

# Chapter 3

## Theorising Space

### from Western Perspectives

#### Introduction

The constructs of space and time are basic assumptions that western traditional academic disciplines have used and continue to use to contextualise, analyse and discuss how humanity perceives and relates to its existence. Space has also become discourse in its own right in the Social Sciences. By using the word 'space' in the phrases 'space for Maori' and 'creating space for Maori', discourse about education for Maori enters into discourse about space. This chapter explores discourses of space from a social science perspective in order to intersect them, in later chapters, with discourses of education for Maori, in the context of western traditional tertiary institutions.

Within the social sciences there are two main tracks that spatial discourse can be said to follow. One is a largely material understanding of space whereby space is considered in the context of the dominance of capitalism; the other is a metaphorical understanding of space that articulates relations of power and cultural politics. Discourses of material and metaphorical space are seen as relatively recent and there is much debate between academics about these discourses.

This chapter begins with an outline of some of the debate as a way of introducing spatial discourse. Following this, the section on material theories of space outlines several models of space. They are similar in that they identify macro and micro aspects of space in the context of the dominance of capitalism. In the section on metaphorical space, the discussion leads to a particular understanding of space, namely, space in radical cultural politics. The chapter ends with a section that briefly relates Maori to the discourses of material and metaphorical space that have been discussed. It does

this by referring to Maori experiences of colonisation and assimilation and by referring to Maori initiatives that are informed by the concept of rangatiratanga.

## Critiques of Spatial Discourse

In the arts and social sciences, time has been a dominant mode of analysis with emphasis being placed on the historical relationships of events and ideologies and their subsequent effects. Foucault says that history was the "...great obsession of the nineteenth century"<sup>1</sup> and goes on to comment,

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.<sup>2</sup>

Foucault's comments are partly born out in the arts and social sciences, where academics have been exploring the concept of space in terms of social relationships between people and within groups of people, as Hebdige notes

...a growing scepticism concerning older explanatory and predictive models based in history has led to a renewed interest in the relatively neglected 'under-theorised' dimension of space...spatial relations are seen to be no less complex and contradictory than historical processes, and space itself is refigured as inhabited and heterogeneous.<sup>3</sup>

However, spatial discourse in social science often does not follow a strict prescription nor at times agreed upon definitions. John Agnew in his 1993 essay 'Representing Space - Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science', states that "...representations of space are embedded in all social sciences but intertwined in complex ways with

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<sup>1</sup> M. Foucault, (1986) "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986), p22

<sup>2</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>3</sup> Dick Hebdige cited in L. Grossberg, (1996) "The Space of Culture, The Power of Space", in I. Chambers and L. Curti (ed.), *The Post-Colonial Question*, Routledge: London, p177

representations of scale and culture.”<sup>4</sup> He also sees that there are many “...assumptions and presumptions about space”<sup>5</sup>. Doreen Massey reiterates and extends this point

Many authors rely heavily on the terms ‘space’/‘spatial’ and each assumes that their meaning is clear and uncontested. Yet in fact the meaning which different authors assume (and therefore - in the case of metaphorical usage - the import of the metaphor) varies greatly.<sup>6</sup>

In the arena of culture and identity, discourses of space often follow a metaphorical track. In disciplines such as geography and architecture, the approach to space has had a more empirical and material tendency as it leans towards physical representation. Lawrence Grossberg<sup>7</sup> criticises both the use of spatial metaphors and empirical notions of space as spatial discourses. In his view, empirical or material notions of space reduce space to a passive and objective reality and often eventually favour time over space. The use of spatial metaphors is problematic if they portray a normalised identity for example, ‘the home of Maori culture is the marae’. A normalised identity may mean that Maori culture can not exist without marae. Grossberg also notes that when spatial metaphors are used in discussions on race, ethnicity and post-colonialism, they are often placed in a context that is ultimately historical, such as, ‘the traditional home of Maori culture is the marae’. Adding the word ‘traditional’ presupposes that there has been a change in status of the marae over time and can focus time over space.

John Agnew defines what he sees as common usages of space as “...the presumed effect of location, or where social processes are taking place, upon those processes...”<sup>8</sup>. He sees this definition interpreted in social sciences in two main forms, both of them on a grand scale. One of these is space as a national form whereby politically and historically countries are recognised as encompassing a certain sovereign

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<sup>4</sup> J. Agnew, (1993) “Representing Space - Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science”, Place/Culture/Representation, in J. Duncan and D. Ley (ed.) Routledge: London, p251

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p252

<sup>6</sup> D. Massey, (1993) “Politics and Space/Time”, in M. Keith and S. Pile (ed.) Place and the Politics of Identity, Routledge: London, p141-142

<sup>7</sup> L Grossberg, (1996) “The Space of Culture, The Power of Space”, in I. Chambers and L. Curti (ed.), The Post-Colonial Question, Routledge: London, p178

<sup>8</sup> J. Agnew, op. cit. pp251

territory or state. The state tends towards homogenisation through the economy, transportation systems, political practices, industrialisation, urbanisation and education. Diversity within the population, including the traditional and local is seen to give way to a national culture and social life. However, Agnew critiques this largely political interpretation of space as inadequate because it assumes that culture is static rather than dynamic and because generally the local and the regional sustain a political strength and are not altogether subsumed by an encompassing national politics. The next interpretation of space that Agnew sees as dominating social science is space as structural whereby the terms 'core' or 'centre', 'semi-periphery' and 'periphery' are used in analysis of political, social and economic activities often on the scale of the world as in the study of world-system theory. The core or centre designates dominance and/or geographical location, so for example Europe is seen as the core of capitalism or where capitalism grew from extending out into the periphery. As a way of analysing political, social and economic activities, Agnew sees the emphasis of the grand scale giving an unbalanced view of these activities because it does not account for smaller scale causes of events.

## **Material Theories of Space**

Complexities of spatial discourse are compounded by discussion of place and space. Place, like space, is a term with many meanings. David Harvey says that "Place has to be one of the most multi-layered and multi-purpose words in our language"<sup>9</sup>. Agnew notes that place is a central concept of cultural geography where "...it is sometimes used synonymously with location, point, area or space."<sup>10</sup> He also notes that it has been adopted in sociology to mean community.

Harvey explores place in regard to time-space compression that is his term for the diminution of spatial barriers and time barriers. Increasingly modern forms of transport, communications and media serve this notion of time-space compression, as

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<sup>9</sup> D. Harvey, (1993) "From space to place and back again", Mapping the Futures - Local cultures, global change, in J. Bird et al (ed.), Routledge: London, p4

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

does international capital accumulation. In this sense, Harvey considers place as a product of capitalism and looks at the history of capitalism as a being “punctuated by intense places of spatial reorganisation.”<sup>11</sup> Harvey inscribes to the concept of place the distinction of being able to form identity through the representations that people attribute to places. He also outlines the struggles over representations of place. These struggles can take the form of identifying places as ghettos or preferred holiday destinations or sanctuaries or any number of other titles and descriptions. Harvey positions the struggle over representation of places as being part of “the cultural politics of places, the political economy of their development and the accumulation of a sense of social power...”<sup>12</sup>.

Agnew, as has already been noted, says place has various meanings in different contexts. Like Harvey he looks at a definition of place within a context of industrialised or capitalist societies. His definition counters the dominant modes of space he critiqued that were summarised above. There are three interdependent aspects in his definition. The first aspect is ‘locale’ which identifies “... the physical settings in which social relations are constituted.”<sup>13</sup> This term refers to a micro level which considers that “...people do not experience life in the abstract context of ‘mass society’, they live their lives in the context of ‘social worlds’ dominated by the perspectives of different ‘reference groups’”<sup>14</sup>. What Agnew means here is that people move in varying circles, for example some people move in international circles and some only locally, but their interaction is limited to a certain number of people. The next aspect called ‘location’ identifies the macro context that recognises the structures that govern social practices. These structures are identified by Agnew as

... the demands of a spatially extensive division of labour, the global system of material production and distribution, and variable patterns of political authority and control.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p7

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p23

<sup>13</sup> J. Agnew, op. cit. p261

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p262

<sup>15</sup> Idem.

The third aspect is 'sense of place'. This aspect offers a subjective approach to place whereby identification and meaning is attached to a place. Identification and meaning can be different in different places but the extent to which it is similar can create a 'region of places'. The 'region of places' accounts for regionalism and nationalism that shows that 'sense of place' applies to varying scales. Agnew's three pronged representation of space includes space and society as internally or intrinsically related. John Fiske is another writer who uses the term 'locale' for a micro level of relations. His version of locale is similar to Agnew's, however he uses power as the factor to distinguish between a micro and macro context. He recognises locale as the space in capitalist societies where those in subordinate positions of power try to strengthen their control over everyday life by using 'localising power'.<sup>16</sup> He identifies four dimensions to the space of locale:

...it is interior, for it is where social identities, social relations and social histories are experienced; it is socio-political, for it exists within a social order; it is physical, for it is localised in the places where people dwell and play and work; it is temporal, for it exists only in the time in which these who construct it inhabit it.<sup>17</sup>

The macro context in Fiske's model is recognised as the 'imperialising power' or 'power-bloc'. Those who have the greatest access to it have the most to gain by its continued domination and those who have the least or no access to it have the most to lose by the continued domination. The manifestation of the dominant power is registered in what Fiske calls 'stations'. These are actual physical places where the social order is imposed as well as the social position of an individual. Schools are examples of stations.

Fiske's two-part model is similar to how Michel de Certeau (1984) understands spatial relations. For de Certeau, 'place' is the dominant or macro power in society and it organises and controls society. It is manifested in physical places as the following describes,

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<sup>16</sup> J. Fiske, (1993) Power Plays Power Works, Verso: London, p12

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

... cities are places built to organise and control the lives and movements of their 'city subjects' in the interests of the dominant. So, too, supermarkets, apartment blocks, offices, and universities are places.<sup>18</sup>

'Space', for de Certeau, is a micro level of relations, which is constructed by those with weak power. It is constructed through the practices of living and through political conflict as the following quote emphasises,

De Certeau stresses the political conflict involved the confrontation of opposing social interests that is central to the construction of space out of place.... space or setting is where the weak exert their control.<sup>19</sup>

De Certeau sees that space is constructed out of place or against place. For de Certeau, the micro level relates only to those making change or living differently from the dominant prescription. The micro level is a place of political power however weak.

Henri Lefebvre is a key figure in the development of spatial theory. Ultimately, he discusses space in terms of the production of space in society, however he also sees the production of space as an ontological process. As such the production of space is part of the nature of being. In terms of society, Lefebvre sees space as "...embodying social order..."<sup>20</sup>. His concept of space is not what Grossberg described as passive or part of an objective reality; instead Lefebvre sees space "as an active component of constructing, maintaining, and challenging social order."<sup>21</sup> The production of space is a process that is continual and it relates to both social and physical space where social space is the "...domains or realms of *understanding*..."<sup>22</sup> and physical space is "...the *material* of group life."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp223

<sup>19</sup> Idem.

<sup>20</sup> H. Liggett, (1995) "City Sights/Sites of Memories and Dreams", in H. Liggett and D.C. Perry . (ed.), Spatial Practices, Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, p246

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> Idem.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

To analyse the production of space, Lefebvre has developed a three part model based on the 'perceived', the 'conceived' and the 'lived'<sup>24</sup>. The three parts are interwoven and used together to analyse space. The first category is 'Spatial Practice' which is the world as we 'perceive' it in daily routines and the urban makeup. It is concerned with relations between people, the family and the division of labour. Spatial practice looks at the interactions of people in society in the private world of homes, the public sphere of work and the built in world of leisure.

The second category is 'Representations of Space' which is the world as 'conceived'. This category relates to the order or reality imposed on spatial practice by those who are planners, engineers, scientists and any other person who guides the use and construction of space by others. It acknowledges that ideology and empiricism organise the use of space and that this is the dominant space in western capitalist society.

The third category is 'Representational Space'. This category relates to highly symbolic and sometimes subconscious space and is considered by Lefebvre as space as 'lived'. Lefebvre says this is

...space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols...the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space that the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.<sup>25</sup>

Helen Liggett refers to Lefebvre's representational space as being based on "...shared experiences and interpretations at a profound level."<sup>26</sup> It describes not what a space may appear to be but what it means to people and as such it includes history of people as collectives as well as individuals.

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<sup>24</sup> H. Lefebvre, (c1974, 1991) The Production of Space, Blackwell: Oxford

<sup>25</sup> H. Liggett, op. cit. p246

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p251



As well as the three part model of analysis of the production of space, Lefebvre identifies a history of space that considers the development of the parts in historical periods. He assumes that

Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable...(they) contribute in different ways to the construction of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period.<sup>27</sup>

The historical periods that Lefebvre identifies by definition occur in time but he identifies them as spatial. Each period is dominated by one particular space but the dominance does not replace or extinguish totally the preceding spatial period. The following is a very brief outline of the three historical periods he identifies.

‘Absolute space’ is the first dominant space that Lefebvre identifies in the history of space. Absolute space was forged by assigning to particular sites in nature special qualities that were religious and political in character. These sites became representational spaces and their existence dominated spatial practice and representations of space. Lefebvre says “In short absolute space is made up of sacred or cursed locations...therefore governed by a good many prohibitions.”<sup>28</sup>

Absolute space was subordinated by ‘historical space’ that describes the growth of villages and capitalism. Lefebvre states that the town and its surrounding countryside were the main subject of historical space. The dominance of historical space signalled an increase in political activity, the beginning of the alienation of labour from the means of production and the onset of accumulation of goods, money and knowledge. At the beginning of this period in Europe, around 1600, the feudal system still controlled society. However, on the edge of the aristocratic estates a merchant class was establishing itself in the villages. The merchant class grew and gradually the division of labour between town and country extended to a division of labour between town and town as well. Capitalism eventually broke down the feudal system and the

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<sup>27</sup> H. Lefebvre, op. cit., p46

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p240

strength of the guilds which regulated manufacturing in the towns. It broke down the spatial organisation based on social relations whereby the church and the aristocracy controlled the lives of the populace. It reorganised society in a functional manner whereby the production of goods was of paramount importance. New towns were created and old towns reshaped.<sup>29</sup> This was the beginning of the industrial era.

'Abstract space' replaced historical space as dominant and remains the dominant space of this era. Abstract space recognises the increasing alienation of labour or abstraction of labour and increase in accumulation. Basically, it recognises the dominance of the capitalist system and neocapitalism. In Lefebvre's words

Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the 'world of commodities, its logic and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state. This space is founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices. Within this space the town - once the forcing-head of accumulation, fountainhead of wealth and centre of historical space - has disintegrated.<sup>30</sup>

Abstract space is the space of power both of the state and of those who own and manage the means of production and it is a universal global arrangement. Lefebvre notes that other key characteristics are that it promotes homogeneity, fragmentation and hierarchy. It promotes homogeneity because in one sense it tries to gloss over differences such as those of race, age, and gender. On the other hand, it tends to fragment localities and particularities in order to control them. In terms of hierarchy, abstract space orders power with the state or sovereign power supreme ranging downwards to the powerless. The creation of abstract space has privileged what is 'conceived' over what is 'perceived' and what is 'lived'. The conceived reifies "... technology, applied sciences, and knowledge bound to power."<sup>31</sup>

Lefebvre's model is more comprehensive than the models of Agnew, Fiske and de Certeau but it has a lot in common with their models. Firstly, it takes the space of

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<sup>29</sup> K. Kia Tehranian, (1995) *Modernity, Space and Power*, Hampton Press: Cresskill, p45

<sup>30</sup> H. Lefebvre, *op. cit.*, p53

<sup>31</sup> H. Lefebvre, *op. cit.*, p50

capitalism as a macro level; it is the dominant power in organising the world. Lefebvre recognises this space as one which encourages a planned or empirically conceived society. In the other models too, the macro level of relations included structures both physical and social that organise and control daily life. Lefebvre's factor of spatial practice is similar to the micro level of relations in Agnew and Fiske's models. It is the space in which we live our daily lives and it is a space of weak power. Lefebvre's 'representational space' can be seen as similar to Agnew's factor of 'sense of place' or even what Harvey described as representations of place. It is subjective and as such considers the meaning and feelings that people attribute to or have about places or spaces.

## **Metaphorical Space**

Labelling space as metaphorical creates problems of definition. The metaphorical, in very general terms, is linked with the conceptual. Lefebvre notes that all words are metaphors because they have undergone a metamorphosis from an object, impression or feeling in to a word<sup>32</sup>. This exploration, however, understands the use of metaphor in the sense of physical imagery employed to describe intellectual notions.

Neil Smith and Cindi Katz<sup>33</sup> discuss the increasing use of spatial metaphors in social discourse such as in the areas of feminism, ism, post-colonial studies, literary criticism and cultural studies. Their concern is that spatial metaphors are relatively unstudied and that the use of such metaphors often includes a "...contested conception of space and that they embody often unintended political consequences."<sup>34</sup>

The conception of space is contested because the metaphorical use of space has often developed without reference to the development of material space, for instance, some spatial metaphors use a taken for granted conception of space whereby space is thought of as empty, empirical, infinite and homogeneous. Smith and Katz note that

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p138

<sup>33</sup> N. Smith and C. Katz, (1993) "Grounding Metaphor", *Place and the Politics of Identity*, in M. Keith and S. Pile, (ed.) Routledge: London

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p68

the origins of this conception of space are philosophical and scientific and are connected to the work of Newton, Descartes and Kant.<sup>35</sup> The predominance of this conception of space occurred along with the growth of capitalism that used this notion of space to its advantage. Private property, individual rights and colonisation were manifestations of capitalistic logic. Smith and Katz say, "...this space is quite literally the space of capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism..."<sup>36</sup>.

To understand spatial metaphors further, it is necessary to consider discourse that uses spatial metaphors. The following part of this section discusses radical cultural politics as a means to fulfil greater understanding. Radical cultural politics also offers a spatial analysis that can be applied to the position of Maori in Aotearoa and in later chapters to the topic of space for Maori in traditional western tertiary institutions.

Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper<sup>37</sup> consider spatiality as an integral part of an emerging radical cultural politics. In their view, the modernist binary interpretations of difference such as coloniser/colonised are oppositional and exclusive. In terms of counter-hegemonic practice, modernist binaries have been beneficial for subaltern groups but they have also been divisive, for example privileging black politics over feminist politics and vice versa. Modernist politics has also maintained the centre/margin binary which situates the hegemon and subaltern respectively and which can seem to legitimate a move from the margin to the centre by the subaltern as overcoming the oppression of the hegemon.

A radical cultural politics such as is found in recent feminist, and anti-colonialist writing, including for example the work of writers such as bell hooks (1990), has sought to 'disorder' the binaries of difference in order to allow for multiple subjectivities. It has also sought to empower the margin to resist the co-optation that moving from the margin to the centre seems to involve. Drawing significantly from bell hooks, Soja and Hooper note that radical counter-hegemony chooses to inhabit the

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<sup>35</sup> It is also in line with Lefebvre's 'historical' space.

<sup>36</sup> N. Smith and C. Katz, *op.cit.*, pp79

<sup>37</sup> E. Soja and B. Hooper, (1993) "The Spaces that Difference Makes", Place and the Politics of Identity, ed. M. Keith and S. Pile, Routledge: London, p191

margin as an act of resistance. The margin is then seen not in relation to the hegemonic centre; it is de-centred but is also seen simultaneously as a centre in itself. This form of oppositional resistance re-centres identity and in so doing allows so called 'oppressed' groups subjectivity rather than making these groups the object of oppression. Soja and Hooper express this subjectivity as

...a cognitive re-mapping of our many real and imagined worlds...from 'the little tactics of the habitat' to the 'great strategies' of global geopolitics.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, the subjectivity of those who are centred at the margin involves a different world-view from the dominant perspective. Hooks' articulates this subjectivity and alternative world-view as follows,

It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives.<sup>39</sup>

By disordering binary differences, radical counter-hegemony also allows for multiple subjectivity for example, a colonised, black, homosexual, male. Multiple subjectivities in turn can encourage the formation of communities of resistance which are inclusive of those who choose the margin rather than exclusive and competitive as in the modernist binaries. This defines the explicit spatialism that Soja and Hooper see in radical counter-hegemony: it is inclusive; it contains multiple subjectivity; and by combining subjectivity, it builds communities of resistance.

Stuart Hall is another writer who, like Soja and Hooper, recognises that the cultural politics of oppressed groups, has undergone transformation and who describes this transformation spatially. His observation also takes power relations into consideration in terms that echo De Certeau's material theory whereby those who are subordinated use the power they have over the space they have to strengthen their control over their lives - or we/ they make 'space' out of 'place'.

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<sup>38</sup> Idem.

...the most profound cultural revolution has come about as a consequence of the margins coming into representation - in art, in painting, in film, in music, in literature, in the modern arts everywhere, in politics and in social life generally. Our lives have been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation. Not just to be placed by the regime of some other, or imperialising eye but to reclaim some form of representation for themselves. Paradoxically in our world, marginality has become a powerful space. It is a space of weak power but it is a space of power nonetheless.... the discourses of power in our society, the discourses of the dominant regimes, have been certainly threatened by the de-centred cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local.<sup>40</sup>

Hall also echoes hooks' point that the margin's counter-hegemonic discourse is found in habits of being and the way one lives by noting that representation is being struggled for.

Spatial metaphors, in the outline above on emerging radical cultural politics, are integral to the discourse. Use of the term's 'margin' and 'centre' describe power relations between dominant and subordinate groups and the reader may correctly assume that this discourse applies to advanced capitalist nations. However, Katz and Smith's warning about the use of contested concepts of space in spatial metaphors may be valid for the discourse of radical cultural politics. Soja and Hooper, for example, speak of multiple subjectivity in a re-centred margin. Such a phenomenon might be misinterpreted as being unable to apply to a capitalist space because capitalism is a space that is dominated by homogeneity.

## **Material and Metaphorical Space and Maori**

Imperialism and colonialism were present from the onset of capitalism as part of the general ethos of accumulation. Powerful western European countries such as Spain and England had explorers navigating the globe and searching for stockpiles of natural

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<sup>39</sup> b. hooks, (1990) "Choosing the Margin", Yearning - Race, Gender and Cultural politics, South End Press: Boston, p149

<sup>40</sup> S. Hall, (1991) "The Local and the Global: Globalisation and Ethnicity", A. King (ed.), Culture Globalisation and the World-System, MacMillan Press: London, 1991, p34

resources notably gold to begin with but later there was a rush for land and for labour. Katz and Smith have described this period as the space of “capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism”<sup>41</sup>. It has been in relatively recent times that the dominant history of this period has been analysed as racist and patriarchal. Explorers like Columbus, Tasman and Cook were and still are in many instances, considered to have ‘discovered new worlds’. From the point of view of indigenous people and others such an understanding was and is ridiculous and clearly racist. However, at the time, the Western European conception was that space was empirical, empty, homogeneous, and infinite.<sup>42</sup>

It suited the capitalist endeavour to see the ‘new worlds’ as empty of people and thus politically neutral. The concept of terra nullius meaning empty or uninhabited land, for example, was applied to Australia and the South Island of New Zealand because Britain wanted to colonise quickly without a costly fight and because they either believed that the indigenous people were not civilised enough to own land or they believed there were not enough inhabitants to worry about. The British wanted to plunder the land for its natural resources and declaring themselves as owners meant that they could do this. So the conception of space that the colonisers brought with them and applied to Aotearoa was capitalistic because they wanted to commodify the land, commodify the resources and set up a capitalist economy. It was patriarchal because the colonisers came from patriarchal societies and instituted a dominant patriarchal system. It was racist because they believed that indigenous people were uncivilised and owning land was wasted on them if they believed indigenous people lived there at all. It was imperialistic because the colonisers came to dominate and stay. This legacy continues, thus material theories of space can be applied to Maori within the capitalistic society of New Zealand.

Maori as a colonised people have been oppressed in many ways. The oppression that was caused by the policy of assimilation has been documented in the previous chapter and it could be argued that this policy still exists today in subtle and unsubtle forms and

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<sup>41</sup> Smith and Katz, *op. cit.*, p79

<sup>42</sup> Idem

certainly in the hearts and minds of many New Zealanders. In terms of the spatial metaphors of radical cultural politics, colonisation and assimilation have placed Maori firmly in the margin, in our own land. Maori culture, for example, our language and cultural practices, has been and still is marginalised. At the centre is the dominant culture of Pakeha New Zealand.

However, the concept of rangatiratanga can be seen as Maori choosing to inhabit the margin or Maori de-centring the centre. Rangatiratanga embodies self-determination for Maori, or taking or having sovereignty over ourselves to live in ways that we see as Maori ways of being. Rangatiratanga claims subjectivity for Maori rather than Maori being the objects of the processes of colonisation. In this context, there have been initiatives that have sprung from a foundation of rangatiratanga. Over the last ten to fifteen years especially, there have been a wide range of initiatives in the areas of social services. Education has been one of the first areas where rangatiratanga was a foundation for initiatives to be taken. These initiatives, for example, Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Maori and Whare Wananga, can be seen as the marginality that bell hooks calls a central location for counter-hegemonic habits of being and way of life or as Stuart Hall sees as the margin coming into representation. These initiatives can also be seen to cause the cognitive re-mapping that Soja and Hooper spoke of whereby a person's subjectivity contains an alternative world-view from the dominant world-view.

## **Summary**

Spatial discourses in their material and metaphorical forms can articulate positions for Maori. The material perspective can articulate the history of colonisation by capitalism and the metaphorical perspective can add cultural domination to this history. However, the metaphorical perspective, in the form of radical cultural politics can also articulate another position for Maori. It can articulate the position whereby Maori choose to inhabit the margin as a centre. In this space, Maori can practice initiatives which are informed by Maori ways of being and rangatiratanga. As Stuart Hall has



expressed, the margin as a centre may be a space of weak power but it is a space of power nonetheless.