

Elizabeth McLean Petras

8. GLOBALISM MEETS REGIONALISM: PROCESS VERSUS PLACE

INTRODUCTION

The study of regionalism vis-à-vis globalism parallels the two poles of Terence Hopkins's own intellectual development which began with the study of small group interaction and culminated with a focus on the dynamics of the world-system. In his intellectual trajectory, Hopkins encompassed the three levels of analysis which comprise the intellectual substance of sociology as a discipline: the interpersonal dynamics of small groups; the context of large-scale formal institutions; and the superordinate structural sphere of society and economy. Within the two bookends of Hopkins's intellectual thought we find insight into a pressing challenge which is both age-old and contemporary: understanding the persistence of ethnic distinctiveness in the intersection of place, economy, and everyday life.

Ethnic distinctiveness is linked to regional identity. It often persists despite profound changes in the global system which we

might assume would weaken or extinguish it. What is puzzling is how and why it survives, even when the conditions which forged and nurtured the ethnic group no longer exist. Ethnicity is a social construction which generally includes identifiable cultural traditions and artifacts, overlapping kin networks, and, at some time, common territorial origins. This essay introduces two of these factors: aspects of territoriality, or place, and the reproduction of culture in everyday life, as they interact with the historical process of the world-system. We are interested in how regionalism interacts with globalism to stimulate ethnic consciousness. Identification with place is often expressed as ethnic identity and vice-versa.

How do we understand a phenomenon which is intensifying at the close of the twentieth century: the reemergence and persistence of ethnic distinctiveness among populations where it had apparently disappeared, especially as the impact of the world-system becomes more immediate in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Identification with place, or region, is a mechanism for peoples to protect themselves against the more powerful process of the system. From the perspective of the ethnic, or regional, group, we can conceptualize the interaction of process and place by looking at the overlapping and interacting of three spheres—the sphere of control, the sphere of experience, and the sphere of influence. They correspond in a way to the three levels of analysis in the study of sociology:

- Sphere of Influence: World-System Process of Change
- Sphere of Experience: Interface between the World-System and the Regional-Place
- Sphere of Control: Regional-Place and Everyday Life

Place, as we introduce it here, refers not only to a regional or geographic site, but also to the social exchanges and community networks associated with that locale. Economy refers to the capacity to optimize life-chances and provide well-being for the community and individuals of the group. Culture is defined as the behaviors and artifacts of everyday life, and to the collective accounts through which the history of an ethnic group is reproduced.

To put place and process into the historical perspective of the

contemporary world-system, we need to develop a model similar in concept to that of the commodity chain in the world-economy. The adaptation of this concept by Gereffi and Appelbaum in their study of the international garment industry is a useful model (Appelbaum & Gereffi 1994). Could we devise a methodology which maps a system of regional nodes and the cultural, religious, and ethnic identities they represent, within the larger processes of the world-system, something analogous to the methodology of commodity chains developed to study production and consumption within the world-system? Just as commodity chains attempt to capture the activity of nodes located in specific places within the larger movements of production and consumption, identification of ethno-regional nodes might allow us to examine the network of responses of peoples to larger forces of social change originating within the world-system. The research question is real. Whether an attempt to capture it methodologically is only a diversion is problematic. Hopkins taught me the joy of toying around with abstractions, especially because, just every so often, perhaps when one is approaching an altered abstract state, a useful insight comes along!

Why introduce the concept of ethno-region? Because identification with place is often expressed as ethnic identity. Ethnic distinctiveness was often bounded by geographic regions, and the influence of the region of origin continues as an element of ethnicity although the group may relocate. What ideal indicators could our methodology trace? Three variables are essential: ethnic links to territory; the economy associated with place; and the reproduction of everyday culture. How does place, or regionalism, interact with global processes to stimulate ethnic consciousness?

What are the implications of globalism for regionalism? Regional linkages of ethnic distinctiveness endure over time. As the countervailing forces of globalization become more immediate in the lives of ordinary people, so has the commitment to region often deepened. Places have culture. When history repeats itself, it most often seems to repeat itself in place. The identification of a people with a region includes a collective memory of place.

Identification with place serves several needs for regional and ethnic groups. First, it creates the impression of greater control and predictability in the context of uncontrollable global influences. Secondly, it satisfies the need for regional or ethnic group identity in the face of impersonal processes. It also provides an environment which is concrete for groups which feel vulnerable to abstract and invisible forces. Finally, it responds to the urge of peoples to shape their life chances.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

The issue of ethnicity and place serves as our point of reference for discussing regionalism. Definitions of ethnicity are invariably imprecise and even tautological, since the phenomenon itself is complex and ambiguous. Ethnic membership is essentially self-selected. Ethnic identification is both self-designated and assigned by others. Theoretical interpretations about ethnicity can be grouped into three categories: the abstract and primordial interpretations that point to the human need for belonging; situational interpretations that focus on minority and majority relations; and theories about ethnic economies defined by mutual economic exchanges within the ethnic group and between the ethnic group and the dominant society.

The first interpretation is most closely identified with Clifford Geertz who argued that "ethnicity and ethnic grouping are primordial factors in the sense that they are given in the very conditions of human existence" (Geertz 1963: 108-09). Similar to some definitions of nationalism, ethnicity in Geertz's definition implies a kind of instinctual drive that impels humans to seek others who are of the same "blood" or culture, and conversely, to mistrust those they consider as outsiders or the "Other." Geertz identifies this phenomenon as one of the central conditions of human existence, thus implying that drive for ethnic "belongingness" is instinctual and therefore neither learned nor adopted.

Situational definitions of ethnicity are based on observations of mutual interests and common support systems which are essential to

the existence of an ethnic group. Ethnic networks provide access to a variety of resources which can be mutually exploited by members of the group. Unlike Geertz's conception that ethnic identification is an end in itself, situational definitions emphasize mutuality and solidarity in which ethnicity is a means of cooperation for the attainment of individual and group ends.

Ethnic economies based on ethnic entrepreneurs and networks located within an economic niche within the dominant economy are widely observed in the United States and any society where ethnic economic niches are clearly defined. Theoretical debates about the structure and purpose of ethnic economic networks question whether they serve as vehicles for mutual economic support within the group, or as strategies for entrepreneurs who exploit weaker members of their ethnic group for their own advancement. This definition focuses on the instrumental relationships of ethnicity, rather than the fundamental psychological aspects or the broader social context in which ethnicity functions.

This essay incorporates aspects of all of these definitions. Ethnicity is defined as a social phenomenon rather than an abstract ideal type. We try to identify some factors which contribute to the coherence and reproduction of ethnic identity. We argue that identity, which resides in the collective consciousness of the group, is often bound to a special place in which the group perceives it had been originally united. The ethnic economy refers to the resources, networks, and organizations which the group manipulates in order to maintain the physical and fiscal well-being of its members. We emphasize the importance of culture as the medium through which memories of ethnic community are organized.

ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Theory and research about ethnicity in the West, particularly in the United States, tend to concentrate on economic competition among groups and the way in which unequal distribution of scarce resources is reinforced through political rivalries. Since economic betterment

is the single most powerful motivation for groups to immigrate to the United States, it follows that economic success is integral to the goals and identity of all ethnic groups. Ethnic economic competition is most often studied in the context of the labor market. This in turn is then generalized to issues of social stratification at large.

Issues of ethnic culture tend to be treated as secondary, and related to sociological phenomena of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, stereotyping, and prejudice toward the "Other." In a society formed by successive waves of immigrants, each labeled by their national origin and therefore, their ethnicity, all groups are, or have been, potentially the "Other." Not surprisingly, the drive for national coherence stresses understanding, acceptance, and minimizing ethnic hostilities. The American plea for multiculturalism stems from the ever present tension between the political ideals of equal rights for all, and the economic reality of competition for limited opportunities and resources.

So the U.S. case does not seem to offer the best answer for why ethnic distinctiveness persists so tenaciously in other parts of the world. The concept of place seldom enters into discussions of ethnicity in the U.S. By definition, Americans have abandoned their original place to adopt a new society to which they will eventually adjust, and in the process, also transform. Persistence of ethnic distinctiveness is also tenuous because no group can truly lay a legitimate claim to place. Periodic campaigns by nativists to claim special rights as "Americans" frequently coincide with periods of economic recession, but they are usually based on tactics designed to conserve specific economic and political power during intermittent periods of scarcity.

Sooner or later, immigrants to the U.S. surrender their ties to "place" as a source of their ethnic identity. Sociologists have observed the tendency for ethnic distinctiveness of immigrants, those who are not clearly identified by race, to wash out after the third generation. By then, ethnicity often becomes merely symbolic or related to subjective "feelings" of identity. Note that this is not necessarily true of race which resists obliteration and has quite different implications in the United States because of histories of restriction and degradation. Like ethnicity, the concept of race is also a social construction. But racial

distinctions are reinforced by the fact that racial minorities can be publicly identified because of their physical attributes. Dominant groups impose racial identity through prejudice and exclusion. Racial distinctiveness has been maintained by labor market stratification and sustained by discrimination. The process of ethnogenesis or intermarriage is prevalent among all ethnic groups, but racial groups, especially Black Americans, have not been significantly included in this process.

Elsewhere in the world at the close of the century, however, identification with place remains an intricate aspect of ethnic distinctiveness. Even when it exists only in the memories of the group, common regional origins feature strongly in ethnicity perceptions. This is observed throughout Central and western Europe. Greeks, for example, refer to themselves as “from” the village and region where their family originally owned land, even though they themselves may be generations removed. In Spain, one might expect that the bitter legacy of the civil war and its fundamental ideological conflicts would remain more prominent than ethnic divisions. But conflict and divisions continue along ethnic lines identified by region and expressed primarily through language. Poles have endured long and valiant national struggles to keep and maintain their Polishness. Yet they often identify themselves in terms of a specific ethnic group even within a region that may have undergone repeated transfer of civil status from one nation to another and where, inevitably, original ethnic distinctions are blurred. The same is true of the British for whom the notion of identity is fuzzy because it subsumes not only the core Anglos, but the Welsh, the Irish, and the Celts, all of whom are linked to particular regions.

INTERACTION OF PLACE, CULTURE, AND ECONOMY

Place, culture, and economy provide the context for a collective consciousness of community based on the memories shared by the group. These recollections incorporate past glories, perceived injustices and the traditions of everyday life. But they are always associated with

a special locale. In ethnic lore, perceptions of proprietary relations to place are often frozen in time.

Anderson (1983), for example, has formulated what students of immigration have long observed: cultural and normative behavior of immigrants as a group tends to remain static, fixed at the time they emigrate. Thus, even though the culture and history in their country of origin continues to evolve and modernize, the immigrant group abroad often preserves the ethnic culture and norms that prevailed in that place many years prior. Among immigrants who return after some time abroad, their expressions of ethnic culture are often far more constrained and less dynamic than the actual culture at home.

Similarly, objective conditions may have transformed the place which is the original point of reference for ethnic communities—factories may have closed, wilderness may have been converted into towns, and villages into wilderness. The original ethnic group itself may have voluntarily or involuntarily abandoned the place. But the romanticized attachment endures.

The relation of place and ethnicity is complex. Geographers and psychologists agree that our environment shapes our thoughts, actions, and identity. Humans in turn impose physical and social structures on place. Place consists of both the natural environment—landmarks, topography, interaction with the local climate and repetition of seasons and seasonal activities, the visual impact of the terrain, and the built environment consisting of all the physical and social artifacts of use and symbol constructed by the residents of a region. Place confers identity and perhaps citizenship. Historically, the interaction of people and place was the focal point of ethnic economies. Note, however, that the powerful trends toward economic globalization threaten to undermine or contradict historical uniqueness of place.

Location is intrinsic to social history—from wars to weddings. Contemporary sociologists insist that place, time, and social process cannot be separated, and therefore social analyses of history cannot stand apart from geography anymore than they can be independent from time. Spatial conditions, or structures, which enable and constrain human activity, are themselves social products; in the unfolding of

history, social and spatial structures constantly play on one another in transformational interplay (Pred 1990).

Hiss (1991) refers to the process by which awareness of place is formed as an ongoing experience of simultaneous perception which occurs even when our consciousness is entirely concentrated on something else. “[S]imultaneous perception is more like an extra, or a sixth sense: It broadens and diffuses ... attention ... across all the senses so we can take in whatever is around us ... sensations of touch and balance, ... sights, sounds and smells” (Hiss 1991: xii). The implication is that simultaneous perception contributes to the sense of membership in our communities and in our regions. Regardless of whether our experiences are beautiful, arduous or painful, interaction with place nurtures who we are as individuals and as communities. Thus subtle formation of ties to place must play a role in the ambiguous way in which identity of ethnicity is shaped.

Others have extended the concept of cultural capital to include place, arguing that “capital” refers both to money, and to the complex processes wherein the physical and cultural resources of a place are manipulated for gain. In contemporary history, political boundaries were established to protect the economic use of space by those who had established preeminent control over it. Generally, these boundaries coincided with claims of origin, or the rights to this “place” as the personal “home” of the group. This place was the location of kinship networks, intermingled marriage pools, and bonds of friendship. It was also the site of ethnic trade connections, voluntary affiliations, political institutions, and the like. When the ethnic groups builds temples, churches, and shrines, the place becomes sacred. The places where forebearers are buried are consecrated by ethnic groups. Historical events that occur in a place—proud, tragic or comic—are woven into the historical accounts of the group.

The strength of ethnic solidarity is generally linked to racination or original roots rather than to abstract notions of membership. A proprietary sense of place deepens the awareness of shared “groupness” among those who traditionally resided there or who can trace their lineage there. Given the ease of migration, and the demands

contemporary capitalism places on workers to be geographically mobile, members of the group may no longer live in the mutual proximity necessary for direct multiple networks to exist. However, recollections of concrete social networks which existed in the region of origin are translated into the abstraction of ethnic identity. Ethnic groups are often unaware of how deep their sentimental and primary attachments are to a certain place until they separated from it.

Nevertheless, social trust, which conforms to the notion of reciprocal ethnic relations, is retained. In an effort to preserve continuity, displaced ethnic groups frequently seek to duplicate the ethnic bonds of place by organizing social clubs, mutual aid associations, sports teams, and, of course, religious institutions in their new location. Since ethnicity is a collective rather than an individual phenomenon, these agencies create essential interactive links. They also provide networks in which group members can vest their mutual trust in co-ethnics, rather than in weaker and more risky individual exchanges of the market. Finally, ethnic and regional associations offer support and protection to their members, as well as a mechanism for brokering exchanges with the larger society.

Culture, which is a central criterion of ethnicity, is learned; it is reproduced in the intersection of place, economy, and everyday life. Ethnic culture, for reasons discussed above, is embedded in place. So long as ethnic consciousness exists, the importance of place is never fully eradicated because it is refracted through shared communal memories.

Other groups may enter, or seize control of the place through political or economic domination. In the process, an ethnic group may be dispossessed or forced to relocate to another place, i.e., deracinated. Deracination or uprooting from one's place is one of the most powerful assaults an ethnic group can experience. However, it often stimulates commitment to group solidarity rather than undermining it. This is observed even among members of subsequent generations who have known the place only as it has been replicated for them through the many strata of group memories. For them, ethnicity may be idealized and symbolic, but that does not necessarily weaken the forcefulness of

their commitments. The rapidity with which nationality in Yugoslavia disintegrated into warring ethnic groups, the prolonged sacrifices young Eritreans made for ethnic independence, the bloodletting between young Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, the covert organizations of young Armenians vowing revenge for the genocide of their grandfathers by the Turks, the boy-men who demanded the return of the lands of their fathers and grandfathers in the frontlines in the Palestinian intifada are all cases in point. Why and how? We do not agree with Geertz that these emotions reside in some primordial and perhaps biological human drives, but we do recognize that they are deeply rooted in collective consciousness.

The histories of a place which are told and retold are the crucible for group memories. Memories are also preserved in the intimate acts of culture repeated in everyday life. Community institutions, particularly religious organizations and the set of values and rituals they embody, are central agents. But the most powerful in the locus of consciousness is in personal and family relations. Reproduction of ethnic identity through popular culture cannot be easily extinguished because it is intimate and private. Folk songs, rituals, games, foods, popular sayings, proverbs, and legends contain emotions that promote group consciousness. Prosaic rituals, or truths embedded in everyday life, are the agencies for cultivating ethnic bonds because they are actually derived from complex and unique collective experiences and traditions. In the cultural division of labor, women and grandparents, interacting with children, are more likely to assume the role of reproducing ethnic habits and preferences. The homily that ethnic consciousness is taken in with the mother's milk may be quite accurate since a mother suckling the newest born in a family usually sings to her or him the traditional songs, murmurs the fond nicknames used by the group, and relays snippets of ethnic history in popular rhymes and games.

ECONOMIC LOSS OF PLACE

Deracination, or loss of autonomy over one's place or one's land, is

usually accompanied by a sustained perception of deprivation, especially loss of economic resources. Mourning of loss is a frequent ritual among deracinated groups who identify themselves as victims. Nostalgia about predictability of economic control of place is fundamental in popular ethnic histories. Such a rationale is psychologically more manageable than one which concedes powerlessness of one's group in the face of long-term, large-scale social forces.

Regardless of how extensive and real the economic losses actually are, they offer a potent explanation for current economic privations. The concern with loss or threat to economic resources may even be transformed into a multipurpose explanation for difficulties of any sort experienced by the ethnic group. It may provide a rationale for contemporary insecurities, inadequacies, or wants. Outsiders may not be able to evaluate the justification or consistency of these claims. However, the vague sense of "days when things were good," when we were together, when we had command over our own welfare because we controlled our own place, may be proof enough in the rationale of the group. In a traditional or patriarchal ethnic division of culture, men in particular often seek commonsense explanations for economic hardships. They revert to justifications based on historical loss of place so as to allay fears about their own inability to provide for their families and community.

NATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND THE CONCEPT OF PLACE

Natural regions frequently transcend national boundaries. A "natural" region, whether defined by economic activities, social organizations, geographic features, etc., may be artificially bisected or mutated by the superimposition of political boundaries. One definition of a "natural" region is in terms of the groups that traditionally resided there, or which claimed this region as their place over time. While the national and the political unit are the same, they may not correspond to the ethnicity of the groups they enclose or divide. Consequently, definitions of nationality may conflict with more fundamental ethnic and economic definitions of region.

Over time, political boundaries have been drawn without respect for ethnic group identity or even for principles of nationality. The result is that current territorial maps represent an ethnic jigsaw puzzle. In fact, the idea that national units should or could be congruent with ethnic communities is unworkable. Gellner (1983) has pointed out, for example, that in the case of contemporary Europe, it would be impossible to draw ethnic boundaries on a territorial map, since ethnic, cultural, and religious groups are often separated not only by territory, but within the social structure itself. Although they reside in the same territory, the status and strength of different groups within the society is distinct.

Nevertheless, the notion that national boundaries imposed by modern states are superior in strength to boundaries of place defined by ethnic groups has proven ineffectual. The reemergence of ethnic cultures clustered around the drive to regroup and reclaim their original place has led to region-based ethnic conflicts. Despite wide assumptions that these rivalries had been obliterated by the superior strength of the modern state, ethnic warfare during the past two decades has forced several states to concede their inability to quell aggressive ethnic claims to place.

By definition, national boundaries are based on legal codes. But legal sanctions have been futile in containing many outbursts of the region-based ethnic loyalties, allegiances which in many instances preceded the legal boundaries, and in many cases, conflicted with them. In the face of tenacious ethnic claims to place, modern states have frequently been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to enforce legitimacy of their own political boundaries. In fact, the very legal-rational rules which are the *modus operandi* of the state itself may restrict its ability to restrain or suppress zealous ethnic movements that are informed by the belief that group solidarity takes precedence over respect for the laws of nation. Indeed, the nation itself, is often identified as the source of injury to the ethnic group.

In the half-century since 1945, the ethnic composition of modern states has changed vastly. Most states in Europe contained several ethnic groups within their boundaries but, as we have stated, the

potential for fragmentation and inter-group clashes was restrained by the political and judicial weight of the state. In the past two decades, dramatic structural shifts have altered relations of power between state and citizen in several ways. Two trends predominate. The first has been the incorporation of large immigrant populations as new and permanent ethnic minorities within western Europe. The second has been the deterioration of the powerful internal control of state over citizen after the collapse of the old regimes in eastern Europe, and the redrawing of existing political boundaries across the region. As a result, ethnicity became a much more prominent issue. In the West, rivalries and antagonisms over ethnic rights have proliferated. In the East, where diversity of national minorities had been suppressed by forceful manipulation of the state, the breakdown of obsolete state apparatuses stirred ethnic groups to challenge existing minority and majority relations and to reclaim their ancient rights for autonomy and control of place. Contemporary ethno-religious responses which seek fundamental pre-capitalist social visions as a refuge from the social disruption and the new economic pain imposed by modern capitalism are an example.

MINORITY AND MAJORITY RELATIONS

Ethnic demands for rights usually contain an awareness of loss and of violation of group sovereignty. The sense of one's place being exploited by "Others" reinforces ethnic cohesion rather than undermines it. This in turn is translated into a perception of injustice against the ethnic group, which in circular and cumulative fashion reinforces ethnic identity.

Response of ethnic minorities to injustice may be expressed in different ways: defiance of the "appropriators" or dominant group; deviance, or rejection of the norms of the majority; or marginality between two ethnic points of reference. Occasionally, the reaction is the rejection of one's own ethnicity, and, by implication, xenocentric acceptance of norms of the majority. In other cases, ethnics elect voluntary exile from their place of origin to escape persecution as

members of the group.

Ethnic minorities often challenge the norms, constraints, and conditions imposed on them by the majority. In so doing, they defy the ability of the majority to define their status or subordinate them. Defiance is manifest in political attempts to reclaim control of place through challenges of political boundaries and legitimacy or ownership of land rights. Ethnic political parties, electoral politics, and voluntary groups are legal instruments of defiance, but military attempts to retrieve rights are also increasing.

Cultural nationalism usually precedes the emergence of overt political defiance. In promoting its own culture, a group repudiates the culture of the majority. That is, the group refuses to give up its own habitus, or what Bourdieu (1979) defines as a system of practices that embodies preferences or taste for objects, values, and people. Religion, language, and education are the most common institutions for the organization of cultural resistance. To relinquish them would be tantamount to the group accepting alienation from its own identity. Defiance in the face of threats of exclusion or economic discrimination by the majority is often necessary for the continuation of ethnic identity.

Open repudiation of majority behavior norms may be an unconscious expression of minority identity. Its simplest form is observed in language—deviance from prevailing norms of discourse, or the common assumptions contained within language and language-use, or, even total rejection of the dominant language itself. Speaking the original language of the ethnic group, or a subset of the dominant language such as patois or “Black English” may eventually serve as a means of rallying ethnic defiance. In its most extreme and sometimes self-destructive form, deviance may tend toward social disorganization or “normlessness” and even a drift into the so-called underclass.

Marginality has two dimensions; both are situational. Marginality stems from an imperfect ability to affiliate with either the dominant ethnic majority or one’s own ethnic minority. Even if minorities attempt to assimilate or cooperate with the dominant group, they are seldom accepted unconditionally as full members. On the other hand,

for psychological and sociological reasons, individuals can never totally abandon their original ethnic identity. Even when they are removed in time and space, individuals cannot completely erase memories of their family and community of origin. Ethnic marginality implies a location between two points of identity—that of the majority, or dominant group to which they can only belong provisionally, and that of the minority, or ethnic group of origin to which they will always belong if only in memory.

In the context of marginality, ethnic distinctiveness may remain covert, obscured even from the individual himself. But in given circumstances, the identification with one's original ethnicity may emerge, even when it appeared that the ethnic has abandoned his or her ethnic foundations. I am reminded of an Argentine colleague whose politics and cultural commitments were strongly nationalistic; he was identified by himself and by others in these terms. But after watching a film which portrayed the transport of Jews to the camps in Europe, he asserted with emotion, "In this context I am first a Jew, and secondly an Argentine."

Politically, marginality is often perceived as potentially dangerous by the dominant group. Contemporary history is full of tragedies where members of minorities were persecuted because the majority believed their loyalty could never be fully trusted. They may be branded competitors, blamed for dividing national unity, or worse, accused of being traitors. This stereotype forces on the ethnic a sense of being different, of being the "Other," in the exclusionary sense. In this situation, ethnic minorities may increase their attempts to demonstrate allegiance, or they may emphasize this distinction and take actions in the interest of their own ethnic unity. Either way, the frustration that ensues can lead to overt and even irrational actions in the name of ethnic group membership.

ETHNICITY, ECONOMY, AND PLACE

Economic competition with others is integral to all the minority responses mentioned above; it strengthens social bonds and ethnic

identity. The impression of economic well-being connected to the control or loss of influence and power is a central motif in the common histories of ethnic communities. Even when this interpretation is absolutely false, in the collective consciousness, there is a tendency to mute or ignore the economic realities in order to preserve the sense of group legitimacy. One effect of shared ethnic solidarity in opposing the dominant majority, for example, is to blur the actual competition of interests within the ethnic group. Instead, unity of the ethnic group's interests takes primacy and becomes a generalized response to any and all offenses by others, regardless of whether this response may actually serve the best needs of all members of the group. Whether convictions that a dominant majority is trying to appropriate the resources of ethnic place is current or embedded in many strata of memory, the consciousness of community may spill out into direct actions in the name of a group which had appeared, to the outside world, to have lost its ethnic distinctiveness.

REGIONALISM VS. GLOBALISM

This essay reminds us how resilient ethnic identity is; it is stubborn to eradicate so long as it is linked in the collective memory to place. In the face of superordinate factors—wars, political collapse, or shifts in the global economy—ethnic groups may be dispersed, cultures may be diluted, or economic control shattered. But place remains. Ethnic distinctiveness can galvanize around the role assigned to place in the group's historical consciousness.

In the past quarter of a century, the powerful juggernaut of global capitalism has been relentless in its geographic foraging for new sites of production and markets. Capitalism is not fair. It has no concern for culture, for place, for tradition, or for institutions. It moves wherever it must to sustain its growth and survival. It has broken down existing social ties and rendered individuals more vulnerable and less protected by traditional institutions and practices. Labor markets have collapsed and new ones emerged. Old economic systems of aggregates of states have disintegrated, and political and economic reorganization has

faltered.

Simultaneously, waves of ethnic sentiment and violence have erupted in many places. From support of football teams, to recollection of ancient battles pitched among groups, ethnicity is associated with locale. Rather than destroying regional and ethnic identity, global economic competition may have actually strengthened social bonds rooted in place. The connection between the dynamics of overarching spheres which peoples can only experience, and the local sphere, where peoples can attempt direct control, remains a puzzle. What is the relation between the global nature of capitalism, and the local identity of peoples with place? Where does ethnic consciousness fit into this matrix?

Conceivably, the increased perception of powerlessness which peoples sense in the uncertainty of geographic movements of global capital has stimulated the enduring effort to stake out power over region or the sphere of control. This in turn is expressed in heightened ethnic consciousness. In other words, the mechanisms of reproducing ethnic distinctiveness in response to injustice or the perception of injustice are once again finding expression through defiance and deviance, and resistance to being subordinated or divided by marginality.

With the methodologies we have at hand in the study of subsets of the world-system, can we devise a means to understand the way in which loyalty to region, to the specific place of one's group, is deepened rather than weakened under the impact of larger systemic processes? Somehow, world-system methodology needs to bridge "what" is happening in the system with "where" it is happening in the lives of real people. Is there room for place in the process?

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