

# Negotiating space in post-1968 French thought

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that space has become a critical concept in French theory at a time when the country is undergoing massive transformations due to urbanization, consumerism, migration and ecological dilemma. Post-1968 followers of spatial theory felt that its existential basis (where space tends to be a function of time) was rapidly changing. They assessed these shifts critically at the same time that they sought new ways of *thinking space*. It is clear today that concepts of space not only vary with the theorists' disciplines or "places" in which they work; they also evolve over time. This article posits, firstly, that what was initially perceived as a loss of existential space under the impact of the state was really due to globalization. Secondly, the paper examines a gamut of theory to consider how an evolving concept of space can be "translated" and "negotiated" for use in today's context, in which there are new and more pressing issues—ecological disturbance, the end of the nation-state, the advent of massive migrations. Theory now asks how the world can be made habitable.

In the aftermath of the turbulent 1960s, space has become an operative concept in much French literary and cultural theory. As a general rule, it can be said that *space* emerges in place of *time*, which was the measure of a dialectics synonymous with progress and the manufacture of history. In literature and philosophy, before the term becomes a critical object as such, it is often known as a spacing (*espacement*). Its active or even predicative form is aimed at undoing binary oppositions underlying Western metaphysics and the full or self-identical historical subject. Jacques Derrida and other writers and thinkers (e.g., Maurice Blanchot, Hélène Cixous, Jean-Luc Nancy) introduce time in space and open gaps in the official philosophical systems fashioned to enable an easy pedagogy aimed at producing subjects obedient to the ideology of the state and nation into which they have grown. In his own writings on the pedagogy of philosophy, it was Derrida who in fact was

among the first to show how spacing is linked to the psychic apparatus as difference, deferment or *différance*.

Without disputing the philosopher's findings on spacing that merit being put in epigraph, I have chosen to focus on another current that, by way of cultural and critical theories, rediscovers space in reaction to the compression imposed by a bureaucratic French state, soon exploited by an invasive American-style consumerism ultimately spread through control of technologies enabling rapid and pervasive circulation of information. Theorists from Henri Lefebvre to Michel de Certeau, Jean Baudrillard, Marc Augé, Paul Virilio, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Bruno Latour and Etienne Balibar sense that the ideology of space into which they were born is rapidly changing. Most perceive these changes as a loss of an existential relation with the world, but nonetheless also see it as an opening that enables the dismantling of obsolescent concepts and cumbersome symbolic orders inherited from modernity. At stake in their writings is the opening of a *habitus*. Coined by Marcel Mauss, the word enables the anthropologist to show how structures determine practices. Recognizing the constraints of *habitus*, and intent on looking for new spaces, these theorists are keen on making the world *habitable*. The latter term, which resonates with some distant echoes of Heidegger, indicates the commitment to an ethics of life and ecology.

The critical assessments of these philosophers vary according to personal methodologies; they have also evolved over the past four decades as the problems of France and the world change from 1968 to 1989, to 2001 and beyond. In the process, these critics move from a focus on the subject in relation to the state, to citizen-subjects in a world of transnational corporatism and global financial and human flows. While it is commonly understood among them that space can never be separated from time, their local investigations of the everyday, of Paris and France, open progressively to a more general questioning of space that includes the status of the nation-state, the European Union and its place in the greater world.

Often credited with the reinvention of space in critical and cultural theory, Henri Lefebvre notes already in *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991a c1947) that political and religious structures repress humans. New spaces have to be created, beginning with the everyday, to make humans accede to life. This he finds first in the advent of an urban revolution (2003 c1970), and later in the awareness of a generalized production of space (1991b c1974), that come with the passing of the industrial age whose formative agents bore illusions of dominating nature and its inhabitants. Lefebvre assures his followers that even in the midst of increasingly uneven economic development, they can re-appropriate their bodies, lived space and the everyday as well as city spaces and the street, a symbol of popular power. Exposing what he calls the lethal tenets of official space, Lefebvre urges his public to recapture their cities and their bodies in order to lead lives free of alienation. Critical of bureaucratic organization, he argues for the importance of desire and

*élan*. Despite the progressive intensification of capitalism and belatedly recognizing the growing mass of ghettos in France and all over the world, he holds out cautious hope for the realization of this utopia in which the lived body would be in harmony with its milieu and create a space that would make this possible: workers of the world, your bodies are key to your future!

Similarly, in his writings devoted to cultural anthropology, Michel de Certeau notes in *The Practices of Everyday Life* (1984 c1979) how people deal creatively with the bureaucratic procedure that the French state has imposed since the advent of the Third Republic. They have recourse to time-honored ruses and tricks to gain agency by introducing space—which he suggests is a field of play—in official places governed by fixed rules. For Certeau, however, space becomes a vector that introduces unpredictable movement into the otherwise inert order imposed by the state. Appealing to Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology, he declares that space is existence and existence is spatial (1984:120). Through ordinary or everyday practices people invent ways of “doing” things in the slightest and most ordinary areas of life, including talking, walking and even cooking. They make the world habitable. Certeau envisages these practices as metaphors—taken literally, as modes of transport or conveyance. Analogy, the basis of metaphor and poetry, is reinserted into everyday life in order to equate its spaces with pleasure obtained through surreptitious movement. Like Lefebvre, Certeau looks at the backward, archaic or forgotten areas of the everyday. He observes that “ordinary” people always negotiate and open temporary spaces through quotidian practices that escape the clutches of power without overtly contesting its presence. In his political writings, in *The Capture of Speech* (1997 c1994), Certeau stresses the negotiation of immigrant spaces. He asks how the practice not only of a language, but also of habitus that for the immigrant originates in a psychic and geographical displacement, affects the relation of the French nation-state to its increasingly hybrid population.

The compression of space, a symptom of the demise of everyday life, is due as much to an oppressive order of administrative efficiency as to a growing American-style consumerism. The latter are what Jean Baudrillard (1996) analyzes first in connection with the French bourgeois interior. The loss of one order of life can introduce mobility in others. Rather than being born into a fixed, “hexagonal” order of France, its citizens—especially those with means at their disposal—are now turned toward the attractions of the free market. This freedom, however, is limited by the fact that consumerism, despite advertisement that pitches images of unbounded freedom, introduces constraints that restrict mobility. A new social hierarchy is quickly formed according to the price tag attached to objects. In Baudrillard’s Marxist lexicon, as exchange value of an object does away with its use value, humans enter into a new period where structural laws of value reign supreme. A fairly clear model of his spatial theory is implied: any attempt we may make to return to a previous “moral” order or of reviving existential territories of times past

turns out to be hopelessly utopian. When humans leave the analog and enter into the digital age, what they felt to be the territory of their lives vanishes in view of abstract signs that measure simple quanta of input and output. Visible evidence of this shift is manifest when both the bourgeois interior and the fixed architectural plan of each town (previously assembled around its church, mayor's office and market place) lose their importance under the impact of electronic technologies. The waning of a traditional bourgeois order becomes the condition of possibility for opening new spaces. Or does it? A repressive aspect is found where the new order sells the *idea* of an unfixed or de-centered continuum. It hides the effects of its own simulation where false realism and artificially revived icons of unrestricted, open, moving and negotiable space are the matter of cleverly designed marketing strategies.

The illusion of flexible and free-floating space in Baudrillard's writings is affiliated with the defining traits of a post-modern continuum. His prose is redolently nihilistic when he suggests that we can do nothing to counter it or even consider alternative spaces. Originating in a bourgeois milieu, the nihilism seems patent or even designer-styled. True, with the waning of symbolic spaces, the meaning of a traditional French culture, owing its values to the dreams of the Revolution and the Third Republic, vanish in global spheres of operation. By strong and marked contrast, when he returns from the not-so-exotic shores of Western Africa, in *Non-Places* Marc Augé (1995 c1992) decides to focus on an anthropology of the near—the proximate, local, everyday—in France. Following what he calls the demise of monumental history due to an overabundance of events televised 24/7 and the multiplication of spaces that lead to the return of a market-driven “ego,” the inherited characteristics of French culture—its sensuousness, its exceptionalism, its egalitarian ethic—also go global. The French character is on sale at international airports, duty-free, in row upon row of shops purveying pinot and perfume. Inexorably a variety of “non-places” (airport lounges, highway rest stops, convenience stores, shopping malls), hardly based on kinship structures, begin to proliferate. However, registering without nostalgia the unstoppable transformations taking place, Augé thinks that a different “French” culture, defined by new and novel singularities and held together by other modes of assembly, will emerge and force us to relearn how to think about space (1995:36).

Yet, do electronic networks and anthropological spaces simply coexist as peacefully as Augé first seems to imply? The anthropologist himself would seem less sanguine in his later writings, such as *Le Metro Revisited* (*The Subway Revisited*, 2008), in which the Certallian invention of trajectories in the subway, that had been the subject of *Un Ethnologue dans le Metro* (*In the Metro*, 2002 c1986), are increasingly occluded and occulted. And in his writings after 2008 he burrows further and further into pre- and post-war memory in order to appeal to the effects of a national sensibility becoming digitized. He paradoxically finds existential space in

the “constrained time” (Lefebvre) of lounges in airports where he finally has leisure and calm enough to reflect and write. He begs his readers to wonder if the international and highly neuter character of electronic communication is cause for the disappearance of all cultural spaces and their existential territories.

Augé’s documentation of a certain *loss of meaning* is what Paul Virilio (2008), a theorist of technology, calls the anthropologist’s *premonition*. Virilio sees the world under the yoke of increasing militarization and with it the implementation of a new moral imperative of speed. Acceleration of experience causes space to become felt not in its intensity or extensiveness, but as a function of time. He dates a major change in the concept of space from a childhood memory when he saw allied planes fly over the bunkers and bastions the Nazis had erected along the coast of Normandy. New deployment of air power led to the idea that space could no longer be determined by the demarcation of an inside and outside. After the bombing and invasion of France, he noted, borders criss-cross *inside* a territory. From this moment, that he discusses in his early work in the 1970s, especially in *Bunker Archeology* (1994 c1975), he traces a rapid evolution of the concept of space that reaches a critical point in 1984 with the publication of *L’espace Critique (The Lost Dimension, 1991)*—the same year, he likes to point out, as William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. With the advent of the speed of light, traditionally extensive space had been all but obliterated. With electronic communication available to a general public, first with the advent of television and now with computers, space is lost and time—hardly ever “regained” in the manner of Proust—becomes real time of the current moment and nothing more. History and myth that used to inform our relation with spaces and places are progressively eradicated. In the new economic regime humans lose a sense of existential depth that used to define their cultural space. Victims of manipulative images, of what is no longer simply advertisement but a full-fledged, all-pervasive propaganda machine, they must, argues Virilio, reintroduce reflection into the critical reception of the thousands of images that appear in each and every hour of everyday life.

Based on electronic communication, a new power elite (moguls of the media, CEOs, military technocrats) goes fast at the top of what Virilio calls a new social pyramid from which the old power elite—liberal professionals as well as academics and real artists (Virilio often mentions Bill Viola and Michael Snow)—has been eliminated. Those who ascend are *quick* to cast a true strategy of deception upon those at the bottom, who move *slowly* because they buy into the consumer culture. An immense majority, however, lives entirely outside this pyramid. And they are not tourists on the outskirts of Cairo who gaze upon its immensity: they constitute the *banlieues* (suburbs) that have become worldwide zones of misery. For people living in them, it is not a question of reclaiming existential depth but of being deprived even of access to the everyday. Virilio makes clear the dire circumstances in which humans are living and warns them of even more dangerous worlds to come. In some

of his later work, such as in *City of Panic* (2005 c2004), written after the events of 2001, he claims that an emotional democracy now replaces a political democracy. Taken hostage by an onslaught of propaganda and pre-processed information, people can no longer even think. Here we witness a true *crêpuscule des lieux* or a twilight of place (the formula playing on Richard Wagner's opera, *Crêpuscule des Dieux*, the French translation of *Twilight of the Gods*) (2005:113–143). To remedy the situation, we have to reinvent political man and, by extension (literally), new spaces. How, Virilio does not say.

No one will deny that the existential tradition of space into which these critics were born has undergone dramatic change. Are things as hopeless as Baudrillard suggests in shrugging his shoulders or as dire as Virilio portentously makes them out to be? Has the idea of invention of existential territories gone the way of all flesh? Should humans not rather learn how to exist in a world of speed and to think space and time accordingly? Other philosophers and theorists have responded to this question in different ways. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari claimed several decades ago that we have to analyze the world in today's conditions, that is, from the standpoint of those very megacities, the ubiquitous electronic communication and financial centers that Virilio so aptly describes. In 1980, in what they call a "universal history," Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987 c1980), criticize Western "arborescent" metaphysical thinking whose ways, they observe, are often sedentary and proprietary. They introduce the concept of the weightless rhizome that they associate with nomadic thought, which they assume to be forever on the move. The contemporary world, they claim, is in incessant motion; it actively composes and recomposes itself at dizzying speeds.<sup>1</sup> Rhizomes are lines and connections that cut through median areas. Space literally exists *between* the lines they trace. It does not preexist but is a function of passage. Instead of binaries such as *either/or*, the world is made of alliances of things constantly adding to one another, + + +. Enclosed entities, inside and outside, are replaced with "plateaus"—a term the authors borrow from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson—held together by intensity, from which lines detach themselves in a constant movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. It is rooted thinking, in the form of a tree, that traces deep furrowed, fixed lines, such as those dealing with nations, race, ethnicities and class.

Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari argue for a rethinking of space in terms of the distinction of things smooth and striated. Striated spaces would be city spaces defined by the gridded aspect of their architecture, institutions, laws, hierarchies and fixed centers. Smooth spaces are quasi-boundless, much like steppes, deserts, the sea or air, where circulation is intense and can go in all directions. Yet, these smooth spaces (such as the ocean) can always be re-appropriated where dominant powers have managed to use the mobile medium for strategic purposes. For as much as smooth seems positive and striated negative, the distinction is heuristic: most

striated city spaces are constantly in the process of being smoothed again. Lines separate themselves and lead to new ways of thinking that may be inventive, as Bateson would have it, in the manner of prairie grasses or inversely, like weeds, offering little creative use.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, written in the wake of May 1968, the philosopher and analyst claim that thought-images linger long after an event has taken place. They can be reactivated at any moment, and from them a special dynamism can be lifted. The 1960s in general, and May 1968 in France in particular, afford such a possibility for the reactivation of several thought-images, like that of the nomadic war machine that captured the state on the Asian steppes of the thirteenth century. With that in mind, Deleuze and Guattari argue for a “de-striating” or smoothing of space when they witness uprisings from Algeria to Vietnam, and from the United States to Latin America.

After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the philosopher and the analyst refuse to see a triumph of liberalism opening new spaces where the barrier had been. Even if the possibility now exists to address what Guattari calls the North-South imbalance, conditions do not allow new vectors of exchange (2000 c1989). They blame the media and capitalist forces for the infantilization and even dissolution of the subject and the disappearance of any real voice. For Deleuze, because of the fetishization of money, modern life is so rotten that even art, which was always one of his preferred modes for the opening of new spaces (1995 c1990), has lost its inventive edge. In turn, to the surprise of his readers, Guattari insists on the necessity of reconstructing the subject. He argues, with recourse to Sartrean vocabulary, that a rigidly reigning *en-soi* (in itself) has to be replaced by a precarious *pour-soi* (for itself), an active state liable to reconstruct existential territories that are not simply death-laden or based on closed repetition (Guattari, 2000:40). He sees that the Marxist distinction between the infra- and superstructure has been replaced by interchangeable semiotic chains of economic, juridical and scientific character. Everyone who deals with subjectivation (the vital process by which individuals learn how to cope with their ambient world), including educators, architects, urban planners and artists, as well as those working in sports, fashion, food and the media, have the responsibility of doing away with an alleged transferential neutrality. They now must introduce a wedge that creates interruptions (*vacuoles*, in Deleuze’s terms) and opens spaces that can change collective intelligence and sensibility and enable the construction of new existential territories.

Guattari substitutes philosophy with an *ecosophy*, that is, the wisdom of cultivating one’s habitat, according to mental, social and natural ecological registers. Humans have to open even the smallest of spaces for the sake of reintroducing flexibility into their thinking, replacing exclusions with alliances, and rethinking relations with their own bodies and those of others. They must, furthermore, reconsider nature from the conditions of a densely populated, highly technologized

world while orienting technologies toward what can be done in our fragile planetary ecosystem. It is only on these conditions, Guattari asserts, that the desert can bloom again. As Deleuze writes:

What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume (1995:176).

The opening of micro-spaces engages politics. It deals with the actualization of virtuals and with a resistance not only to the state, but to international capitalism that, after 1989, they see dominating the world. Theorists, Guattari wrote in *Molecular Revolutions* (1984:253, c1977) cannot remain enclosed in the concepts of an established signature. As scientists constantly update their concepts, so must philosophers (or "ecosophers"). *Bricoleurs*, they too must piece together new concepts with the pliers and calipers of their mental tool boxes.

Deleuze and Guattari theorize space in the post-1968 years, but after 1989 they avow an increasing difficulty to do so. Much like the authors of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bruno Latour and Etienne Balibar use a similar idiolect to engage different alliances and connections. Latour dismisses any attempt to recover existential depth and declares that we should ask how to exist in networks. His theory of a flat world consisting of myriad networks along which humans circulate incessantly resembles a rhizomatic vision. Modernity, Latour's *bête noire*, was a world rife with distinctions of inclusion and exclusion and of inside and outside. Heraclitian and Deleuzian, Latour too sees the world in constant movement. What he calls the *furet du social*, as in the pass-me-the-slipper game, moves humans along networks through which they mediate with machines. Any arrest in this circulation is temporary and instantaneous, much like a digital snapshot. Latour both dismisses Virilio's metaphor of the social pyramid and the idea of "society" *tout court* simply because we can never totalize a world that exists only in movement, in what he calls a "cascade of images." The society of "information" is a chimera in view of its process of ongoing transformation. Information hides the existence of concrete networks and the tiny hiatus that separates one transformation from the other. It is what he dismisses as an obsession with the zoom and the double click of the mouse that gives humans the illusion of being able to arrest and totalize persons and situations and to create panoramas—much as they did during the heyday of the genre in the nineteenth century.

Mocking the heroic times of Sartrean existentialism whose cargo dream was heavy with transcendence, he declares that instead of pondering whether existence comes before or after essence, it is more practical to follow all the operations and transformations that surround the event of ordering an espresso in the Café Flore in

Paris. The exercise reveals how there exists only a vast network of always partial “oligoptics,” from those that organize the weather forecast, to those that organize classrooms, the Parisian police, its central market or the fabrication and consumption of a cup of coffee. Careful review of the episode reveals to the coffee drinker that progressive reductions from the large to the small or vice versa cannot be tracked, but *changes in scale* of everyday operations can be accounted for. These oligoptics, mainly computer screens, enable large megacities, like Paris, to function. While modernity had been predicated on progress, hence on time, today space has become a defining element that exists between the lines of the myriad simultaneous networks. It is an area where citizens breathe freely enough to consider how the world can be made habitable.

Latour’s political charge is to restitute *possibility* to the world. In his description of Paris, where people might have the leisure to walk, ride in their cars or talk in expensive caf  s, the art of the possible seems to be, like space itself as Henri Lefebvre had envisaged it, unevenly distributed. It appears to be open to some while closed to others.

Latour accounts nonetheless for the contradiction in a short essay in which he addresses the construction of a common space in a globalized world. After September 2001 he criticizes the “Western world” for its continued archaic use of modernist concepts: to begin with, its belief in a universal science and unilateral nature; and second, its assumption that its own science is universal. Such misguided belief leads to the well known associative chain that links science, reason, technology, democracy, the market and even human rights. The West “tolerates” others as long as they leave their ontologies aside—in other words, concepts and practices of time and space ill-suited to its ideology of development. The recognition of multiple ways of thinking and living with space would lead in the words of Isabelle Stengers (with whom Latour affiliates) to a true cosmopolitics. To be unified, a common world-space can emerge only through discussion and negotiation (2002:43–44). The vital question is how to construct common spaces. Responding to his critics, he continues: “The whole enterprise around...networks which superficially looks like a reduction, a limitation to tiny local scenes—is in effect a search for space, for a vastly more comfortably inhabitable space” (Latour, 2009:141).

Latour proposes intellectuals as the *prima facie* negotiators best enabled to create these common spaces. They have to accept that all truths are constructed; from this axiom, they will have to enter in negotiations that will take place between Westerners and others. And these negotiators will belong to different cultures rather than to nation-states. Negotiations will also lead to hybridizations and an intersection of networks that include everyday spaces, city spaces, nation-states and world spaces.

Emphasizing what he calls the “road of the concrete,” he vows to avoid the trap of the “big picture” of societies and follow transformations along the threads of networks in order to construct a non-modernism suited to unify the world. To think of the world as flat and as an array of networks does indeed introduce what Latour calls breathing space. The philosopher writes of “subscribing to networks” the way people do to telephone carriers. However, access to networks remains unevenly distributed and if the world is flat—as Thomas Friedman also claims in his newsprint support of liberalism—hierarchies are nonetheless reintroduced based on class, gender, race, ethnicities and other forms of discrimination. Discussions of these common spaces—and Latour is well aware of this—seems to exclude many potential negotiators or what the philosopher calls “subscribers” to networks. Latour speaks of different worlds but avoids the discussion of citizenship, geography or geopolitics. Are the latter still relevant in a global, electronically interconnected world?

A first answer is found in the work of the fellow-traveling intellectual-diplomat Etienne Balibar (1998). Like Latour, he also acknowledges Deleuze in staking the claim that a *nouvel espace*, a new (and smoother) space must include the French state, the European Union and the world at large. Balibar writes explicitly from a context in which demographic concentration has increased precipitously. Theoretical musings are at best deliberative examples that cannot be separated from practice. Because of the speed with which the world changes, rectifications—Balibar uses Deleuze’s term—are continuous. In France, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed spatial transformation with the influx of immigrants and their descendents. To have the right to a minimal existential territory—hence to an everyday life—the subject has to be complemented by an active citizen.

This leads Balibar to a rearticulation of the nation-state in the context of inner and outer borders. The latter have to be made porous so as to let not only goods but people circulate. Focusing on the violence of mental and physical borders, he concludes that the latter always differ depending on the point from where they are seen. An undoing of borders that contribute to racism and various anthropological discriminations is essential. For what concerns France, the nation must recognize that “alterity” is part of its constituency. The country must reassess its policies of citizenship in order to shape politically active citizens, unlike the souls at the bottom of Virilio’s hypothetical pyramid, who are market-driven. Every citizen has a right to a minimal existential territory from which to speak and act. Citizenship has to be a right even for those who are not nationals or who possess neither French passports nor credit cards. With recourse to Hannah Arendt’s expression of a “right to rights” in her discussion of stateless persons after World War II, Balibar declares that citizenship can no longer be just one of fate, related to kinship and the soil. He argues for an imperfect citizenship that would be temporary and give people who

share a common territory the right to speak and act so as to create existential, social and national territories and enable the creation of habitable spaces for all.<sup>2</sup>

Balibar applies the same criteria in his discussion of the European Union. Far less universalizing than Deleuze and Guattari (whom he criticizes for constructing a hyperspace that capitalism all too easily coopts), Balibar is aware of the speed with which alliances are made and undone in an accelerated world. He argues for movement and circulation from a geopolitical context. His subject-citizens, instead of being merely formatted as they were for Baudrillard or Virilio, are shown having multiple identities as a result of simultaneous appurtenances (Latour would say, networks): the family, the profession, the sports club, as well as increasingly the social spaces on the Internet. Multiple identities can never be reduced to politics based on national or religious identity—evidenced in such expressions as a Frenchman, a Muslim or a foreigner. Such verbal reductions—what Latour dismissed as the double-clicks with the mouse—always produce exclusion and lead to violence. A Marxist whose thought has evolved significantly since his early days in the 1960s, Balibar continues to militate nonetheless for a just society and for the creation of social spaces open to all. Each of us, he notes, always writes from a locus of fiction (*lieu de fiction*) and *constructs* the real from experience and knowledge (1998:15). The mission of the intellectual is to rephrase “wrong discourses” such as those of the National Front. The same holds true for European and world-spaces under domination of global capitalism against which, Balibar writes in 2003, no organized resistance has yet appeared.

Creation of habitable spaces has to be local, regional, worldwide and ongoing. Just prior to the war in Iraq, Balibar further develops his idea of the way *nouvel espaces* can be made possible. It is incumbent upon intellectuals, whose tasks include development of the art of diplomacy, to negotiate their advent. Intellectuals no longer function, as in the nineteenth century, as interpreters—that is, as some kind of high priest or specialist of objects of one sort or another. The intellectual (in the words he borrows from Fredric Jameson) is a *vanishing mediator*. He or she negotiates, translates and then eclipses himself or herself. The translation is both linguistic and cultural. While (as Certeau has already argued) certain codes translate easily between cultures, others, with unconscious, symbolic roots that include sexuality, life, death, marriage and symbolic law, are more resistant. They are translatable, but always with remainders of healthy alterity. Negotiations are ongoing and have to adapt to the speed with which a world evolves in which new actors arrive on the scene every day and new alliances are formed. The universalism the West once knew of the days of modernism, Balibar stresses, now witnesses many competing universalities.

To conclude, space becomes a major critical concept in 1968, at the very moment when a traditional arena, in which human progress was measured in terms of time, loses ground. Space as concept and practice emerges when the philosophers

reviewed above take account of issues that include consumerism, the power that the media exerts upon the world at large, the forces of globalization and immigration and the increased demographic pressure on the world's limited resources. In the 1960s, in France a decade of hope and change, space was discerned through attention to the everyday in the context of an otherwise invasive bureaucracy. Its presence is later felt when consideration is given to the composition of the nation-state under the impact of the media, immigration and international economic development. Space becomes the matrix in which the European Union relates to a global condition where, having reigned throughout the period of modernism, Western universalism is replaced by conflicting universalities.

Space is conceived less and less in the existential register it knew in the work of Henri Lefebvre and his followers. Existence and essence give way, we witness in the reflections of Latour and Balibar, to network and negotiation. The everyday now presupposes a minimal mental or physical territory given by right, from which other rights, at once national and international, can be negotiated. These nine French theorists, diverse and contradictory, have opened new avenues of reflection and practice of space. Their work provides a foundation for further thought and action at this very moment when, more than ever, it appears that space, like most things and creatures found on the planet, is a highly endangered species.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Speed in Deleuze and Guattari deals with acceleration and deceleration in a world that is in movement. It does not have the exact same ring as in Virilio.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Arendt, he includes Herman von Gunsteren (Balibar, 2004:130–132).

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