them into the tenant ownership program.

Another type of social change occurred more indirectly. Participants and organizers referred to the event afterwards as a "practice" for them in being able to work collectively, speak publicly, and handle the logistics of a big event. In this case, this one-day event created both a transitional public--people coming together for a moment in time--and began creating a more permanent counter-public as they developed their own group identity.

An example of social change and resistance occurring directly through reclamation of public space, can be found in a coalition of tenant presidents of five public housing developments in East Harlem that represent approximately

8,000 units of housing in close to 100 buildings. Their developments define the built form of East Harlem. They are about to undertake a massive organizing effort of their residents and to attempt to restructure their role in decision-making with the local and federal authorities that control their housing. It is their goal to alter the public discourse around public housing, although that's not quite the way they say it. They say they want to change the vision of life in public housing and the first thing they are doing is never using the term "housing project" and only using the term "housing development." In one small way, this suggests the possibility of the use and appropriation of language for altering the public sphere. (For an analysis of a similar case in another context see Pred's study of the habit of many Swedish to not use proper place names, using instead a "folk geography" which, he claims, acts as a resistance to ideological domination (Pred, 1992).

The vision of these leaders in forming a coalition instead of working separately is that they can change the space which they occupy in several ways: 1) they can alter the power relationship between local control and city or federal control; 2) they can make a physical impact on both their own developments and on East Harlem, since together they define what East Harlem looks like. Their first step as they plan their organizing effort, and define what they

need to learn is to secure a local space from which to
operate.

The involvement of research with residents effected
their opportunities and choices. It also effected the
research program. Concurrently with the network
evaluation, the Housing Environments Research Group
undertook a large-scale survey of residents in city-owned
properties, including those which have become cooperatives
as well as those going into other programs for disposition.
In the first stage of this study 2700 Bronx residents and
300 Harlem residents were interviewed, followed by another
approximately 3000 in Brooklyn.[21] It also shaped the way
we (HERG) work with residents of a large public housing
development in East Harlem, which has now expanded into a
coalition of several public housing developments that
cover, probably, 50% of the land in the East Harlem
community and are its most salient built form.

It is now our job to pay close attention to the how
the actions of residents, technical assistants, "the
system" and its representatives, and we as researchers,
involve and depend on particular relationships to space and
place to gain legitimacy. Expanding our theoretical

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[21] the results of the Bronx study can be found in Housing in the
Balance: Seeking a Comprehensive Policy for City-Owned Housing
(Henderson, Saegert, Sullivan, Sierra & DeRienzo, 1993).

framework, as critical environmental social scientists, to "spatialize" concepts such as the public sphere, subject position, identity formation, and lifeworld will in turn help us alter those practices in the most fruitful way.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters advocate, and demonstrate the
effects of, reconstructing environmental psychology into
what I have chosen to call "critical environmental social
science." I want to use this concluding section to draw
out the implications for change in actual research practice
that result from adopting the epistemological and
theoretical framework developed in this dissertation, and
then point to the many areas where fruitful theoretical
development could take place by using this framework.

First, I present a series of substantive conclusions
which are drawn largely from the research example developed
in the three "Transformations" chapters. These are
dimensions of both theory and practice that were able to be
revealed by adopting a critical theoretical framework, and
include a means for theorizing about forms of rationality
and gender in specific places.

In practice, the expansion of the theoretical
framework in this way leaves two questions, which are: 1)
given a new conceptual model, what are the possibilities
for bringing about changes in peoples' situation that will
provide them with greater latitude for action and less
oppressive constraints? and 2) how can what people do
effect the "system" in a larger way? These questions are
explored in two sections, the first concerning how

significant transformation can come about, and the second
by developing further how environmental psychologists can
work with the problematic of the public sphere. The final
section of the conclusion suggests several implications for
research that arise from reconstructions of certain key
environmental psychological and social theoretical
categories.

The "criticalization" of environmental psychology, and
the "spatialization" of critical theory to integrate space
and place, can position environmental psychology to take a
leading role as a critical environmental social science.
This provides a foundation for empirical research in
environmental social science that grounds that research in
more clearly defined concepts of emancipation and
liberation as understood by critical theory. By so doing,
environmental research becomes more clearly situated within
its own social and political context, thereby providing a
more explicit basis for understanding the goals and
possibilities of individual research endeavors.

With the radical changes to places that advanced
capitalism has wrought, there has been increased interest
in the dynamics of spatial relationships. Not long ago the
purview only of geographers, the spatial has become
increasingly integrated into social theorizing in general.
Postmodern critiques of history have added to the shifting
focus on space. There is increasing recognition that much

of our daily lives are effected by things far away, and a
concomitant rise in questions about the necessity and
importance of those activities that still occur within
circumscribed areas, dependent on proximity to something or
someone.

Rationality, gender, power and place

The grounding of critical environmental social science
in real places exposes aspects of the "actors" in ways that
abstractions about system and lifeworld (or communicative
rationality, or colonization) may hide. For example, women
are still the primary care-takers and have the major part
of domestic responsibility in our society. The sites of
these responsibilities are the home and neighborhood, and
women generally experience these places differently from
the men they live among. As the site of both cultural and
material reproduction, the home is a primary location for
the experiences and the activities of women.

The spaces of the public sphere, and of technical
rationality are, on the other hand, still largely
controlled by men. Therefore, the importance and problems
of specific places can also be viewed as a gender issue, as
can questions about the reproduction of both the system and
the lifeworld.

Once we link the different places in people are found
with the type of rationality employed, we realize *that*

forms of rationality are dependent on the places in which they are found.

According to Habermas, the lifeworld (unphysicalized) is the sphere of communicative rationality. He makes no differentiation between how, where, or on what basis men and women may differ in the types of rationality they employ. However, if we view the lifeworld as *physicalized*, we can see that it is women's situatedness in places of care-taking that accounts for the differences in reasoning ascribed to men and women by feminists such as Gilligan (1982). It is the social construction of gender which locates women in the spheres guided by actions oriented toward understanding, rather than an innate perspective, or biological predisposition.

Location in places in which one type of rationality is more effective (or more normative) means that approaches to resistance also depend on where one is. In my research in housing cooperatives, I found that both the emergence of women leaders and the styles they adopted to challenge oppression were directly related to the physical space of their particular lifeworld.

In fact, because of the stratification of society along gender lines, gender and power/oppression are never independent. Power is therefore another dimension that becomes revealed as we examine communicative and technical rationality in a physicalized, site specific way.

Feminist theorists have conceptualized three types of power: power over (domination), power to (empowerment) and power differences that underlie behavior (Yoder & Kahn, 1992). One of the most extensively researched areas of power over is in communication. Tannen (1990) suggests that men and women approach verbal communication with different goals: men have goal of gaining power over, and women have goal of creating a connection. Again, we find a distinction based on gender that is analogous to the distinction between technical and communicative rationality.

Winter (1988) has suggested that expressions of power motivation are based in socialization experiences rather than gender. Since socialization experiences never occur independently of physical setting, we can now tie gender, rationality and power into the same theme, and see how in each case the spaces and places in which they are constructed in turn structures the options available to the persons in those places.

However, in much psychological research (see Sagrestano, 1992) power over is analyzed only at the level of individual characteristics, such as personality, attitude or motive. We need to pay closer attention to the spatial manifestations that support and reproduce power-over, and the settings in which unequal communication takes place.

Power-to is personal empowerment, or the control one feels over one's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This is most often discussed in terms of therapy. It is rarely discussed beyond the individual to the broader context of social influences and change.

In both cases (of power-over and power-of) the focus on individual characteristics is apparently at odds with feminists' insistence on social change and they may be in a possibly irreconcilable tension (Marecek & Hare-Mustin, 1991). According to Marecek & Hare-Mustin, (1991) politically oriented consciousness-raising may bring these two approaches together. A more intersubjective and social view of power opens the door to examining the physical settings of power as well, wherein we can locate, in a geographical and place-based sense, locations of oppression and resistance.

Power-to needs to be linked to a politics of identity. The role of place in the politics of identity cuts across the work of several geographers who are grappling with the relationships between politics, research, resistance and the subject under the scrutiny of their postmodern dismantling.[22]

For example, Radcliffe (1993) examined the changing identity of women in Argentina during periods of dislocation, military dictatorship and changing meanings of

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[22] see, for example, the 1993 collection of essays in _Place and the politics of identity_, edited by Michael Keith and Steve Pile.

public and private spaces. She found the formation of a
political movement around the "identity" of being the
mother of a "disappeared" person. This political identity
and its consequences was "contingent upon a particular
configuration of sites (police stations, clandestine
detention centers, homes and cafés)" (Radcliffe, 1993, p.
113).

From "outside" the system

Huber (as cited in Habermas, 1987), hypothesized that
institutions which develop within the lifeworld will divert
an informal, non-profit sector from the main economic
system, and create a "politics in the first person" that is
both expressive and democratic. Such counter institutions
can remove some domains of action away from the steering of
money and power and return them to a sphere of action-
coordinated-through-understanding. The limited-equity
cooperatives I became familiar with seem to be doing this.
A concept of "liberated" areas may apply to these
cooperatives. Henri Lefebvre (1991) calls the interstices
of capitalist space where resistance can occur
"differential space." What these different terms indicate
is that there is a theoretical basis for locating specific
sites of resistance. While we may know such a site when we
find it, the more specification we can bring to the
theoretical framework, the more we will be able to seek and
identify such areas.

We may be able to explain the potential for limited-equity cooperatives to be "liberated" areas or sources of "differential" space by placing them in a geographical and economic position vis-a-vis capitalism. Low income tenants are often removed from the core of the economy (Hirsch, as cited in Habermas, 1987). They can, therefore, be considered to be part of the peripheral amalgam that Habermas locates on the other side of a line of conflict separating the productive core from those outside of it. This location provides these tenants with few resources but also places them at a distance from system control.

Making significant transformations

If the concept of different rationalities is to be useful as a critical theoretical tool, the question that remains to be explored is: What are their implications for creating change for individual or collective empowerment? The answer requires more than theoretical clarification; it also requires empirical evidence derived from the details of day-to-day decision making. We need to demonstrate not only that different forms of rationality exist in different situations and that they are connected to gender, class and power, but that some significant transformation, which is emancipatory, can take place through action.

What constitutes a significant transformation? That is not an easy question. However, if we identify sets of social relationships which are oppressive, *in part* because

of unchallenged meanings attributed to social categories,
then one criterion for transformation may be the
delegitimizing of those meanings. The case study provides
an example. Residents of limited-equity cooperatives seem
to have successfully challenged the limits of traditional
meanings of domesticity, home-ownership and self-help by
relying on their accepted meanings to make their actions
politically acceptable, and then changing them. For
example, home ownership is an ideologically-laden goal in
American life, that is associated with having a stake in
society, with economic status and security, and with
individuation. Cooperatives were presented as a form of
home ownership, that would make low income people more
middle class, give them a stake in society and so on. That
made cooperatives politically feasible. However,
cooperative residents ascribe completely different meanings
to their ownership. In interviews and meetings with
hundreds of cooperative residents, they expressed the
following values: freedom from fear of displacement,
control over their homes, collective decision-making,
maintenance of social relationships, a permanent place for
low income housing and legal rights to their space. Most
did not place any importance on their home as having
exchange value, and viewed it as a collective, not
individual, entity.

A second criterion for evaluating social change is the
reallocation of resources. In limited-equity housing

cooperatives, the resource is the right to space, and control over specific places. An interesting aspect of understanding cooperatives as social transformation is how the two criteria are interrelated. What happens when appropriation of specific places also alters values and changes accepted meanings of other social categories, such as gender, race, age needs further exploration.

The daily social practices that occur in the particular form of resistance with which I have experience exemplify the many concrete acts and physicalities that constitute coordination of action based on shared meaning. Daily communicative acts that, taken together, maintain the social fabric of the cooperatives and lead to decisions that keep buildings running, represent a philosophical shift in action coordination that undermines the legitimacy of actions taken by the system, when those actions violate intersubjectively agreed upon norms.

To claim any real possibilities for social transformation stemming from transformations in rationality, we must be able to show that programs, policies or movements support struggles to sustain the lifeworld, both in its normative content and its material substance. Place-based resistance to "colonization" is most often challenging both cultural reproduction and material distribution.

No discussion of social transformation can have any meaning in practice unless it provides the ability to

locate relationships of power, and find out how they are inscribed, created and reinforced in space. A physicalized concept of the public sphere is useful in revealing and creating shifts in the construction of power by finding places for the formation of identity and legitimacy.

The public sphere, public space and critical environmental social science

In this section, I discuss the need to talk about the public sphere in terms of access to places and in terms of the types of power and contestations over space described above.

Processes that alter social relations structured by oppression may produce democratic outcomes if we understand the marginalization, racism, sexism and powerlessness of residents in low income communities (Young, 1990). Young says about oppression, that its "causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules". (Young, 1990, p. 41) By creating a discursive public, the Neighborhood Networks in my case study provided a place to contest and reevaluate those norms. As a counter-public, or set of counter-publics, they can challenge the assumptions of the larger public.

A key to expanding social justice lies in the ability for all to enter into decision-making about public life,

and to have their identities recognized as *legitimate* claimants to discourse and resources. One way to analyze the significance of resistance or action is by whether it reallocates space or resources. Another way is to determine whether it effects the boundaries of the public sphere. This leads us to two important questions for critical environmental social science: 1) How does the existing public sphere become altered?, and 2) What are the implications for the public sphere when groups appropriate and control space?

The concept of the "public" and the overlapping but not identical concept of public space presents one of the most exciting areas for critical environmental social science. Benhabib (1992a) links the public sphere and public space when she says:

> the multiplicity of perspectives which constitute the political can only be revealed to those who are willing to engage in the foray of public contestation. The perspectival quality of the public world can only manifest itself to those who 'join together to act in concert.' Public space is formed through such action in concert. (p.12)

There are at least three ways in which critical environmental social science can take the idea of "public space" further. Each differ from the way public space has been engaged in research in the field of environment and behavior so far.

One, critical environmental social scientists can look at the role that public space plays in the creation and

reconceptualization of the public sphere. There is a great deal of debate and interest in the role of the public sphere (see e.g. Habermas and the Public Sphere, C. Calhoun (ed.) (1992); The Phantom Public Sphere, B. Robbins (ed.). (1993); and Social Text 25/26 for recent collections devoted to this topic).

The current discussions of the public sphere are concerned with questions such as whether or not it really exists as posited by liberal political theory, who has access to it, where it can be found, what are the conditions for discourse within it, and how to resolve problems concerning the delineation between public and private.

Resolution of these questions is central to the discussions about possibilities for creating real democratic practices. Yet, it is an area where no research, to my knowledge, has been done on the interrelationship between the public sphere as a political entity and the physical locations of public space.

Two, putting the focus on the intersubjectivity of the public sphere rather than on the individual, would allow critical environmental social scientists to get away from the conceptual trap of the autonomous subject. Many traditional social psychological concepts like efficacy, empowerment, learning, meaning and linguistic practice become directly connected to the material world when they are conceptualized as intersubjective or collective, and

therefore "public" processes rather than individual attributes.

Three, critical environmental social scientists can contribute to working out the problematic dichotomy between public and private. For example, almost two decades ago Relph (1976) wrote that all places are public in the sense that places are created and known through common experiences and involvement in common symbols and meanings. However, the intrinsic publicness of all places in the sense of their social production and symbolic meaning has been undertheorized and understudied empirically in environmental psychology and geography.

The distinction and overlap between the public sphere and public space needs examination from a critical perspective. Many researchers of public spaces assume these spaces belong to the public realm (see, for example, Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone, 1992). While they acknowledge and lament problems with the use of public spaces, they believe that management and design can correct these problems (for a critique see Gee, 1994). Research methods to study public space therefore usually include observation of user groups or ethnographic approaches. However, the problems of the (non-spatial) public sphere remain in terms of exclusion, domination, and reification of the categories of public and private. The public realm does not achieve real or radical democracy through studies of use patterns of public space. Methodologies are needed

that locate spaces of alternative public discourse, and that view places studied as being linked to the web of social and power relations that are both outside of them and part of them.

Current public space research in environmental psychology begins with a conception of places as bounded, combined with a romanticized ideal of public spaces as places where community building can occur (e.g. Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone, 1992; Whyte, 1988). These authors look to public spaces to support diversity and identity formation. Yet, as bounded places, this hope for public space remains an ideal. As Doreen Massey (1994) suggests, a different conception of place, as fluid and interconnected with the social relations that surround it, will change the methods and perspective we use to study a place.

The space of the public sphere is either the source of reproduction of dominant ideology and values, or of potentially emancipatory alternative discourses. It is in a fully inclusive, rational public sphere that any hope for real democracy lies.

Marie Gee (1994) has argued, following Arendt (1958), that the actions initiated in the public realm are transitory, and cease when the moment of meeting is over. How does this statement change when an environmental component is added? How does the permanence or transitoriness of places for creating and sustaining

"publics" affect the nature and consequences of the actions taken within them? What role do places play in the formation of group and individual identity?

I have argued elsewhere for the necessity of a reformulating the political theoretical arguments about the public sphere in order to create conditions for real democratic processes (Clark, 1994). The spaces required to expand and redefine the public sphere provide an opportunity, even, I believe, a mandate, for critical environmental social science.

Feminists, such as Fraser (1992) & Benhabib (1992), have agreed with Habermas (1989) that a public sphere based on discursive will formation is the most just on a procedural basis. Fraser has further identified the need for multiple publics to serve as places of identity-formation. My own work in New York City has made the importance of the physical sites for the development of these multiple publics clear.

. How do such spaces come to exist? What breaches or accommodations in the system of economic exchange and political dominance are needed for such spaces to open up? How do people act to create such spaces, and then make them into places that serve to form and articulate group identity? What are the boundaries, the inside/outside, inclusion/exclusion of such places? From a psychological point of view, how do such spaces become contexts for

peripheral participation and situated learning[23] (Lave & Wenger, 1991). From a social justice point of view, what role do they play in moving a discourse from marginal or non-existent into a voice in the larger public sphere?

By weaving together a critical environmental perspective that is explicitly spatial, and draws on all of the concepts considered in this chapter, patterns of social injustice and domination can be exposed, and situated practices to challenge them can be formulated, both through research and action.

Because of environmental psychology's historical interest in public space, and because it is within the public sphere that new forms and concepts about representation, subject positions and the role of language are being played out, research in critical environmental social science could make a major contribution to the current lively debates and reformulations about the public sphere taking place among feminists and political theorists (see Fraser, 1992; Benhabib, 1992b; Okin, 1991). Also, because of the shifts in defining the public sphere, the

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[23] see Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991) for an in-depth discussion of peripheral participation and situated learning. To summarize, they refer to people learning by participating in a group. Peripheral participation means that an individual participates in the actual practice of doing something with someone who is more skilled, but participates in a limited way, without ultimate responsibility for the outcome. Situated learning posits learning not as acquisition of propositions of knowledge, but as the result of certain types of social practice. Situated learning, as opposed to traditional learning, along with meaning and understanding, are defined by Lave & Wenger as occuring only in contexts of human action, not as independent structures of the individual mind.

role of dominant and "other" discourses, and the

possibilities of creating and sustaining new, now

marginalized, identities, it is within the public sphere

that an emancipatory potential lies.

I have observed and participated in discourses arising

that challenge current cultural and legal distinctions

about housing ownership, power, meaning and identity. Much

of this is occurring by developing something that seems to

resemble Fraser's "sub-altern counter-publics" (Fraser,

1992).[24]

These counter-publics need to be conceptualized in

terms of the places in which they occur, and how these

locations can be instrumental in the formation of new

publics. Critical environmental social scientists can

effectively argue that truly democratic public discourse

can only happen when there are material structures which

support and sustain identities and subject positions.

These structures may be a town square, or the vast

distances of the InterNet. The changing social relations,

conditions of access and terms of discussion that each

reflects and creates can be better understood only by

grappling with the physicality of public discourse.

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[24] see Nancy Fraser (1992), Rethinking the public sphere: A
contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy, in
Habermas and the Public Sphere, Craig Calhoun, ed. She defines
subaltern counterpublics as multiple alternatives to the dominant
public in which social groups constitute "parallel discursive arenas
where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate
counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their
identities, interests, and needs. (p. 123).

Furthermore, through working with residents in low income housing, it has become clear to me that participation in the public sphere not only requires places to which one can be admitted, but that there is a fundamental geographic component to the public sphere. While there is certainly a dominant culture which controls much of the public discourse, there is no one, placeless, monolithic public sphere. Rather, there are specific sites where the dominant discourse is either reproduced or challenged. The location and built form of those sites has everything to do with whether it is challenged or reproduced, and how. Differences in access, and locations of discourses that arise to challenge aspects of the dominant discourse follow the patterns of uneven development created by advanced capitalism.

Another way that poor people have been excluded from the public sphere is by the inequality of discourse that occurs. By the way people express themselves, or their inability to do so, policymakers, bankers, etc. can manipulate discussion and the result is most often that people who don't use the same language are silenced. By the "same language", I mean the same style, format, syntax, slang and ability to articulate. Furthermore, language *styles* are not only different, but because officials, planners, and presenters usually have greater power than local participants, they routinely don't call on, respond to, or allow discussion that doesn't conform to their

style. I see this most often in presentations to community residents, where the description of a plan precludes discussion because it is conducted in ways that reflect inequalities of class and ethnicity in inequalities in discourse. Because of the difference in power, it is the officials' style that is deemed more competent, and would-be participants are excluded in part because they do not seem (based on the privileging of the "official" discourse) to have the skills to articulate their concerns.

Critical environmental social science can look for the inequalities that enter discourse by paying attention to, not only the social inequalities just mentioned, but also the inequalities that come about because of access to, relation to, or meaning of, places. Going back to limited-equity cooperatives, and the city ownership and abandonment that they arise from, one can see that there has been an inequality in the public sphere of housing discussions that existed because of the geographic distribution and physical characteristics of the housing involved. Residents had to appropriate space first (control their buildings) and then secure access to local public space to begin to have voices that can be heard in housing and policy circles.

The importance of studying (and supporting) the interrelationship between place and resistance lies in the possibility of creating local social structures (such as not-for-profit ownership of space by women and minorities) which will persist across time and localized space within

the framework of global capital. Critical environmental
social scientists should begin to examine the
differentiation of local social structures and discourses
around issues such as homeownership, place and resistance
in the lives of marginalized groups.

> Geographic specificity, particularly in an area
> of relative unimportance (at a margin or
> periphery) occupied by marginalized groups
> (minorities, women) concerned about devalued
> objects (property that has temporarily become
> worthless) can provide a breeding ground for
> alternative discourses to become locally
> dominant without immediately threatening the
> larger society. (Center, 1994, p. 2)

Built form can also mitigate *against* alternative local
discourse. For example, in a study conducted in the
neighborhood of South Jamaica, in Queens, New York, local
residents, staff of community-based organizations, and
participants in local voluntary associations, such as block
and neighborhood associations, all believed that the most
appropriate form of housing for their area was single
family detached homeownership.

This was in a context where every block had numerous
abandoned single family houses that had been foreclosed by
the federal government, with a total of almost 1,000 such
houses in this neighborhood alone. Many, if not most,
blocks, had well more than half their housing sitting
abandoned and burned out for a period of several years,
while the government tried to figure out what to do. This
neighborhood also had the highest proportion of single

parent families in New York City, one of the lowest median incomes, and the largest number of homeless families being housed in shelters (Clark, 1989).

However, people repeatedly claimed that this neighborhood was best suited to homeownership, that was what was always there. They also acknowledged that virtually none of the local residents who needed housing could afford their own home, that they did not want to displace these people, and that single family houses were not necessarily appropriate for singles or women with children. Yet, they had a local discourse around the desirability of homeownership that was completely in line with our national ideology of the importance of owning one's own home (Clark, 1989). I believe in this case, the built form of the neighborhood, abandoned shell that it was, mitigated against the development of a discourse of housing and ownership that challenged the dominant ideal. This is in direct contrast to the discourse around housing and ownership that one finds in Harlem, for example.

In summary, what I am suggesting is that the critical, emancipatory capacity of environmental social science can operate well within the problematic of the public sphere. It is a good place to make contact with the directly political, with feminist deconstructions of such constructs as public/private, with the role of agency and its connection to built form, and with research on public

space. In the public sphere, questions about representation, power, agency, identity, equality, language and location must come up. However, I use this only as an example for critical environmental social science. I suggest there are many similar avenues for critical research into places, built form and space and their role in creating the possibility for more "liberated" and materially secure, forms of life.

Implications for future research

In conclusion, there are several research implications for environmental social science that result from adopting a critical perspective and the "spatialization" of critical theory.

1) It is necessary to shift focus from "behavior" to "agency." One of the obstacles that has prevented environmental psychologists from engaging more directly with social theoretical and political constructs, has been the focus of the field on behavior. For example, public space research often is about "users" and their behavior.[25]

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[25] see e.g. Whyte's classic The social life of small urban spaces. I am also thinking of evaluations of public space that are based on behavior-mapping techniques. For a somewhat more political treatment of the role of open space in community life, see, for example, Francis, Cashdan & Carr, for case studies of different types of community open space, in Community open spaces: Greening neighborhoods through community action and land conservation, and Hecksher & Robinson's history of open spaces in the United States, Open spaces: The life of American cities. However, neither of these deal explicitly with agency or the public sphere because they remain focused primarily on micro-level analyses.

Environmental psychology, more so than geography, is concerned with psychological processes, and as such has inherited the study of behavior from traditional psychology. It is difficult to go beyond an analysis of behavior in places with that format.[26]

Theories of society on the other hand, fall along a continuum by degree of freedom for human agency. From the determinists who allow no room for human beings to make or change their world, to those who place complete responsibility for one's life and the world on the shoulders of individuals, social theorists are trying to answer the same "nature or nurture" question as environmental psychologists. However, environmental psychologists tend not to look beyond the micro-level at how people change their environments. Environmental change studies in environmental psychology have neglected macro-level effects, in favor of looking at how people use or construct specific places, such as museums, hospitals or community gardens.

The potential contribution environmental psychology can make to critical environmental social science is to understand the impact of external social, political, economic and cultural forces on personal consciousness and

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[26] behavior in places as studied by Barker (1968) and Wicker (1987) is a fruitful area for theoretical development. The problem is in conceptualizing this line of inquiry as the core of environmental social science, rather than one avenue within a larger social theoretical frame.

action, and provide methodologies that are grounded in the link between the socio-spatial processes and the individual's experience of them. However, environmental psychology, and other disciplines that begin with the individual, have an explicit goal of viewing social theory and organization through the eyes and perceptions of individual actors. Viewed in this way, the "hidden" or "masked" processes and relationships that support dominance are most difficult to see. What we need to do is find ways to incorporate individual experience without retreating to individuating categories that preclude an intersubjective analysis.

The recent interest in everyday life in social science research and social theorizing indicates that environmental psychologists who have been looking at specific places, such as a building, have been going in the right direction. However, constrained by certain concepts such as behavior, or the boundedness of places, their usefulness *in a critical sense* has been negligible. A unique contribution of environmental psychology has been the interest in the experience of individuals, attention to the details of their everyday life, and descriptions of depth concerning individual meaning structures. A critical focus on human agency can retain this vital dimension, which is lacking from much sociological theory.

2) The concept of agency needs to be further developed as arising from a combination of particular identity constructions and constraints on both action and identity-building. We need to be directly concerned with both internal and external constraints on the exercise of that agency. By addressing a variety of scales, ranging from local to global, and the impacts on action and agency that arise in each, emancipatory change becomes more researchable. Many of the structures of oppression and lack of opportunity that we find from a critical theoretical point of view remain hidden when "behavior" is the dependent variable, because social relations at different scales are not exposed.

I think the previous chapters point to "identity" as a construct which can encompass agency, change and oppression. Furthermore, serious attention to identity brings us back to psychological concepts, in that it more directly recognizes the role of consciousness and cognitive aspects such as goal setting, motivation and intentionality. However, it must be a construct that includes the role of place in identity formation.

3) Therefore, identity construction needs to be discussed specifically in terms of how places and spatial factors facilitate, inhibit or change it. Identities are formed in specific places which are not merely containers, but which shape the identities that arise within them.

Environmental psychologists have been far ahead of the other social sciences in this area, but have not developed a strong enough theoretical perspective, which speaks the same language, as broader social theories.

Using the environmental psychological perspective of place identity, critical environmental social scientists can add to the incomplete understanding of human agency social theory has so far achieved. It allows for a concept of place that is made of, and penetrated by, social relationships which include power and domination.

Place identity is one of the earliest, and founding contributions to the field of environmental psychology (Proshansky, 1974). However, it has not been connected to theories of human action, or theories of society and remains therefore an inchoate, incomplete and undertheorized area. Many students in environmental psychology undertake dissertations on the topic of place identity, often as it is experienced by a certain group. However, place identity is often studied descriptively for sub-cases, such as descriptions of negative instead of positive experiences with places, relationships that homeless persons have to places, relationships of students or immigrants to places, relationships of gay and lesbians to places, etc. These are all valuable contributions to expanding knowledge about the group studied and what places they are included/excluded from, comfortable/uncomfortable in and how they use them.

Chawla (1992), on the other hand, took a more theoretical perspective, connecting the development of psychological characteristics to childhood experience of places. She reviewed previous research on children's place attachment in terms of their future psychological development, and found that they were unconnected to psychoanalytic concepts or social theory. She found a need to challenge the limited perspective of object relations theory and to explore the nature of human connection to the external world. Chawla suggests that our first basic attachment to the environment should be a primary research topic, especially in a time when children are being born into a "precariously degraded" environment (Chawla, 1992, p. 84).

While Chawla provides an example of how place identity can be more seriously developed and linked to both psychoanalytic and cultural theory, Wolfe (1990) examined the role of place and access to explicate how power and oppression (or suppression) of identity work. She traced the history of places in which lesbians could meet, and how necessary such places were to the formation of their identity, both individual and group. In doing so, she critically exposed the way in which the dichotomy of public and private space and behavior are both socially constructed and invoked to limit those who do not conform to current social norms. It is studies like these, both

done by environmental psychologist, which are contributing
to the theoretical development of place identity.

Another line of study could be pursued which would ask
more explicitly, what role does one's experience of and
access to certain places play in identity formation, and
how does the formation of one's identity affect agency?
How is this in turn related to our acting from "multiple
subject positions?"(Mouffe, 1988a) And how does an
identity concept that is inextricable from one's position
in place effect our actions and access to the public
sphere?

4) Link both "identity" and "agency" to issues of
power and access, as well as to spatial factors, such as
uneven development and mobility. As my research example
illustrated, people are situated in cities, neighborhoods,
and nations that go through radical changes depending on
how important they are, strategically, to the advancement
of capital. The term "uneven development," refers to a
fact of capitalism, which is that there will always be
areas that are neglected while others flourish as capital
moves around, seeking profit. However, the mobility of
capital is not matched by the mobility of people. People
remain in areas that capital investment abandons, albeit
their numbers may dwindle, causing further social and
physical stress on those that stay behind.

What does it mean to develop one's identity, one's attachment to place in areas that capital has left (or in areas destroyed by conflicts over territory and culture)? How does such situation effect one's power and access to participate in the public sphere? I do not assume that these are uni-directional questions. How do social constructions of identity, such as racism, fuel uneven development in the first place? These are complex global issues, but they can be examined locally for partial answers.

5) One way to tackle the complex questions listed above, is to define political/ideological concepts such as "political community," "location" and "marginality" in terms of explicit geographic sites, and in terms of the actual places that comprise these "locations." The concept of "political community" could provide one avenue for pursuing power/space relationships in an intersubjective and situated way. Political theorists[27] concerned with issues of social justice and relationships of power, ideology, and freedom often begin an analysis of these issues by locating and defining "political communities," but without connecting them explicitly to the places in which the participants of the community live, work or make decisions. Environmental psychology has a history of going

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[27]see both D. Held (1991)(ed.) Political Theory Today, & P. Jackson & J. Penrose (1993)(eds.) Constructions of Race, Place and Nation for diverse discussions about political communities.

to those sites, but without thematizing how they influence
the formation of political entities.

6) Spatialize critical theoretical concepts such as
"lifeworld," "rationality," "public/private," as discussed
in the first part of this chapter.

7) Adopt an unbounded, unromanticized definition of
place. Massey's (1994) explication of webs of social
relations that extend outside the boundaries of any given
place is useful in providing a framework for understanding
interpenetrating boundaries. This allows environmental
social scientists to focus on local sites, but understood
as sites that are interlocked with other sites at different
scales, such as city or nation. In this way, connections
can be made between the "local" and the "global."

Integrating differences of scale, and viewing each
place and group as linked vertically to sets of social
relations, provides a research design that extends
conceptually beyond the immediate setting. This means
going beyond recognition that every one exists within a
broader socio/political/economic/historical context, to
defining at least some of the interpenetrations and
differences between the place or group that is the focus of
research and social relations that effect it.

8) Finally, we need to develop methods and conceptual categories that capture the extent of the influence of the research and the researchers on the situation. We need to understand the *Hawthorne effect* in a directly political sense. How have people who participate in the research been effected? Have their opportunities for jobs, education, housing or social connections increased? Has the knowledge brought up during the research changed the approach or the chances for success of the inhabitants?

Each of these implications change the way we look at a research setting, and at the way we act towards people in those settings. By thematizing the actions of people in places as integral to their location, we can develop more realistic theory and more effective practices to meet our goals for change, whether our purpose is to expand opportunities for social justice within the existing system, or challenge fundamental aspects of that system.

My goal has been to present one specific way to nudge environmental psychology out of its isolation and irrelevance to social theory by defining change in a critical/theoretical way, as increasing opportunities for self-realization and freedom from constraint. In order to do this, I have proposed some profound shifts in the orientation of environmental psychological research so that constraints on opportunity (or oppression) are much better

understood. We need to exemplify the ways in which the relationships between space, materiality and power are apparent in person/place interactions.

Doing this can, I think, move environmental psychology beyond its current state of affairs, by going back to its original intentions, its strengths and potential, to a critical environmental social science that contributes to, rather than avoids, social theory.

Critical environmental social science can contribute to these discussions by focusing on the relationships between the materiality of built form, social production of places and theories about identity and human agency.

I hope that this dissertation will energize the interest in reconstruction and revitalization of environmental psychology as a critical environmental social science, which will engage with the difficult philosophical questions and practical conundrums other social scientists worry so much about, and which occasionally really advance our ability as theorists to make real, material contributions to practice. What better field to effect material change in the world than one with an explicit concern for built form and the creation of place?

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