

# Chapter 1

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## Fundamental Concepts of Political Geography: An Introduction

### Introduction

The simple answer to the question “what is political geography about?” is what it says it is about: politics and geography. But that is altogether *too* simple. Political geography is by no means the sum of its two parts. In political geography, “geography” is drawn on in selective ways: in ways which illumine the political. By the same token, “politics” is drawn on in ways which shed light on the geographic. Above all, political geography focuses on the twin ideas of territory and territoriality.

Territory and territoriality are the defining concepts of political geography in that they bring together the ideas of power and space: territories as spaces that are defended, contested, claimed against the claims of others; in short, through territoriality. Territory and territoriality mutually presuppose one another. There can't be one without the other. Territoriality is activity: the activity of defending, controlling, excluding, including; territory is the area whose content one seeks to control in these ways.<sup>1</sup>

But again, that only takes us so far. To understand territory and territoriality as opposed to describing what they are about, we need understandings of space relations and politics. As geographic concepts territory and territoriality have their roots, their conditions, in other spatial practices; in particular those relating to movement and those that have to do with the embedding of people and their activities in particular places – ideas that are fundamental to contemporary human geography. Likewise, in order to understand the political in political geography we need to come to terms with *the* central concept

1 Consider in this regard the definitions given by *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (1986). Territory: “A general term used to describe areas of land or sea over which states and other political entities claim to exercise some form of control” (p. 483); territoriality: “The attempt by an individual or group to influence or establish control over a clearly demarcated territory” (p. 482).

of modern political science, the state. The state is itself an expression of territorial power: it has an area over which it claims jurisdiction, it has boundaries and it has powers to influence movement and what goes on in any part of its jurisdiction. For any territorial strategy, any expression of territoriality advanced by a neighborhood organization, a business or ethnic group, or whatever, the state is, accordingly, of crucial significance.

This begs the question, however, of what motivates people to defend particular areas and so to seek out the help of the state. It also begs the question of why the state might be responsive. Territory itself has no substance and what motivate people are interests which are, by definition, substantive in character: they refer to things, perhaps symbols, that people want. In short we need some concept of what it is that drives people in their territorial activities and what produces conflict over territory. Ultimately it has to do with our relationship to the material world: our need to relate to that world if we are to survive. But that relationship is always socially mediated. It is always in and through others that we appropriate and transform aspects of that material world into forms which we can use. Concepts of social process, therefore, are central to understanding territory and territoriality. But specifically *what* social process are we talking about? In human history there has been a succession of highly diverse social formations. This book, however, has to do with the political geography of the specifically *contemporary* world. Accordingly our focus here has to be that highly dynamic force that we know as capitalism.

Now, this may sound as if the treatment is to be economically deterministic. This is far from my aim. Rather I recognize that social life is highly diverse; that it consists of many different conditions, without which it could not function. There is something that I will call the social process that is separate from capitalism. But capitalism is the energizing moment of that process and continually strives to mobilize those other conditions for its own purposes. And in this it is no different from previous forms of social life. Production is always the central pivot around which social life is continually being organized and shaped.

In the first major section of this opening chapter, therefore, the three principal ideas around which the argument in this book is organized are introduced: territory, the state, and the social process. The second part of the chapter is devoted to a consideration of some case studies through which I want to illustrate how these fundamental ideas can be applied. In a brief closing section I will then outline how the book as a whole is organized.

### **Fundamental Concepts**

#### *Territory*

The core concepts of political geography can be stated quite simply: they are *territory* and *territoriality*. These ideas are inextricably interrelated. Territory is to be understood through its relations to those activities we define as terri-

torial: the exercise of territoriality, in other words. Robert Sack (1983) has defined it as activity aimed at influencing the content of an area. This means that activities of an exclusionary or, alternatively, of an inclusionary nature would be regarded as territorial and the area the content of which one wants to influence as the territory in question. This means that in addition to territory having associations of area and boundary it also has ones of defense: territories are spaces which people defend by excluding some activities and by including those which will enhance more precisely what it is in the territory that they want to defend.

In these terms examples of territorial activity are legion. Import quotas and tariffs are obvious cases in point as are restrictions on immigration. Sometimes the products whose movement is being regulated have a strong cultural content: the French government has tried to limit the amount of non-French programming shown on French television. This is not to say that exclusionary processes are limited to the level of the nation state so that the territory that political geographers focus on is that of the state's jurisdiction. Examples can be found at all manner of scales: the gated communities that have become common in the suburbs of many American cities, for example; or the greenbelts which surround every British city of any size and which limit new residential development within their boundaries. And the latter example reminds us that *any* form of land use zoning is a territorial form of activity.

There are also activities or processes of a more inclusionary nature. People and organizations try to regulate the content of geographic areas by attracting in certain sorts of people or activity. The constitution of the state of Israel mandates that all Jews should be accorded full rights of residency in Israel if they should request it. A different sort of example has to do with the channeling of investment flows. For many years in the United States local and State<sup>2</sup> governments have implemented a variety of policies the goal of which has been to attract new investment inside their boundaries: investment that will, among other things, generate employment and add to the local tax base. This sort of activity is now becoming more common in Western Europe. The member states of the European Union have been especially active in competing for choice investments like those of the Japanese auto companies.

This is not to say that exclusionary and inclusionary forms of policy are unrelated. What is inclusionary for some may be exclusionary for others, and that may be the point of the exercise. Gentrification has been a common housing market process in neighborhoods close to the downtowns of major cities in both North America and Western Europe. As wealthier people move into an area so rents and housing prices tend to increase. This results in the exclusion of long-term, low-income residents who can no longer afford the rents. But this is a process the gentrifiers promote through trying to secure for the area various local government expenditures and regulatory policies that will make the area more attractive to the well heeled buyer. And one of the purposes of that is, through the medium of increasing real estate

2 Throughout this book I use State with a capital "S" to indicate US (and Mexican) States, and state with a lower case "s" to indicate the state as a universal concept.

values, to drive out the poor, who for various reasons are regarded as lowering the tone of the area, perhaps introducing a criminal element into the neighborhood.

The idea of territoriality is derivative of other concepts absolutely crucial to contemporary human geography. These are the related ones of mobility and immobility. Geography, bear in mind, is the study of objects, activities, institutions from the standpoint of their space relations (both internal and external), what we might call their various where-nesses. These include their accessibility relations with respect to one another, and their distributions.

One way of studying human geography is in terms of movements. This was a dominant theme in the spatial analysis school which dominated human geography for much of the sixties and which is still influential today. The point is that the reproduction of a particular distribution of objects – factories, houses, highways, airports, the people themselves – depends on various sorts of flow: movements of raw materials for the factories, movements of money with which to buy the raw materials, movements of labor among others. To the extent that the geography of movement changes then so will the distribution of houses, factories, and the like. As investment moves out to the suburbs, for example, so the form of the city changes: housing is added on the edge but we often find housing towards the center of the city being deleted. The shift of investment to the suburbs is a major reason for the fact of housing abandonment that is so apparent in some American central cities, like Detroit and Chicago.

But more recently, the converse of movement, the idea of settlement, of immobilization or embedding in a particular place, has come to be recognized as of immense significance. This is particularly so from the standpoint of understanding territoriality. It is certainly true that people move around. Residential mobility within cities is a fact of life and without it realtors would go out of business. And people also move over much longer distances, retiring from, say, New York or Montreal to Florida or from the United Kingdom to the Costa Blanca in Spain. In similar fashion firms move. They close or sell factories in one location and shift their operations elsewhere. But there are contrary tendencies as well. People, firms, organizations of all types get embedded in particular places: embedded in the sense that other places become costly substitutes for their current locations. People put down what are often referred to as “roots.” They buy houses in neighborhoods, and raise families. Their children marry and some, at least, will live in the same city. People also get locked into particular careers with particular firms: they develop skills which are appropriate to their particular employer but which have limited portability. So leaving the area, moving elsewhere, can mean a serious diminution of life chances, a deep sense of loss as one moves away from one’s loved ones and the familiar, or both. Even owning a house is a source of geographic inertia since buying and selling is such a protracted and time-consuming process.

In similar fashion firms develop collaborative relations with other firms in the same locality and these can be a source of competitive advantage.

Firms may share the same labor supply. A virtue of being located next to other firms manufacturing similar products is that when one of them is releasing workers another is likely to be hiring. So labor shortage is unlikely to be a problem in the area whereas moving to a city where the firm is the only one that has those sorts of skill demands is. In short, firms can get locked into areas not just through the productive relations they enter into with other firms but also through the way they may share with those firms labor reserves or suppliers.<sup>3</sup>

This means that people, firms, organizations may be very dependent on what happens in the area they happen to be located in. People buy houses in neighborhoods and see the house, to some degree at least, as an investment: an asset like stocks or bonds or a savings account on each of which they expect a return. In the case of investment in the house you live in the return is in the form of an increase in its value. But neighborhoods can change as some people leave and others move in, as undeveloped land is rezoned for gas stations or bars. In short, movements in and out can threaten investments in homes. Money has been invested in something which is difficult to move, which is literally embedded in the ground. If values are to be maintained let alone increase, territorial strategies have to be deployed: attempts to structure movements into the area by (e.g.) opposing the rezonings that will allow gas stations or bars or the conversion of existing owner-occupied housing into apartments.

As we have seen, firms likewise get immobilized, dependent on particular localities or those in them, and the continual flow of value through them. But the arrival of new firms in the area can threaten that flow of value and hence their profitability. The increased demand for labor that comes about can result in increased wage levels, particularly if the new arrivals are the branch plants of unionized firms. To the extent that labor shortages are moderated by in-migration then pressure may be transferred to the housing market, and as housing prices increase this too can exercise upward pressure on wages. Yet relocation by the firms so affected to areas where lower wages prevail will be difficult. It may be hard to persuade the workers on whose skills the firms depend to move with them, and training new workers will be a protracted and costly process. And it will certainly be hard to reconstitute elsewhere the collaborative relations with other firms so important to competitiveness.

As a result they can be expected to organize to defend their territory and the advantages it provides them. They may, for example, pressure city government to ease bottlenecks in housing supply so that the upward shift in housing prices can be contained: facilitate the speedier rezoning of

3 Firms may have specialized transport or marketing needs. If located alongside firms producing similar sorts of product demand may be such that these activities can be subcontracted to specialized suppliers able to operate at lower cost. Whereas if the firm is only one in the area with those particular needs it may have to (e.g.) purchase its own trucks, even though it may not need them on a continual basis.

land to higher densities, eliminate delays in servicing raw land with water and sewerage. And the policies that are bringing new firms into the area will also come under review: should city government be so aggressively courting firms to locate their branch plants there, for instance?

We will see in what ensues that territory and territoriality can assume more complex forms: that what is a territorial strategy for some is a threat to the territorial strategies of others. But the relation between mobility and immobility, of movement and embeddedness, is central to the emergence of territory as an issue: to the desire to influence the content of an area. And as we have seen from the examples above, territorial strategies typically draw in some way on the power of the state: its power over rezonings, over local economic development policy, for example. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the state should be our next focus of concern.

### *The state*

For a start, notice how important the state and its various agencies are in regulating geographies: in structuring movements, in defending the interests of the more immobilized, the more embedded. Central governments everywhere regulate movements across their boundaries: movements of people, of commodities and of money. They may restrict imports in order to protect particular industries, their workers and the cities in which they are located from foreign competition. They may also restrict exports for a similar purpose: a duty on exports of American leather protects the shoe making industry by driving up its price to overseas producers at the same time as it lowers it for the American producer. Limits on immigration on the part of the more developed countries<sup>4</sup> are the norm and so too is the regulation of foreign investment. In the latter regard there are often laws governing the takeover of firms by foreign corporations or foreign investment in certain sensitive industries like arms firms.

Likewise there are things that local government can do that impact on geographic change through their effects on movement. This is despite the fact that central branches of the state protect the freedom of movement of labor

4 Use of the term "more developed countries" raises an important issue for this text. The problem is one of differentiating between countries but not in a way that implies value judgments. The "First World/Third World" distinction clearly implies hierarchy and will not be used. Alternatives to "more developed"/"less developed" are "rich"/"poor" and "North"/"South". I am deterred from using the latter by virtue of its transparent inaccuracy. There are more developed countries in the South, like Australia and New Zealand, and less developed countries in the North, like Egypt or Pakistan. The "rich country"/"poor country" distinction seems no improvement on the "more developed"/"less developed" distinction since to define someone or someplace as poor is often (not always) to imply some sort of lack on their or its part. At least the term "less developed" implies a process of change towards the more developed pole. That gets us into the problem of whether development is a good or a bad thing but it nevertheless softens the sense of invidious distinction between countries. It is, therefore, the term that I will use in the remainder of this book.

and of commodities within national boundaries and so local governments cannot try to achieve their ends by interfering with them: protecting a major local employer by imposing restrictions on the sale of goods from competing firms elsewhere in the country, say. Rather there are other means of structuring location choice. Urban development, the siting of new housing developments, new industrial estates, and the location of new highways must invariably run the gauntlet of a local permitting process: public hearings, rezoning hearings, objections from national public health authorities, and so on.

Nevertheless, the relation between the state on the one hand, and power in society on the other, including power over geography, is not straightforward. Power comes in different forms. Immensely important in contemporary social life is the power of money. This is not something which is foreign to the state. This is because it itself draws on that power in persuading others to do what it wants: tax concessions, subsidies, various forms of duty, the threat of fines. But it is also a power that anyone participating in a market, or for that matter trying to purchase the favors of a legislator, draws on. The power of money is expressed among other things in what urban analysts call the competitive bidding process. The wealthy, by and large, live in the more desirable neighborhoods because they can afford to: they have the money to outbid other would-be purchasers.

Likewise there is the power of the normative. Norms are important in regulating family life and much else besides. It isn't just the power of money that makes us punctual for work; the fear that we will be fired if we don't turn up on time. We have been socialized into it from early childhood on: "do not be late for meals," "do not be late for school," "hurry, or you'll miss the bus." Again, this is something that the state can turn to its own advantage. It is a form of power that it employs through the schools. It is through the educational system, both state schools and the private schools – that are always regulated by the state – that certain rules of good citizenship are imparted. And through its public statements, if not always through its actions, it advocates the ideal of equality as a principle of social justice.

Yet in talking about the state and its relation to various forms of social power we need to bear in mind that the state form is not a universal. There have been societies which lacked states. Some of these exist at the present time in, among other places, the jungles of Amazonia or Borneo. And in many other so-called states, particularly in less developed countries, the power of the state, its ability to penetrate and regulate social life, is weak indeed.

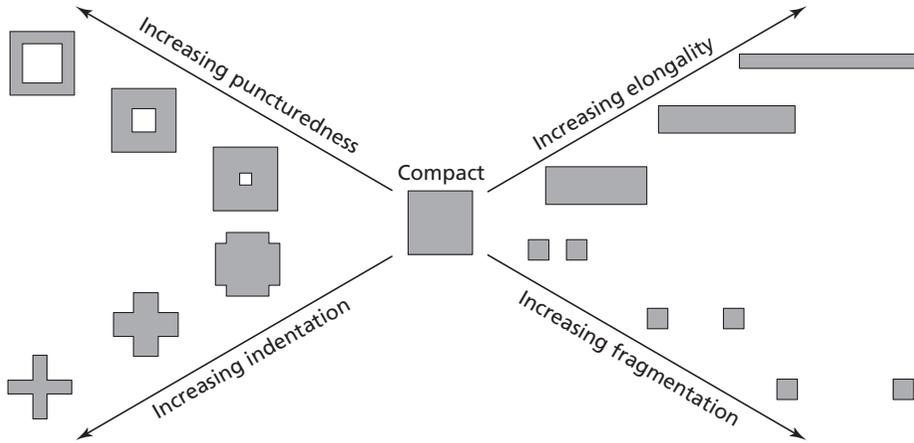
But having said that, a case can be made for some sort of regulation in *all* societies. Government with the intent of harmonizing the activities of different people one with another has been an omnipresent feature of all social life: the household, kinship, and the various norms accompanying them, for example. And indeed today these regulatory mechanisms continue to play a role alongside more historically recent ones like the market. But what is characteristic of the present era is the role of the state as, in effect, the regulator of regulators: as the ultimate guarantor – and limiter – through the law, of the

social power of others, whether that of capitalists, husbands, and parents, or that of money in the abstract. In other words, there can be government without states; but states always entail government.

Territorial strategies are *always* exercises of power. To some degree they may depend on the direct exercise of state power: redrawing the catchment districts of schools so as to simultaneously include some and exclude others; or assigning additional police patrols to a neighborhood. Sometimes, on the other hand, strategies appear to be more private in character. This would apply to the gated community or the private school, both of which can have exclusionary intent. But ultimately they both depend on the state. Gated communities have to be legal, as do private schools. And even if private schools are legal the state can take steps to make them more or perhaps less attractive as territorializing options through the sorts of tax concessions it makes to parents (i.e. whether or not school fees are tax deductible).

But what is attractive about the state as a means of regulating space relations, as a vehicle for the various exclusionary and inclusionary policies different organizations, firms, political parties, residents' organizations push for, is its own territorial character. Consider the variety of possibilities here. Imagine, for example, a state whose power was not territorial in the sense of areal and bounded. What if (e.g.) people who were the citizens of different states were not as they are now, geographically segregated one from another, but geographically *integrated*? Imagine a situation, in other words, in which your next door neighbors, other people living in the same city or region as you belonged not to the same state but to different states: that American citizens lived in the same neighborhood alongside French, German, British, Mexican, Australian, Nigerian citizens *and* they were all subject to the laws of their respective countries.

While on the one hand this might have its advantages – it would make warfare a very difficult enterprise, for example, since “friendly fire” victims would be at least as numerous as enemy dead – it would also make the implementation of other, less lethal, territorial strategies highly problematic. An interest in remedying something like acid rain in response to the demands of people downwind of factories and power stations with high sulfur emissions would be extremely difficult to bring about. This is because it would involve so many independent sovereign powers in multiple, many sided, negotiations with one another: a high level of geographic fragmentation of power where what is needed to remedy the situation is a spatial centralization of power. In other words, what is required is states that respectively enjoy uninterrupted sovereign power over large, continuous areas that in terms of their shape are relatively compact: neither punctured, highly elongated, fragmented, nor indented (figure 1.1). And of course it is precisely towards the latter compact form that states in their jurisdictional geography tend. This is what makes them so appealing to those promoting territorial strategies of various sorts: it promises some sort of resolution of conflicts, though not necessarily in favor of them or their particular territorial projects as opposed to those of others.



**Figure 1.1** Deviations from compactness along four dimensions. Consider the compactness or otherwise of state forms and those jurisdictional subdivisions like the Canadian provinces, British counties, French *départements* and US states in terms of these different dimensions.

Source: P. J. Taylor (1971) "Distances within Shapes: An Introduction to a Family of Finite Frequency Distributions." *Geografiska Annaler*, 53B(1), 43.

### Think and Learn

In talking about the compactness of state jurisdictions I used the term "tend." Think of exceptions to the compactness rule. What states are elongated, punctured, indented, or fragmented? How would you judge the US or Canada in these regards? Peruse a world atlas in order to identify these deviations.

Significantly, the territorial principle is writ large in the geographic structures of states. The internal organization of the state includes a division into local and central branches and sometimes branches at a more intermediate level (regional or provincial governments, for instance) and these all tend to the same compact form, as a scrutiny of the geometry of the States of the US, the counties of the United Kingdom or the *départements* of France would quickly confirm. The territorial principle likewise extends to representation and to many state policies. The constituencies or Congressional districts that legislators represent are discrete, bounded, relatively compact areas. Compactness is viewed as a virtue to the extent that any serious departure from it is likely to be viewed with suspicion: as signifying, that is, some attempt to manipulate boundaries in order to guarantee a particular electoral outcome.<sup>5</sup>

5 So-called "gerrymandering".

Within state jurisdictions there are yet other partitions that relate not to representation but to actual policies: the land use zones of local governments; the Special Areas of the United Kingdom designated for assistance in attracting new employment; conservation areas, historical districts, urban renewal districts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, etc.

None of this is accidental. One can say that it is this which makes the state so important to those with territorial interests. But it also reflects the significance of territoriality as an organizing principle of social life. People have territorial interests that they share with at least some people in the same area and which bring them into competition and conflict with those elsewhere. If these interests are to be expressed then it makes sense to organize elections through territorially defined voting districts.<sup>6</sup> And if they are to be satisfied, then some policies at least should be territorially differentiating.

So it is important that the state's organization be through and through territorial: that there be local as well as central branches; that legislators represent geographically discrete districts; and that there be, for some policies at least, ways of making their incidence geographically differentiated in some way. This is a state in short that is appropriate to the expression and realization of interests of a territorial nature.

But a territorial form that facilitates the expression and realization of one territorial interest may be less satisfactory from the standpoint of others. Just as state policy is a stake, therefore, as people, firms, labor organizations, and so on struggle for policy outcomes enhancing to their neighborhoods, regions, industrial districts, and countries, so too is *the structure* of the state itself. We will see later that a major issue dividing people, firms, and other organizations has been the internal organization of the state in its territorial aspects: the degree to which, that is, the state should be a highly centralized one, one which reserves few powers and responsibilities for more local branches, as opposed to one that decentralizes a good deal of its power to more local or regional levels. Recently this has come to the fore in the UK with the implementation of some devolution of power to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It is also of ongoing significance in debate about the future form of the European Union. But it is not just the territorial organization of the state that is contested. Modes of representation, how territorial they should be, have often surged to the fore as an issue. In the US Senate each State has two Senators regardless of population; so representation is by State rather than proportional to State population. But in Canada there is no such equality between the provinces. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the less populous provinces there are pushing for a US-style Senate.

### *The social process and political geography*

What is lacking from this picture is some sense of what energizes the political process in a geographic context. It is not enough to refer to territorial inter-

6 Though we will see later that this is actually not a universal in democracies.

ests and projects in the abstract. They always have some substantive content. They are interests in particular things, practices, relations. Ultimately, as I remarked earlier, our interest has to be in relating to the material world: in harnessing its naturally occurring substances and forces in order to realize our changing needs for sustenance, shelter, affection, creative expression, etc. This is why no human science can ignore the relationship to nature, including, of course, our own nature. But this relationship is always socially mediated. It is always in and through our relations with others that we relate to nature (as in production, narrowly conceived) and our own nature (as in the socialization process). So our needs assume socially mediated forms. In the advanced industrial societies of today they become interests in profits, wages, property values, trade, labor, and housing markets: in other words interests in categories that only make sense given the existence of a capitalist society, and that are *entailed* by it.

Other stakes are less obviously related to capitalist development and the material objectives of those participating in it. These include demands as diverse as upholding the national honor, protecting particular landscapes from development, recognizing favorite daughters or sons by creating national holidays in their honor, or controlling the activities of white policemen in black neighborhoods. All these seem a little remote from money making and distributing among various claimants the wealth so produced. What ties them together is in part the symbolic: actions that recognize, accord respect (or disrespect, perhaps, in the case of the white policemen). What are at stake are less objectives of an instrumental nature (achieving them as a means to an end) but ones that are more consummatory in character, that by their very writing into law perform an important symbolic role for some people.

On the other hand, these different types of demand are not unrelated either. Struggles for recognition are often prosecuted through mobilizing the power of money. The recognition of Martin Luther King Day has been an issue in a number of the American States. One of the ways in which blacks and white liberals have sought to achieve their ends has been through influencing the location of national conventions. In other words, if Arizona refused to recognize Martin Luther King Day then various professional associations threatened to move their conventions, with all their implications for local hotel and restaurant trades, to cities in other States. Similarly, in South Africa the black boycott of white stores became a favored tactic in the dying days of apartheid.

Conversely, in more clearly economic struggles, struggles in which the ultimate stakes are ones of wages, welfare benefits, etc., leverage of a more moral sort may be resorted to: "our rights as British citizens" fairly cries out for recognition not on instrumental grounds but as an end in itself.<sup>7</sup> In the United States blacks struggle for improved life chances through the educational system. One of their arguments is that they are disadvantaged through the

7 In other words, policies should be such as to recognize certain claims because to do so imparts respect and dignity to the people making them – as if the increased public benefits are a mere unintended consequence!

cultural bias of educational testing instruments, i.e. that those who are different are being marginalized, being treated unfairly. So cultural struggles are often conducted, at least in part, through the exercise of economic leverage and vice versa.

But what does this imply for how we approach questions in political geography? Does it mean that in thinking about the economic and the cultural, the material and the symbolic, and how they articulate with the politics of space, we should see them as *independent* sources of social power, as substitutable one for another depending on circumstance? There are several quite crucial points to bear in mind here.

First, any social process, indeed any action we perform in society, has a diversity of aspects. It is, for example, both material and ideal. A necessity of our existence is that we have to relate to the material world. We have to transform it into usable forms and then consume or experience the product. But in order to relate to the material world, to produce, to consume, or whatever the material practice is, we have to have some idea of what we are doing: how to cultivate, how to operate, how to cook, how to assemble. On the other hand, practice is a precondition for our ideas. It is in terms of those material practices that our ideas about them change and, for example, new technologies are developed.

Likewise, action is invariably both individual and social. People are irremediably social creatures. They depend on others for (e.g.) the systems of communication like language through which they acquire ideas about nature and how to appropriate useful things from it; they depend on others through a division of labor. This socialized nature of what we do does not mean to say that we can read off individual thoughts and actions from a knowledge of forms of communication and the division of labor. These change and it is people who do the changing. They develop new modes of communication, new metaphors, perhaps, new roles in the division of labor. But they always do these things using the raw materials provided by the existing division of labor and existing forms of communication. Nothing is totally novel. So while people are indeed creative and can change things, can make a difference, if often only to infinitesimally slight degrees, they do not do it out of nothing. The resources they draw on are social in character and available to others, though perhaps not in the same sort of mix.

Finally, the social process is always cultural, always political and, one might add, always spatial. Culture enters in the form of the meaning systems through which we are able to interact meaningfully with others and with the material world in general. It is always political because some invariably have power over others by virtue of (e.g.) some skill or knowledge lacking but important to others. And it is always spatial because it requires connections over space with others and (again) the material world in its entirety. If we want to interact with others we have to get close to them. If we need water we need to move in the direction of the tap or the water fountain.

We can, in short, think of social processes in terms of mutually presupposing parts, though without consigning those processes to stasis, to stagnation,

to always reproducing what was there before and in the same forms. There is change. People are inventive, they come up with new ways of doing things; but only through a contact with the material world that is invariably socially mediated. Likewise this idea of mutually presupposing parts, how the material entails the ideal and vice versa, how the material practice entails the social and vice versa, should not lead us to the view that that is all there is to their interrelations. Some things are more fundamental than others, some aspects are more conditions than they are conditioned. As Marx and Engels (1845–6, p. 48) famously remarked:

we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history.” But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.

The development of social and intellectual life as we know it today would have been impossible without a relation to the material world of a particular sort: one of control and the harnessing of natural forces to productive purposes, that enables people to be productive on a virtually heroic scale. Without it there would be no schools, universities, opera, libraries, foreign holidays, modern medicine, pensions, and so on.

One can, of course, retort that that development of productive abilities has in turn depended on particular social configurations, particular ideas and insights, and that is true. But not *any* meanings, social relations, power relations are effective in this regard. In organizing a hunt we would not give the role of coordinator to someone who had never hunted before. And mobilizing the power of steam or aerodynamics to productive purposes depends on getting the equations right.

The fact is, the material world – the world of physical, chemical, and biological objects and forces – has its own ways of acting. Material objects, as diverse as pylons and people, have their own powers and limitations. As far as people are concerned, it is by virtue of our own nature, our own material nature, that we can develop ideas,<sup>8</sup> new social forms, and have, unlike other organisms, social and technical revolutions. But our nature is also limiting. These powers have to be deployed, as the quote above indicates, towards satisfying our material needs. As we develop new material needs so this necessity reasserts itself in new forms. And how we go about satisfying those material needs in turn depends on the nature of the material world outside us.

8 If you disagree with this emphasis on the material conditioning of thought consider what happens to a person’s powers of cognition and of thinking when the material character of the brain changes, as with Alzheimer’s or a tumor.

But this is to talk in very general terms. It applies to social life anywhere and everywhere. While the material is primary quite how it all works out depends on more concrete forms of social life and these change over time and space. Again, this is not to argue that all social forms are possible. They have to be such that material needs can be satisfied. Of those concrete social forms capitalism is one. We live in a capitalist society and this has distinct implications for the social process and therefore for the political geography of the contemporary world. Capitalism is, in fact, thoroughly consequential.

In the first place under capitalism the different aspects of the social process, the material and the ideal, the cultural, the political, etc., are separated out and *seemingly* take on lives of their own as independent forces. But only apparently. So, for example, some of our material relations, in particular those that require commodity exchange, are reconstituted as something that we start calling "the economic." One important consequence of this is that what goes on in the household is not defined as "economic." Housewives work – they cook, make beds, launder and a whole variety of other material practices – but since they don't get a wage for their work they are not defined as part of the economy, except, of course, when they make forays to the supermarket and purchase things, i.e. enter into commodity exchange.

Alongside the idea of a distinct economic sphere arise notions about the political, the cultural, the spatial as independent areas of social life with their own distinct logics. Likewise we come to see the material as separate from the ideal, as in books with titles like *Great Ideas that Changed the World*.<sup>9</sup> In part this is a consequence of the division of labor subsequent to capitalist development. There are, for instance, not only assembly line workers who supposedly work only with their hands but also scientists who, it is believed, do their work with their heads. There are captains of industry who are classified as part of the economy but also politicians whose specialty is power and using it. Likewise the cultural appears in a (again, seemingly) separate form as art museums, folkways, ethnic groups with their own languages and practices, newspapers and the media, literature, and so on.

This appearance of separation, however, is misleading: everything we do involves both a material practice and some idea of what we are doing whether we work on an assembly line or in a research laboratory. Likewise art museums have their politics as much as corporations do and they also depend for their continued existence on a healthy economy. But things do *seem* to take on a life of their own and give credence to the view that there is a culture separate from an economy which is separate from the state which is separate from technology and other material practices and so forth. Indeed, the state may well act as if the economy didn't matter and the economy as if space relations were of no consequence. But the unity of these different aspects of the social process will – necessarily – reassert itself: states will go bankrupt as will firms in the "wrong" locations.

This suggests that the active, structuring process, what holds things together, what integrates, what drives the social process forward is capitalism

9 For example, Robert B. Downs (ed.) (1956) *Books that Changed the World*. New York: Mentor Books.

and its agents. In order to reproduce itself, to endure, capitalism requires, for example:

- 1 A state that works for it rather than against it: legislating a body of labor law that allows profits to be made, facilitating the provision of a physical infrastructure of highways, railroads, cities, airports, and the like.
- 2 A set of cultural understandings celebrating the virtues of money making, hard work, private property, and "progress," and denigrating improvidence, idleness, and lack of (a particular sort of) ambition.
- 3 A geography which enhances productivity through speeding up the circulation of capital through its various phases, bringing together those who need to work together, minimizing the time in which materials are being transformed into useful states.

Capitalists may not take the lead directly in structuring the world thus, in attempting to reduce everything to its money-making logic. Indeed the state may take the lead. But the state can only act within the constraints defined by capitalism as a particular form of social life. The state needs money to do what it does but it can only mobilize that particular form of social power to the extent that it promotes capitalist development. Thus in capitalist societies it is only through capitalist development that the state can appropriate its revenues.

This is not to say that the agents of capitalist development, the investors, and those state officials who work alongside them, create symbolic and cultural worlds, distributions of power, and the like as they see fit. Capitalism emerges in a world that is already differentiated in many and diverse ways: culturally, geographically, historically, politically. Its agents have to work with what is available as they try to accomplish their ends: what antagonisms they can exploit, what alliances they can form, who can be seduced in their cultural battles through the power of money, what forms of organization they can orchestrate in such a way as to give them competitive advantages *vis-à-vis* firms elsewhere. And so it goes too for their working class antagonists. As they (e.g.) struggle for a larger share of the product or even for an alternative way of organizing production, they try to mobilize the symbolic on *their* side appealing to the need to protect "American jobs" or the dignity of the working *man*.

The position of this book, therefore, is that the logic of capitalist development, its attempt to subordinate everything else to its purposes and logics, including culture and the state, is central to understanding the political geography of the contemporary world. It is around these attempts that struggles over space, over the territorial, ultimately revolve. It may not always appear that way. It may, rather, seem that struggles around (e.g.) the symbolic character of particular spaces have an autonomy. But that autonomy is always limited. It has to be consistent with the logic of making money to make more money. Spaces can be set aside as (e.g.) Arctic Wildlife Refuges or National Parks. But if there is a sense that oil lurks underneath then nothing will be sacred.

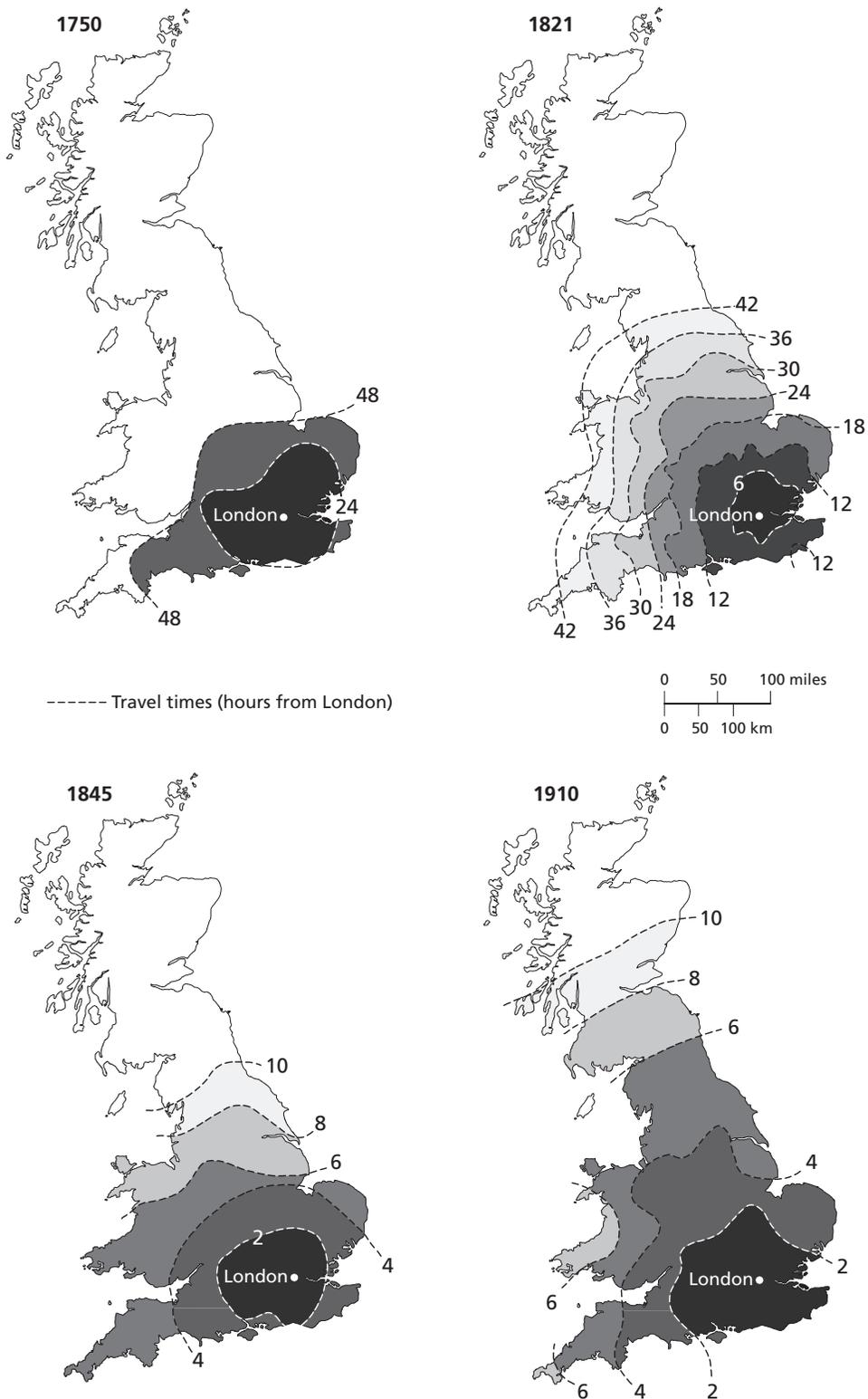
Any approach to political geography that has aspirations to balance has to consider the cultural alongside the economic, the moral alongside the material: struggles that are seemingly more cultural, like the women's movement – struggling against the marginalization of women in social life – and struggles that are seemingly more economic, like the labor movement. But the relation between the two always has to be borne in mind. They never exist independent of one another. They are intertwined. But it is through understanding the logic of capitalist development, its attempt to subordinate everything to its logic, how it exploits particular configurations of power that may appear *either* cultural *or* economic, that we can ultimately bring the two into a fruitful and illuminating relationship.

### Case Studies

We have seen that movement and fixity are central to political geography. As far as the fixed are concerned movement can be both fact and possibility. As such it can be both threatening and enabling. And it can be threatening to some and enabling to others: in which case the precise form that territoriality will take will depend on who is able to prevail, who is able to mobilize the powers of the state on their respective behalves. If it is those for whom movements are enabling, then the attempts to influence what happens in particular areas will be more inclusionary than exclusionary and vice versa. Should, for example, national policy be one that dismantles tariff barriers and immigration controls? Should a local government change its zoning policy so as to shift the balance of land uses in the direction of more rather than fewer apartments? This is not to argue that the movements are necessarily coming from "outside" as these examples might suggest. They can also be coming from "inside." A brain drain can be a threat to a national economy. The same applies to the movement of money "offshore" subsequent to an economic crisis.

Movement has always been with us, as has the fact of settlement and fixity. It has accordingly elicited various forms of territorial response. But over the past 200 years or so many of the movements that affect us in our daily lives have increased, and in at least two senses. They have tended to extend their geographic reach; and they have also grown in their magnitude. The labels on the products that we habitually consume are enormously expressive of the way in which we are now connected to people and places scattered across the globe. The wines from Chile and Australia, the shoes from China, the French cheeses, the tuna from Thailand. Movement moreover is lubricated by the shrinkage of space brought about by increasingly speedy forms of transportation and communication (figure 1.2); and that speed has also brought down the real cost of movement.<sup>10</sup> The increasing distances over which people

10 Consider, for example, the sheer cost of the meals and accommodations required on an ocean-going liner compared with the needs of people traveling on jet planes; little wonder that trans-Atlantic travel has increased so dramatically over the past 40 years.



**Figure 1.2** The shrinkage of travel times in Britain, 1750–1910. The two maps in the upper panels refer to stage-coach journey times; those in the lower panels are for railroad journey times. Note the dramatic shrinkage of times, allowing increasing movement over longer distances, that occurred.

Source: A. Leyshon (1995) "Annihilating Space? The Speed-up of Communications." In J. Allen and C. Hamnett (eds) *A Shrinking World?* New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 23–4.

go on vacation, as well as their increasing numbers, tell a similar story. Thirty years ago the only cities in the United States with direct airline service to London were Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, but now there are at least a dozen cities with such links.

There are other indicators with which we will be familiar from everyday life: the proliferation of Chinese and Indian restaurants in the cities of North America and Western Europe; the increasing diversity of their populations; the spread of the fast-food chain McDonald's throughout the world; the variety of images of other places and other peoples to which people are exposed through the media, especially television; the increase in marriage across international boundaries. There are also ecological effects: the emergence of a "dead zone" offshore from the delta of the Mississippi is testimony to the huge amounts of fertilizer that run off farmland throughout the river basin and are transported downstream; the appearance of air pollution downwind from large metropolitan areas. And then, of course, there is global warming.

### Think and Learn

We talked earlier about the importance of capitalism and capitalist development to an understanding of the contemporary world and its political geography. The increasing reach of movements and their increasing magnitude coincide with the rise of capitalism as *the* way of organizing production. Do you think that this is mere coincidence? How do you think that the increasing reach and magnitude of movements might be related to the capitalist form of development?

As these examples indicate, this increasing geographic reach, the increasing magnitude of what is being conveyed/moved over space is something that is apparent at all geographical scales. The current interest in globalization has tended to focus attention on the growth of trade worldwide, the expansion of foreign investment, and the movements of people in search of jobs, though the novelty of this can surely be exaggerated (Hirst and Thompson, 1996). But always accompanying these changes have been changes at other scales. At the level of the nation state, for instance, one can point to the increasing penetration of the state into everyday lives: the way in which government within the household is displaced by government through the state. The rise of child welfare officers, the redefinition of the disciplining of children as child abuse and as something to be regulated by the state, the recognition of spousal abuse as a problem and a similar tightening up of state controls, and the earlier growth of compulsory schooling are all indicative. Likewise more local branches of the state have tended to see their power shift to more central branches as the latter, for example, become more responsible for providing the money. There are yet other changes of an economic and cultural sort: the dis-

placement of the local provider by chains (the fast-food chain versus the local hamburger joint, the chain hotels), the decline of minority languages and even dialects; and the increasing distances over which people have been able to move in their daily lives, using the bicycle, the train, the bus and car, the airplane.

### Think and Learn

We have been talking about the increasing geographical reach of movements and their increasing magnitude by reference to more global and national scales. How do you think these arguments apply to metropolitan areas? Would you expect there to have been similar changes there? What sorts of movements might exemplify this?

In terms of political geography, and in particular the geographic structure of the state, the effects of this have been contradictory. There has been territorial *integration* and there have been tendencies also towards *disintegration*. On the one hand we can point to the extension of jurisdictional boundaries, the emergence of new territorial structures at larger scales which come into being in order to facilitate movement and the advantages it can bring. The most striking recent example of this has been the European Union (EU). The control that member states once had over trade regulations has been ceded to the European Commission in Brussels, creating an area within which commodities are free to move from one country to another. The justification for this was the classic free trade argument: that it would induce increased competition, heightened specialization, and therefore increased efficiency, lower prices, greater prosperity. The recent adoption of a common currency (the euro) by most of the members has promoted this goal still further by eliminating the currency risk that exporters typically face.

There are other inter-nation arrangements around the globe also aiming to dismantle trade barriers among members – the North American Free Trade Area or NAFTA uniting Canada, Mexico, and the US is one example, and the free trade area linking Australia and New Zealand is another. But none have such far reaching goals as the EU. One should also point to the European empires as earlier attempts to capture the advantages of moving commodities over long distances; though clearly the distribution of those advantages was geographically highly uneven between imperial power on the one hand and the colonies on the other.

There have also been disintegrating effects, however. Decolonization and the breakup of the Belgian, British, Dutch, French, and Portuguese empires produced a massive increase in the number of individual states during the period from about 1950 to 1980. Since the ending of the Cold War there has been another burst of territorial fragmentation. The most obvious expression of this has been the breakup of the Soviet Union, creating the independent

states of Ukraine, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and those of the Caucasus (e.g. Armenia, Azerbaijan) and former Soviet Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, etc.). But the former state of Yugoslavia has given way to five independent states. In Italy the northern region has threatened to break away and form its own state. In the UK substantial devolution to Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland is under way, raising questions as to how long the United Kingdom will indeed remain "united."

All of these partitions and fragmentations have effects on movements; and that, of course, is the point. They can, for example, lock up fiscal resources: prevent the leakage of taxes to populations elsewhere. The drive for an independent Scotland, for example, gains energy from the prospect of diverting the highly lucrative severance taxes imposed on the North Sea oil industry centered in Aberdeen to exclusively Scottish use. They can alter the geography of civil service appointments so that cultural minorities are no longer administered by those defined as alien: Croats by Serbs, Estonians by Russians, and so on. And they can protect infant industry from "foreign" competition and so nurture a native capitalist class.

These are tendencies, moreover, that apply at many different geographical scales: not just the more global with its nation states, empires, and free trade areas but also the metropolitan. Within every metropolitan area there are competing tendencies towards greater integration, greater centralization of power, and tendencies that would enhance the power of constituent local governments or even neighborhoods. So at the same time that metropolitan areas move towards a common water and sewerage system, a metropolitan airport authority and transport authority, for example, there may be counter movements: demands from neighborhoods that decisions on land use rezonings be delegated to them. And there will be resistances: resistance to the creation of larger, metropolitan-scale school districts that would change pupil compositions in ways seen as threatening by some.

So whatever the outcome – integrating or disintegrating, unifying or fragmenting over space – there is always a struggle over what is good for "our neighborhood/city/region/country" since some are likely to benefit from particular territorial projects and others will lose. This is because of what those projects will do to various movements of people, commodities, tax resources, school pupils, etc., and what the implications of those movements are for different social groups: for employers as opposed to workers, for black parents as opposed to whites, for the middle class as compared with those of lesser means, for those who see themselves as paying more in taxes than they receive in government benefits versus those who see themselves as net beneficiaries, and so on.

To illustrate these points I now want to move to some examples. These are very different and have been selected in order to illuminate different aspects of the argument set forth above. We will look, for instance, at the struggle around acid rain in the US because of the way it underlines the importance to politics of our relation to nature. The notion of a separate state of Padania in Northern Italy is important because of the way it shows how what is disintegrating at one scale (that of Italy) has integrating effects at a larger scale, since

it was seen as facilitating the fuller integration of Northern Italy into the European Union. The discussion of Chinese migrants to Vancouver and the subsequent politics, on the other hand, brings together the cultural and the urban.

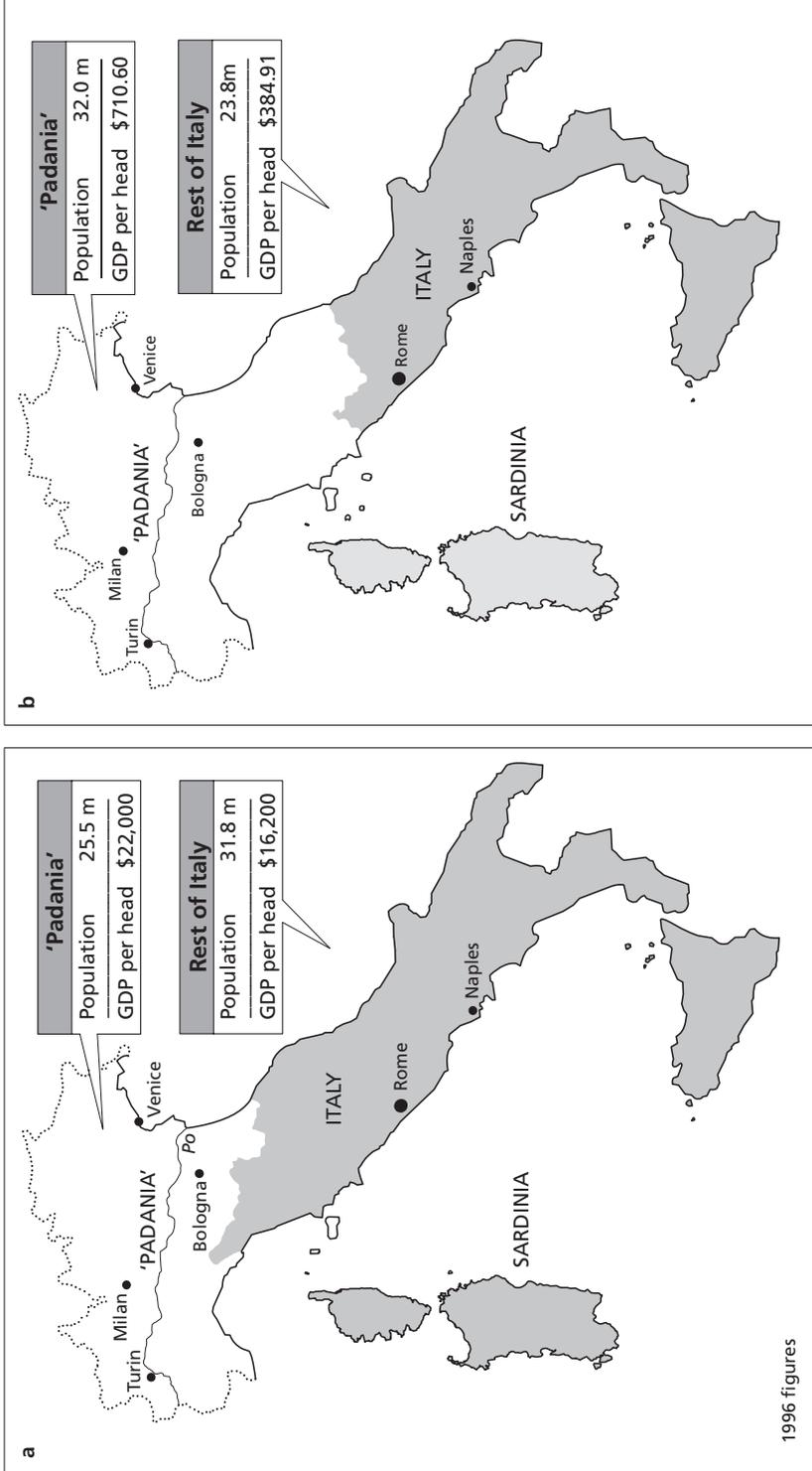
### *Case study 1 The breakup of Italy?*

The notion of an independent state of Padania in the north of what is presently Italy, leaving a rump Italian state in the south, is an idea that has generated increasing attention over the past ten years or so. It is the brainchild of a political party known as the Northern League. The forerunner of the Northern League was the Lombard League, which was founded in 1981 and which changed its name in 1992. Both the Lombard League and the Northern League have drawn their support from what is the most modern and prosperous part of Italy. And that support is not insignificant. In 1992 they got 25–30 percent of the vote in Lombardia and landslides in neighboring Piemonte and Veneto where it became the second largest party. Even so, and despite secessionist demands, it is not clear that this is the ultimate goal of the movement. Another of its proposals, for example, has been for greatly enhanced regional autonomy. This idea envisages dividing Italy into three regions, North, Central, and South. Each would have its own parliament with responsibility for income tax, health care, and education. The suspicion is that if the Italian state could be restructured to the advantage of the North, then that would be the end of the matter.

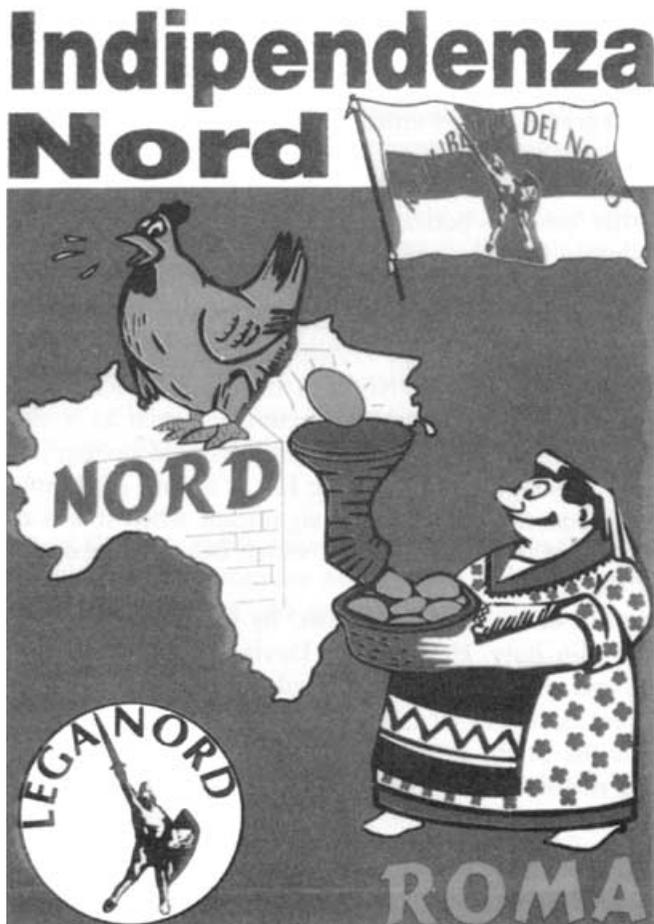
The appeal of the Northern League is to a hostility towards three closely intermeshed objects: Southerners, the South (figure 1.3), and the Italian state. The South of Italy is the backward part of the country and has been for a long time. In 1988 unemployment was a relatively meager 7.7 percent in the North but 21 percent in the South. Gross regional product per capita also varies. That in the South is barely two-thirds of that in Italy as a whole but as a result of transfer payments from the rest of the country – largely the North – the standard of living enjoyed by Southerners was much closer to the national average (83 percent in 1987). This uneven development has been the condition for two processes impacting on Northerners.

In the first place there has been considerable migration from the South to northern industrial cities like Turin, Bologna, and Milan. This has in turn engendered hostility on the part of Northerners, not so much through fear of job competition but more because of perceived cultural differences. There is, for example, a fear of mafia influence and concern about the intrusion of the “kidnapping industry,” based in Sardinia and Calabria, into the North. There is also a broader sense of difference rooted in the urban–rural contrast between Northerner and immigrant. The fact that they occupy the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy in the North and so are more vulnerable to layoffs has also made them an easy target as lazy and welfare-dependent.

Second, uneven development has been the motivation for various programs aimed at improving living standards in the South: programs aimed at enhancing economic development there and, if that should not suffice, redistributing



**Figure 1.3** Alternative proposals for a new state of Padania. Source: a, after *The Economist*, March 29, 1997, p. 58; b, after *The Wall Street Journal*, September 13, 1996, p. A8.



**Figure 1.4** An example of the Northern League's anti-Southern propaganda. Note the sense of territorial exploitation depicted by this cartoon: the Northern hen is exerting considerable energy in laying eggs that go to benefit the South, as represented by the peasant woman. The inclusion of the word "Roma" underneath her figure identifies the Roman bureaucracy as part of the problem as well.

Source: B. Giordano (2000) "Italian Regionalism or 'Padanian' Nationalism – The Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics." *Political Geography Quarterly*, 19(4), 462.

income. The perception of many Northerners is that those programs have been at their expense (figure 1.4). This is part of the reason for hostility to the Italian state since it is seen as the mediating force in these efforts at Southern uplift. But it is not the only reason. The Roman bureaucracy is also despised for its inefficiency and corruption. This in turn is linked to the bogey of the Southerner since the Italian civil service, particularly in the lower echelons where it comes into contact with the Italian public – postal workers and railroad employees, for example – is manned disproportionately by Southerners (up

to 80 percent according to some accounts). Accordingly the Northern League is characterized by strong hostility not only to the South and to Southerners but to the central state itself, which is seen as fiscally oppressive, corrupt, and inefficient. Small businesses complain about the stifling bureaucracy and bad public services while tax rates on individual and corporate incomes are indeed high by international standards. The dominant feeling is one of exploitation to the advantage of the Roman bureaucracy and the South.

On the other hand, there are also important conjunctural elements that help to explain the appeal of the Northern League. In the first place the end of the Cold War and the Soviet threat has meant changes in the Italian party system. The Communist Party has lost some of its grip on the Italian working class; while the party that for a long time dominated the Italian right wing, the Christian Democrats, has lost its credibility as a shield against communism. This has created an opening for the Northern League.

In the second place there has been the attraction of the European Union. Italy is a member of the EU but membership of the latest phase of its development, European Monetary Union (EMU), required meeting criteria that business people in Northern Italy feared would be difficult to achieve given the Southern incubus. An attraction of the EMU is that while Italian firms can borrow more cheaply within the EU than they can in Italy, membership of the EMU eliminates the currency risk.<sup>11</sup> In the event Italy did indeed meet the criteria through reducing its budget deficit, but with the South, and the demands made by the South on the national budget, it looked for a while as if this might be difficult.

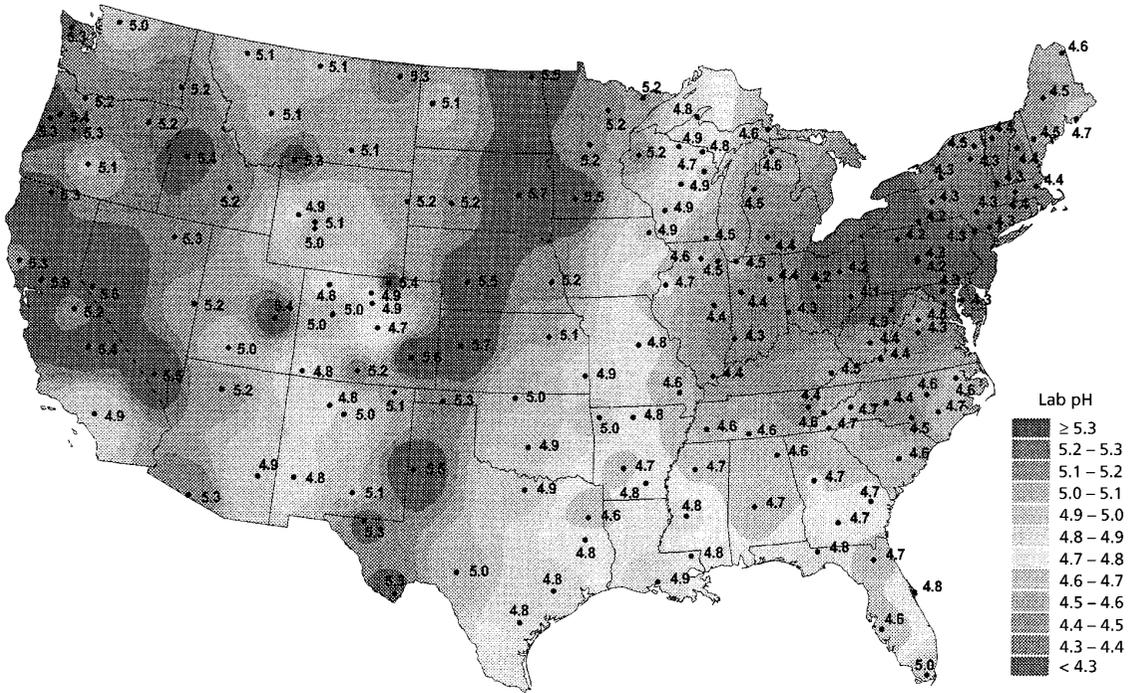
As a national movement the drive for an independent state of Padania is unusual. This is because typically national movements are not just driven by motivations of the clearly material sort that are driving the Northern League. Rather there is commonly a strong sense of difference with respect to non-nationals: a sense of difference in terms of culture, history, senses of belonging and solidarity that go to create a distinct national identity. But there is little or no Padanian identity, apart from some minor differences of dialect, and little hint of how it might be constructed: no distinct history, no political entity such as a provincial subdivision of Italy, for instance. On the other hand, in material terms many in Northern Italy clearly believe they would be better off with a state of their own. And the fact that Italian nationalism is weak is also a factor that works in their favor.<sup>12</sup>

### *Case study 2 States and the federal government: the acid rain issue*

In Italy the response to what is perceived to be some regional disadvantage has been to propose a restructuring of the territorial structure of the state,

11 The risk, that is, of (e.g.) borrowing German marks but having to pay back at a rate of exchange adverse to the borrower owing to inflation and a devaluation of the Italian lira.

12 There is an old saying that little holds Italy together apart perhaps from its soccer team (*The Economist*, November 8, 1997, p. 13 of Special Supplement on Italy).



**Figure 1.5** Acid rain levels in the US, 1994. Unpolluted rainfall has a pH (acidity) level of 5.6. Readings below that indicate the presence of acid rain, and the lower the figure, the greater its intensity. Note the relatively low readings across the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern States of the US. These were the areas from which greatest pressure was brought to bear on the federal government to do something about the problem. The result was the Clean Air Act of 1993. And indeed if you check the same map for 1999 (<http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu>) you will see that there have been reductions in intensity in that area. Note also that one of the biggest offenders in the production of acid rain, Ohio, had very low pH readings, presumably as a result of the burning of high sulfur coal in States further west like Illinois and Indiana.

Source: National Atmospheric Deposition Program/National Trends Network (<http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu>).

though whether that restructuring should take the form of fragmentation or federalism is undecided. In the case to which we now turn the territorial structure of the state, through its capacities for controlling movements, has also been to the forefront. But here the movements to be controlled are not those of people or tax resources but of air pollutants. And for the affected regions to have broken away from the United States, in the way that some in Italy support the idea of an independent Padania, would have served no useful purpose. This is because it would have impeded their ability to control the acid rain at its source: a source that lay elsewhere.

Acid rain is something that seriously afflicts areas in the northeastern part of the US, including New England and the States of the mid-Atlantic seaboard, including New York and Pennsylvania (see figure 1.5). It has a number of dele-

terious effects on ecosystems significant to people. It tends to kill off freshwater fish, for instance, and can also kill forests. It has implications for the hunting, fishing, and timber industries therefore.

Chemically it is a highly dilute form of sulfuric acid. It results from the mixture of sulfurous particles with water vapor aloft. These sulfurous particles originate in the smoke emitted from factories and power stations burning fuels with a high sulfur content. In the American cases these factories and power stations are found, by and large, in the Midwest. Their effluent mixes with water vapor which is then displaced by the prevailing winds to the east and northeast where it condenses and falls to the earth as acid rain. The view of the environmental and economic development lobbies in the Northeastern and Middle Atlantic States, therefore, was that the solution to acid rain lay in some sort of regulation of smokestack emissions in the Midwest. This became the core of various policy initiatives going back to the seventies and culminating in the federal Clean Air Act of 1993.

The earlier approach had been to try to persuade the Midwestern States to undertake their own initiatives aimed at controlling high sulfur emissions. This proved impossible. State Environmental Protection Agencies, recognizing the substantial costs it would impose on respective State economic bases, simply dragged their feet. Attention then shifted to the federal arena where those States could be forced to act. In short, the anti-acid rain forces mobilized those branches of the American state where they would have most leverage. And this in turn was to result in a further centralization of environmental policy at the federal level in the form of the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Air Act calls on the major sources of high sulfur emissions to simply reduce them. The major sources targeted have been the power stations burning high sulfur coal. The possible solutions are twofold. The first is that the electric utilities install so-called scrubbers in their smokestacks: these take most of the sulfurous particles out of the smoke prior to it leaving the smokestack. The second solution is to burn low sulfur coal. Which solution to adopt has been a major source of contention in the States most affected: Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The difficulties have been several-fold.

The scrubbers are expensive and this would result in higher electricity prices in the States affected. This in turn would have impacts on major electricity users and on the ability of State development departments to attract in new businesses. Major electricity consumers in particular, like the automobile industry, have been important sources of pressure for the power companies to adopt the low sulfur coal solution. The problem with this, however, is that the high sulfur coal that is burnt comes from the Midwestern States in question. To cut back the consumption of high sulfur coal in favor of the low sulfur variety would result in serious unemployment in respective coal mining industries. As a result the coal mining companies have lobbied in favor of the scrubber solution and against low sulfur coal.

There are other pressure groups involved from outside the Midwest and quite apart from the Northeastern and Middle Atlantic States affected by acid rain. Low sulfur coal is an important export for some Western States, in particular Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. They all supported the Clean Air

Act of 1993 because they believed it would increase the demand for their low sulfur coal. At the same time they have opposed any policy that would increase the likelihood of the power companies installing scrubbers.

The Midwestern States affected, like Ohio, pushed for federal subsidies to defray the cost of the scrubbers, i.e. a federalization of the cost of the legislation alongside a federalization of regulation. This was vigorously opposed by the low sulfur coal producers and respective States which benefit from severance taxes on the coal extracted. In this, moreover, there has been some overlap with the interests of other Western States, like California. Many of these States have relatively high electricity rates. The high sulfur coal burning States of the Midwest, on the other hand, have often enjoyed relatively low electricity rates and this has redounded to the benefit of their economic development initiatives: it has made them more attractive for some firms (than, say, California) as places in which to invest. Federal subsidies for the installation of scrubbers would do nothing from their viewpoint to "level the playing field." They too, therefore, have opposed a federalization of defraying the costs of clean air.

Another approach by the high sulfur coal-producing States has been to give financial incentives to the utilities if they continue to buy in-State coal. This does not mean that the utilities can ignore the Clean Air Act; only that the scrubber option becomes financially more palatable. But this too has been opposed by the coal producers of the States of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming operating through their lobbying association, the so-called Alliance for Clean Coal. The basis of their case is that this interferes with the commerce clause of the US Constitution which proscribes barriers to trade between the States.

In this case study ecological issues mingle with the economic, all within the framework of strong territorial interests. Movements are at stake and they are not all channeled by those natural pathways that convey the acid rain. Rather they are structured by market gradients in contrast to those of the world's atmospheric pressure differentials. So alongside attempts to block the effluents causing acid rain at their source there have also been initiatives designed to exploit the new markets that were seemingly in prospect, to the extent that the effluent producing States actually opted for the low sulfur coal alternative. And of course, as we have seen, the States producing low sulfur coal took the necessary legislative steps, or more accurately legislation-blocking steps, that that would require. Clearly in this instance, at least, and in contrast to the common image, environmental action may have its market appeals!

### *Case study 3 The monster houses of Vancouver*<sup>13</sup>

If ecological effects are increasingly felt "at a distance" and to a substantial degree, so too might it be said of cultural effects. The movement of people around the world creates juxtapositions that can be the source of strong

13 This discussion is based on Mitchell (1993).

exclusionary sentiment as cultural prerogatives, deeply embedded senses of superiority and power, get challenged.

To some degree these effects are closely bound up with movements more of an economic character. Countries, regions, and cities compete for capital on what seems like an increasingly global stage. And in some instances those who own the capital move with it. Such was the case of the wealthy Chinese who invested in, and set up residence in, Vancouver in the late eighties and early nineties.

Anticipating an increased anxiety level on the part of the Hong Kong Chinese as reunification with China in 1997 loomed closer, Canada set out to attract the wealthy as immigrants. Starting in 1984 a business immigration program aimed at this group was initiated. In exchange for a higher processing priority for immigration they were required to bring in a certain amount of money and commit to investing some of it. In 1991, for those moving to British Columbia (and usually therefore to Vancouver), they had to have a minimum personal worth of C\$500,000 and promise to invest C\$350,000 in a Canadian business over a three-year period. In Vancouver this legislation was acted on with vigor by a mix of local government officials and businesses that stood to benefit – like developers and banks – as a means of boosting the local economy. The result was a considerable inflow of wealthy Chinese into the city. In the single year of 1988, for example, British Columbia was the preferred destination for over 300 immigrants, and the vast majority of these would have ended up in Vancouver.

But although they were eagerly solicited by local business interests and local government in Vancouver there have been tensions, particularly with more elite elements of the Anglo-Canadian mainstream in the city. Most of the tensions have focused on the housing market, though the initial stimulus for disquiet was neighborhood change. There is, for example, a historic Chinese presence on Canada's Pacific coast and one which has always been marked by separate areas of residence. The new immigrants have not observed this norm and this has been an affront to the identities of the old Anglo elite. Historically racial separation has been seen as part of what it means to be a member of the Anglo ruling class. Adding to the sense of cultural threat have been the "monster houses" favored by many of the immigrants. Often with large extended families, they have sought appropriately large houses. But the way in which they have gone about this has been to purchase property in the more desirable neighborhoods, demolish the existing structure, and replace it with something that consumes a much larger proportion of the lot's surface area: hence the sobriquet "monster houses." This has served to further disrupt the sense of cultural integrity of the Anglo elite as their architectural tastes have been quite different: mock Tudor, for example, in an ample garden with numerous trees. And in addition to neighborhood change there have been wider housing market effects. Housing prices in the Vancouver area have accelerated considerably and this has sparked concern on the part of residents that their children would not be able to afford to live in the city.

The response of the Anglo elite to these threats has been various. One has been to call for new restrictions on the proportion of the lot area that a house

can consume, in order, one assumes, to inhibit the purchase of property by the Chinese in choice neighborhoods. The other, of course, is to stop encouraging the Chinese to come and live in Vancouver. But both of these actions are problematic from the standpoint of those who want to see the Chinese comfortable about living in Vancouver and continuing to bring their money and invest it in the city. In other words a struggle over the nature of Vancouver, what and who it should consist of, has been joined between the old elite concerned about their neighborhoods and those business elements who want to see the city's economy grow.

The local growth lobby, for instance, has been anxious to see the Hong Kong link preserved. It has therefore been closely associated with think tank research into the housing market demonstrating that the housing price rise has nothing to do with the arrival of the Chinese but that it is the baby boom that is responsible. The other part of the counter-offensive has been to claim the moral high ground. Accordingly the opposition has been branded as racist. There has also been an attempt to align their position on the Chinese with the idea of multiculturalism which had been embraced earlier by the Canadian state and which was designed for purposes quite other than encouraging the immigration of the wealthy with a view to boosting local economies. This is the idea of equal rights under law but respecting the fundamental differences of individuals that stem from diverse cultural and "racial" backgrounds. But as Mitchell (1993, p. 265) comments, "the attempt to shape multiculturalism can be seen as an attempt to gain hegemonic control over concepts of race and nation in order to further expedite Vancouver's integration into the international networks of global capitalism."

## Summary

The central focus of political geography, the point from which it starts and to which it returns, is defined by the twin concepts of territory and territoriality. Neither of these can be understood apart from each other. In order to talk of territory one must talk of territoriality and vice versa. Territoriality refers to actions designed to exercise control over some area: the territory. Territory and territoriality, therefore, bring together the two concepts of space and power: geography and the political, as in political geography. Accordingly, in order to understand territory and territoriality we need understandings of relations over space and of politics.

Territoriality is rooted in the contradiction between movement and fixity. In order to carry on their various activities people seek some fixity in their lives. They "settle" in particular places, become embedded in them through (e.g.) the relatively permanent transformations they make to the immediate environment (draining the land, cutting down the forests, building houses, creating tracks) and through the relations they develop with other people: relations of kinship, friendship, cooperation. But there are wider movements which either underpin or threaten these place-bound activities. These include natural movements like those that convey acid rain and socially mediated

ones like those of trade. There are also displacements of population which can result in the threat of invasion and dislodgement, and threats to a place-based identity as we discussed in the case of the Chinese immigrants to Vancouver. To protect the place-bound relations that they have created, therefore, people in particular areas seek to control the movements in and out of them by defending, excluding, including; in short by regulating this wider set of movements to local advantage.

The notion of power, on the other hand, is closely bound up today with that of the state. Most of what we talk about in this book will have to do with the state for in the contemporary world the state is an extremely important regulatory agent. This is not to say that it has been a universal of human existence. There have been stateless societies. But there have been no societies that lacked means of regulating their activities. Even today, regulation cannot be reduced to the state. But the state is now the ultimate regulator which either regulates directly or regulates the regulations of others.

The particular forms of regulation that we are most interested in in this book are those of a territorial sort. We look to the state to control the content of those areas important to us. In this regard the state is a highly appropriate vehicle, not just because of its regulatory power, but because of the territorial form of its jurisdiction: the tendency for it to regulate within relatively compact spaces so that it can indeed arbitrate between (e.g.) neighbors, or the movements coming from some place within its jurisdiction and impacting on others elsewhere. This is not to say that its territorial form is uncontested. Those who feel oppressed by the state may want to see it divided so that they can take control of one of its fragments: this is the goal of the Padanian project we reviewed in the case studies.

Rooting territoriality in the contradiction of fixity and movement, of course, serves to underline what territoriality is ultimately about: maintaining a relation to the material environment that will facilitate the realization of human needs. But we never deal with human needs in the abstract, but always with human needs as they are socially mediated. And so too is it with the activities through which we relate to the material world: they also are socially mediated since it is only in and through our relations with others that we can appropriate naturally occurring substances or forces. In brief, our powers and our needs with respect to that material world are *social* powers and needs. Our forms of production are social forms and our needs are socially defined. In today's world people's activities are coordinated through markets and they seek wages, profits and rents: the categories, in other words, of a capitalist society. Central to the notion of social process that we will draw upon in this book, therefore, is capitalism and capitalist development.

All of the case studies reflect these different concepts and how they interact one with another: the concepts of territory and territoriality, as structured by the tension between movement and fixity, the state and capitalism. The movements are diverse: acid rain in one instance, tax resources and people in another, and in the case of Vancouver, wealthy immigrants. In each case people have stakes in particular places that they seek to defend against the threats implied by these movements: investments in forests in the case of acid

rain, a local status for the Anglos of Vancouver, businesses and jobs in Northern Italy. In every case the movements are mediated in some way by capitalist forms of development – the desire of the booster lobby to attract inward investment, the need of the Midwestern power utilities to minimize their costs, the importance of being part of European Monetary Union for the businesses of Northern Italy. And finally, of course, the state is central to the action as it unfolds.

## The Organization of the Book

The remainder of this book is divided into three major sections. Parts I and II take up the distinction made earlier in this chapter about the economic and the cultural, matters material and matters having to do with identity and feelings of significance. Part I addresses the economic, or more accurately the politico-economic: why, by whom, how, and where governments are mobilized in order to intervene in the production of economic geographies. The first chapter of this section, chapter 2, provides a general background of political economy as context for what is to come. Chapter 3 focuses on workplace issues, in particular those of economic development. Chapter 4, on the other hand, is concerned with issues we encounter in the living place: issues of schools, home values, housing availability.

Part II takes up the issue of Difference: how it is that we come to differentiate Others, how we define each other socially, how the state is implicated in this process of definition, how in short it is a state for Some rather than for Others, and the implications that has for identity and struggles around identity. Chapter 5 is the counterpart for this part of the book to chapter 2: it addresses the question of social definition and the politics of Difference in general terms, trying to establish some principles that can be applied in the two subsequent chapters. Chapter 6 applies these ideas to the formation of nations and nationalism, and why a sense of nationhood is so important to people. The final chapter of this section then examines from the same viewpoint some Differences that have become quite central to politics more recently – those of race and gender.

Part III examines political geography more explicitly from the standpoint of the state. For the most part, the first two sections of the book take the state for granted. It is part of the background. It is an organization that various interest groups and social movements mobilize in order to secure their ends. The state also has its own effects on those struggles. It endorses particular social orders. It redistributes, not least geographically. But quite why states should exist is bracketed. In chapter 8 we address the nature of the modern state and why it has the features it does: features that make it attractive to groups struggling to achieve ends of a territorial character. What we find is that the modern state is a necessary condition for that development, and its territorial character facilitates solutions to the territorial dilemmas that capitalist development confronts. Chapters 9 and 10 then explore two particular dilemmas confronted by states when they are placed in a geographical context.

Chapter 9 examines the politics of geographically uneven development from this standpoint. Chapter 10 then looks at the politics of scale, a politics that is expressed most clearly today in what has become known as the politics of globalization but which, as I hope to show, has also been generous in the illusions which it has spawned.

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Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1845–6) *The German Ideology*.  
Mitchell, K. (1993) "Multiculturalism, or the United Colors of Capitalism." *Antipode*, 25(4), 263–94.  
Sack, R. (1983) "Human Territoriality: A Theory." *Annals, Association of American Geographers*, 73(1), 55–74.

## FURTHER READING

An excellent reading for a person coming to political geography for the first time is Doreen Massey's (1995) "Making Spaces: Or, Geography Is Political Too." *Soundings*, 1 (Autumn), 193–208. The essential source on the questions of territory and territoriality is Robert Sack. Read in particular his paper referred to in the references. Writings on the state are voluminous and none of them especially accessible to the novice. Especially interesting to geographers, however, because of the links he makes with territory, is the work of Michael Mann. See in particular his provocative 1984 statement "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 25, 185–213.

For further reading on the Northern League and Padania consult: B. Giordano (2000) "Italian Regionalism or 'Padanian' Nationalism – The Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics." *Political Geography*, 19(4), 445–72; and J. A. Agnew (1995) "The Rhetoric of Regionalism: The Northern League in Italian Politics." *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS, 20(2), 156–72. On the monster houses the paper by Katharyne Mitchell listed in the references is well worth reading.