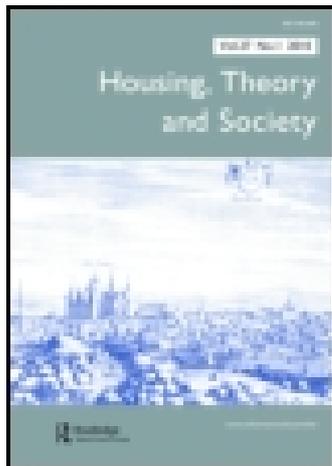


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### A place called home

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# A Place Called Home

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This article reviews literature on the concept of ‘place’ and discusses its relevance to housing research. The article begins by providing a working definition of place before embarking upon an examination of the connections between place and identity. The nature of such attachments to place is examined through the work of Martin Heidegger (1973) and Pierre Bourdieu (1979). The relationship between place attachment and the volatile political-economy of place construction is subsequently discussed. The paper then continues with an outline of the importance of the concept of ‘place’ for housing researchers and concludes with some suggestions for further research. While discussions about ‘place’ have been a key preoccupation of geographers for some decades, housing researchers have barely touched on the subject. Yet, at the present time – a time of increasing migration, expanding urbanization, and swelling investments in place-construction (ranging from individual real-estate sales to city and regional re-developments) – the importance of the concept of place for housing researchers has come to the fore. The literature on ‘place’, especially the literature which sees ‘home’ as a particularly significant type of place, provides insight into the relationship between places and people’s identities and psychological well-being; the dynamics of conflicts surrounding home-places; and the political-economy of home places. It also points to the need for a more integrated approach to housing research that looks beyond the scale of individual households to the regional, national and international scale.

*Key words:* place, home, identity, habitus.

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## INTRODUCTION

Housing researchers and practitioners are concerned with the interactions of people with their external social, economic, political and physical environments, in particular their houses and local neighbourhoods. An examination of the concept of ‘place’, a concept that gained prominence in the field of geography in the 1970s, provides a useful theoretical framework for addressing such human-environment interactions.

Notions of place are important in all aspects of life. As Gieryn notes, “everything that we study is emplaced” (2000:466). More specifically, Harvey notes that “cultural politics in general (and the search for affective community in particular) and political-economic power intertwine in the social processes of place construction” (1996:320). Furthermore, ideas of ‘place’ are intertwined with ideas of community, collective memory, group (and individual) identity, political organization and capital flows. These ‘ideas’ of ‘place’ have very real outcomes. An examination of ‘place’ in housing studies can help housing researchers to gain insight into the relationship between places and people’s identities and psychological well-being; the dynamics of conflicts surrounding home-places; and the political-economy of home places. The literature on place also points to the need for a more integrated

approach to housing research that looks beyond the scale of individual households to the regional, national and international scale.

The concept of ‘place’ is complex and has been the subject of much recent academic interest and debate (see for example Gieryn, 2000; Malpas, 1999). This article provides a working definition of place, outlines the distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ and discusses the relationship between people and place and its influence on identity. The nature of people’s attachment to place is further examined through the work of Martin Heidegger (1973) and Pierre Bourdieu (1979). A particularly significant type of place is then addressed, ‘home’. The importance of place-attachments for the political economy of place construction and other benefits of considering ‘home’ as a significant type of place are then discussed in relation to housing research.

## TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ‘PLACE’

Doreen Massey (1995) has argued that ‘place’ is a social construct. In her view, “we actively *make* places” (1995:48) and our ideas of place “are products of the society in which we live” (1995:50). This is not to say that the creation of places is entirely subjective.

The creation of places is influenced by physical, economic and social realities. What it means, rather, is that these realities are understood socially in the creation of place. As Gieryn explains with reference to the work of Soja (1996), “places are doubly constructed: most are built or in some way physically carved out. They are also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined” (Gieryn, 2000:465). Massey and Jess similarly state that “the physical environment is an essential part of place, but it is always an *interpreted* element” (1995:219). Furthermore, as Harvey has argued, “to say that something is socially constructed is not to say that it is personally subjective” (1996:211–212). Harvey argues that “social constructions of space and time operate with the full force of objective facts to which all individuals and institutions necessarily respond” (1996:211). This is also the case for social constructions of place. The difference in the case of place is that while social constructions of space and time are usually agreed upon within large social groups, constructions of places are more commonly disputed.

Notions of places as bound, settled and coherent communities have been threatened in recent times, according to Harvey (1996), because of the increasing pace of globalisation and time-space compression<sup>1</sup>. We live in “an increasingly unstable and uncertain world” (Massey, 1995:48), and as a result, more and more people cling strongly to notions of place as secure and stable. (Some of the implications of this situation will be addressed further below.) Massey (1995) has taken Harvey’s ideas in a new direction, arguing that if the social organization of space is changing and disrupting our existing ideas about place (Massey, 1995:54), then we should re-think the concept of place altogether.

Massey suggests that in a time when social relations are obviously “stretched out” (1995:61) we must interact with people in our local area, our region, our country and even internationally. This means that places can be seen as “the location of particular sets of intersecting social relations [and] intersecting activity spaces” (Massey, 1995:61). That is, places are no longer understood as “coherent, bounded<sup>2</sup> and settled” (Massey, 1995:54), but as particular nodal points within a complex web of social interactions which stretch around the world. Places are social constructs, but they

are created not as bounded wholes, but as open nodal points within a larger set of interacting systems. Places interacting are still seen as unique in this formulation, as “every place is ... a unique mixture of the relations which configure social space” (Massey, 1995:61).

It is important to note here that in discussions of place, the relationship between ‘place’ and ‘space’ can often become confused. For example, Sack points to the importance of place, saying that the ‘projects’ that we carry out in our lives “not only require place in the sense that they need place to occur, but the place becomes an active agent in the project and thereby affects it” (2001:232). He notes that “places can not exist without us. But equally important, we cannot exist without places” (2001:233). Such a statement fits well with Massey’s (1995) understanding of places as nodal points in networks of social relations. However, Sack’s definition of place as “the countless areas of space that we have bounded or controlled”, which “range in scale from a room to a continent” (2001:232), and his comment that “places are the primary means by which we are able to use space and turn it into a humanized landscape” (2001:233) are problematic. This is because of Sack’s inherent assumption that space is simply a material which exists to be ‘made into’ places. Casey (2001) has criticized Sack on this issue. Casey situates this tension between ‘space’ and ‘place’ as part of the debate between modernism and postmodernism. The modernist insists “on the priority of space (whether in the form of a well-ordered physical space or highly structured institutional space) and the postmodernist conversely maintaining the primacy of place and, in particular, lived place” (2001:404). Casey provides an alternative to this dilemma, suggesting that “space and place are two different *orders* of reality between which no simple or direct comparisons are possible” (2001:404). He says that space “is the name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it; and it serves in this locational capacity whether it is conceived as absolute or relative in its own nature” (2001:404) (for a similar argument, see Grosz, 1995). While place is situated in physical space, it has no privileged relationship to space because everything, including events and physical things are situated in space (Casey, 2001:404–405). Place and space are not interchangeable, they are understood here to be different orders of being.

## PLACE AND IDENTITY

The reason that ‘place’ is such a useful concept for housing studies is that it provides a theoretical basis for addressing the relationships that people have with the external world. That is, it provides an alternative position to Cartesian thought, which separates the mind

<sup>1</sup> ‘Time-space compression’ is the term Harvey uses to refer to a “sense of overwhelming change in space-time dimensionality” (1996:243). It is based upon the idea that in the face of globalisation time and place are being ‘compressed’, largely due to improved transportation and communications technology.

<sup>2</sup> The creation of boundaries is always a social act anyway (Massey, 1995:61).

from the body, and instead enables a discussion of the relationships between the mind and the external world through the body. Much of the literature on place discusses the relationship between place and identity in this context. Studying such relationships became popular amongst geographers in the 1970s, who began to take seriously the affective bonds people had to different places, because of growing concern about “the alienation produced by “placeless” modern environments” (Duncan and Duncan, 2001:41). These discussions brought a new dimension to ideas about identity formation and social action, a dimension which understands identity to be created both internally in the mind, and through the body’s interactions with the outside world. Personal identity is no longer seen as “a matter of sheer self-consciousness but now involves intrinsically an awareness of one’s place”, an awareness that “there is no place without self; and no self without place” (Casey, 2001:406).

The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term *topophilia* to describe “the affective bond between people and place” (Duncan and Duncan, 2001:41). He said that this bond may be stronger for some individuals than for others and can be expressed differently by people from different cultures (Duncan and Duncan, 2001:41). Topophilia is an affective response to place, but it is also “a practice that can actively produce places for people” (Duncan and Duncan, 2001:41). That is, the bond people have to a place can help to change the nature of that place. Bachelard (1969) also discusses topophilia in *The Poetics of Space*, arguing that “the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces<sup>3</sup> in which people dwell and those places influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. Inner space is externalized and outer space brought within” (Malpas, 1999:5). Bachelard argues that this bond between people and place means that an investigation of places is essential “in any phenomenological/psychoanalytic study of memory, self and mind” (Malpas, 1999:5).

The related idea of ‘sense of place’ has received more attention than Tuan’s topophilia, but the two ideas are closely linked. Rose explains that “senses of place develop from every aspect of individuals’ life experience and ... senses of place pervade everyday life and experience” (1995:88). Rose notes that while one’s sense of place can be very personal, it is “shaped in large part by the social, cultural and economic circumstances in which individuals find themselves” (1995:89). Rose (1995) provides a working definition of a sense of place. She says that the idea of a sense of

place usually assumes that places have no inherent meanings, only the meanings given to them by humans. Beyond this agreement, Rose identifies three main arguments about the nature of senses of place.

1. A sense of place is seen as natural. Sometimes it is argued that a sense of place is a territorial instinct and some argue that it is a survival instinct. (Rose, 1995:98).
2. “A sense of place is seen as a result of the meanings people actively give to their lives ... a sense of place can be seen as part of our cultural interpretation of the world around us” (Rose, 1995:99). Some writers have argued that “it is an awareness of cultural *difference* which may encourage a sense of place to develop” (Rose, 1995:99) and that power relations are important in understanding a sense of place.
3. “A sense of place is part of the politics of identity” (Rose, 1995:103). This includes the idea of defining oneself in opposition to an ‘other’ (Rose, 1995:104).

Tuan, however, makes a distinction between ‘rootedness’ and a ‘sense of place’. While the first set of arguments above may be relevant for the concept of rootedness, Tuan would argue that only the second and third points actually relate to a ‘sense of place’. The distinction Tuan makes is that “rootedness implies being at home in a unselfconscious way. Sense of place, on the other hand, implies a certain distance between self and place which allows the self to appreciate a place” (Tuan, 1980:4). In short, “rootedness is unreflexive” (Tuan, 1980:6). Rootedness is “a knowing that is the result of familiarity through long residence” while a sense of place is “a knowing that is the result of conscious effort” (Tuan, 1980:8). This important distinction will be discussed further below.

So far, this discussion has implied that a sense of place forms out of a feeling that you belong to a particular place and feel comfortable there “because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place” (Rose, 1995:89). But people also identify against places, establishing their own sense of place by contrasting themselves with different places and the people in them. This is the thesis of Said’s famous book, *Orientalism* (1979) and there has been much academic interest on the connection between places (particularly home-places) and hostilities, especially at the national scale. A number of researchers have discussed the “dark side of topophilia [and sense of place] as manifested in the naturalization of the nation-state” (Duncan and Duncan, 2001:41) and Massey and Jess note that “the metaphors of home and homeland” have often “provoked damage and aggression” (1995:233). For example, Kakar (1996) notes that

<sup>3</sup> Bachelard (1969) appears to use the terms ‘place’ and ‘space’ interchangeably.

with the processes of globalisation we have seen a growth in the opportunities for groups of people to meet and experience the initial recognition of difference, which can be both “exhilarating” and “painful” (Kakar, 1996:150). Once difference has been recognized, Kakar explains, groups begin to form boundaries to differentiate themselves from ‘the other’ and this may lead to an idealization of the group and a negative stereotyping of ‘the other’. Penrose and Jackson (1993) also address these issues in their discussion of the connections between place, race and nation. They say that “the social construction perspective ... reveals that much of what is deemed to be ‘natural’ or a matter of ‘common sense’ is deeply rooted in the dominant ideologies of particular societies” (1993:202). Both ‘race and ‘nation’ are “empowered by their assumptions of naturalness and by their tendency to be viewed as unproblematic by those whom they privilege” (Penrose and Jackson, 1993:204). They explain that “place contextualizes the construction of “race” and nation, generating geographically specific ideologies of racism and nationalism” (Penrose and Jackson, 1993:205). Furthermore, people’s sense of place can become heightened when they think that it is being threatened (Rose, 1995:95) and this can have serious consequences. However, groups are not necessarily embodiments of negative feelings. The group, as Kakar notes, can also provide feelings of love and belonging for individuals and groups and can be formed as a result of feelings of ‘exhilaration’. It is this feeling of exhilaration that is played upon in nationalistic discourse, a feeling of national pride. Furthermore, ideas of home-place have equally been “important bases for resistance and liberation” (1995:233).

While the majority of academic discussion on these issues has concentrated on the national and international scale, these issues are also relevant at the level of the neighbourhood. For example, in her work on a town in Orange County USA, Till found that “the identities constructed for neotraditional towns and urban villages make sense only in relation to the ‘other’” (1993:709). This “geography of otherness ... reinforces existing social and spatial divisions, promotes reactionary and exclusionary territorial identities and legitimizes the status quo” (Till, 1993:709). Duncan and Duncan (2001) have similarly conducted a study of the town of Bedford in the USA. They found that residents of Bedford described the area primarily by what it was not and concluded that a kind of exclusionary politics was taking place. They also discussed the desire by Bedford residents to maintain an appearance of social homogeneity in the town and their objection to changes to the physical environment which would change its ‘historical’ character. Jess and Massey explain that in defining “the essential nature”

of a place, individuals and groups can claim that the ‘essential nature’ of a place has historical validity and can claim that ‘it’s always been this way’ and hence that it should stay this way (Jess and Massey, 1995:140). Duncan and Duncan’s findings were particularly interesting, however, in that they discovered that “Bedford need not be socially homogenous, but it should look so, if living there is to continue to confer social capital upon their (sic) residents” (2001:46). This situation raises the issue of the increasing importance of the *image* of places which will be addressed further below.

While increasing globalisation may in some cases lead to exclusionary politics and violence, because of the painful experiences of groups in recognizing their difference from other groups of people – an experience which may be all the more painful in the face of recognition that places are “linked together in unequal ways” and “the social relations which bind them together are relations of power” (Massey, 1995:69) – Rose has proposed that because “increasing flows of ideas, commodities, information and people are constantly challenging senses of place and identity which perceive themselves as stable and fixed”, “defining where you belong through contrast to other places, or who you are through contrast to Other people” is becoming more and more difficult (1995:116). She points to the possibility that “ways of establishing senses of place and identity are emerging which do not evoke Others, but instead handle difference in more respectful kinds of ways” (1995:116–117). For example, Ignatieff (1998) suggests that it might be possible to break down, or soften the boundaries of difference, through respect for the emotions of people in ‘other’ groups. Pile and Thrift also note that current academic discussions on identity are “often hedged about with spatial metaphors” (1996:10). They say that “the ethnic absolutism of ‘root’ metaphors, fixed in place, is being replaced by mobile ‘route’ metaphors which can lay down a challenge to the fixed identities of ‘cultural insiderism’” (1996:10). For example, metaphors of mobility and diaspora (Pile and Thrift, 1996:10).

The current situation, then, is two-sided. As Harvey notes, “the diminution of spatial barriers has provoked both an increasing sense of exclusionary nationalism and localism, and an exhilarating sense of heterogeneity and porosity of cultures and personal-political identifications” (1996:246)<sup>4</sup>. A person’s sense of place can provide them with a sense of belonging and of comfort. It can be a wonderful thing to share with

<sup>4</sup> Harvey also suggests that this is not the first time “in capitalist history” that we have seen this situation (1996:246). He notes that Kearn (1983) also pointed to a similar situation in the period before World War I (Harvey, 1996:246).

people from other areas and other cultures. It can also be defended (in some cases literally) to the death if it is seen to be threatened.

These are issues facing 'home-places' at all scales, from the neighbourhood to the nation and housing researchers interested in neighbourhood tensions can learn much from discourses surrounding the 'other' developed for analysis at the national scale. Furthermore, what these examples show is that whether there is an 'other' involved or not, one's sense(s) of place can be a very influential force in one's life. One's sense of place (particularly one's home-place) is tied to one's identity and many people throughout history and across the world have demonstrated incredible commitments to their places, so much so that they are willing to die for them. Housing researchers, who are so interested in the relationship people have with their dwelling places, can gain much from an examination of senses of place, particularly home places and their relationships to individual's identities. The question which then arises is, *how* exactly is it that people's identities are tied to places? What are the mechanisms through which this attachment is realised? The work of two prominent theorists, Martin Heidegger and Pierre Bourdieu goes some way towards addressing these questions.

#### HEIDEGGER AND PLACE

Harvey (1996) and Casey (2001) have both discussed the usefulness of Heidegger's (1973) arguments in *Being and Time* for any discussion of place. Heidegger's contribution in *Being and Time* was to challenge Cartesian dualist thought which differentiated the mind from the body, and to propose a philosophy of being-in-the-world. That is, Heidegger recognized that who we are (our mind, our ego) is influenced by our relationship, through our bodies, to the outside world. As Casey notes, "the vehicle of being-in-place is the *body*" (2001:413). The body "goes out to meet the place-world<sup>5</sup>" and it "bears the traces of the places it has known" (2001:414).

In Heidegger's discussion of 'ready-to-hand' things, "place and self are intimately interlocked in the world of practical work" (Casey, 2001:406). Casey goes on to say:

Heidegger is telling us that in a comparatively demanding place such as a workshop, the human beings who labor there are so deeply embroiled that

<sup>5</sup> "Place-world", a term coined by Edward Soja, is "a world that is not only perceived or conceived but actively *lived*" (Casey, 2001:413). The place-world is simultaneously social, spatial and historical (Casey, 2001: 413).

their being-in-the-world, their very self, is part of the scene and not something that hovers above it at a transcendental remove. The purpose of the tools we employ is not exhausted in sheer production or an economic fate outside the workplace but is also closely geared into the circuit of selfhood ... In such a circumstance, then, place and self are thoroughly enmeshed – without, however, being fused into each other in a single monolithic whole (Casey, 2001:407).

Heidegger's work is relevant far beyond the walls of the workshop, however. The workshop is simply an analogy for what Heidegger calls 'dwelling'. "Dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things" (Harvey, 1996:300–301). Heidegger's point is that places "are constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations" (Relph, 1989:26–29 in Harvey, 1996:301). Attachment to place is an integral part of being in the world (Harvey, 1996:301).

Casey says that while Heidegger's workshop was a place with "densely enmeshed infrastructures" (2001:407), a dwelling place or a 'thick place', people also come into contact with "thinned-out places"<sup>6</sup> (2001:407). While the existence of 'thinned-out places' can "enfeeble" the self, this circumstance can also allow the self "to become more sensitive to differences between places, for example, by leaving one's attenuated natal place in order to appreciate and savor other places and peoples" (Casey, 2001:408). This differentiation between 'thick places' and 'thinned-out places' may be understood in parallel to the differentiation between rootedness and a sense of place. The worker in Heidegger's workshop was rooted, he was 'at home' in an unselfconscious way. However, when we come into contact with thinned-out places, we being to consciously think about the meaning of place and we develop a sense of place through our deliberate acts of creating and maintaining place. As Harvey (1996) has noted, in this era of increasing globalisation, an era of the 'thinning-out' of places, people have responded by creating their own senses of place with renewed vigor.

Tuan further theorises these ideas in his framework for understanding the world through the polar extremes of cosmos and hearth. The hearth is local, cozy, familiar and nurturing, and implies a small bounded place, which is accessible to us through direct experience through the senses (Tuan, 2001:319). The cosmos, on the other hand is large, abstract and impersonal, and is accessible only through mediated

<sup>6</sup> Places can never be completely 'thinned out', however, if they are to remain places at all (Casey, 2001:407).

experience (Tuan, 2001:319). Cosmos and hearth are two polar extremes and “the worlds and experiences that these terms conjure often overlap” (Tuan, 2001:319). Tuan says that these two terms correspond to the fact that we are both body (which desires the hearth) and mind (which reaches out to the cosmos) (2001:319). Tuan says that both the hearth and the cosmos contribute to a sense of self, but in different ways. The hearth offers security while the cosmos offers adventure. One’s identity in the hearth, according to Tuan, “is not an effect of personal struggle and definition”, rather “identity is bestowed by one’s kin and neighbour and by material objects that one’s ancestors ... have made” (2001:322). One’s identity in the cosmos, in contrast, “requires effort, individual or group; and it is effort with no guarantee of success” (2001:322). Following from Tuan, Casey (2001) argues that it is not the case that the stronger the self becomes, the less important place should be (and vice versa). The self is strengthened not only by the cosmos, but also by the hearth. It can be argued that a self which becomes stronger through its ‘explorations’ in the cosmos still requires a different kind of strength that can only be achieved through the hearth. This is what Casey means when he says that “the more places are thinned out, the more ... [people are] led to seek out thick places in which their own personal enrichment can flourish” (or vice versa) (2001:408). In other words, the more we rely on the cosmos for our development, the more we desire the hearth.

#### BOURDIEU AND PLACE

Casey says that Heidegger’s work in *Being and Time* provides a crucial clue in the search to explain “what ties place and self together” (2001:409). “The basis of the density of engagement between self and place in this world [of the workshop] is the set of *habitualities* by which its rich fabric is woven” (Casey, 2001:409). He ties this concept of habitualities to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. He then goes on to argue that Bourdieu’s habitus is a “figure of the between: above all, between nature and culture, but also between consciousness and the body, self and other, mechanism and teleology, determinism and freedom, and even between memory and imagination” (2001:409). He proposes that it can also be used as a middle-term between self and place “and in particular between lived place and geographical self<sup>7</sup>” (2001:409). Casey says that “although Bourdieu does not invoke place specifically, it is everywhere present

in his discussion of habitus” (2001:410). This is because:

“a given habitus is always enacted in a particular place and incorporates the regularities inherent in previous such places .... A particular place gives to habitus a familiar arena for its enactment and the lack of explicit awareness of that place as such, its very familiarity, only enhances its efficacy as a scene in which it is activated” (Casey, 2001:410).

In other words, habitus is intrinsically connected to the concept of ‘rootedness’: being at home in a particular place in an unselfconscious way.

Bourdieu argues that habitus, as something taken for granted, has little to do with ‘lived experience’ (1979: 3–4). However, Casey disagrees, arguing that we do act on the basis of habitus, “and action is something that is both lived (i.e. consciously experienced) and intentional (i.e. involves an aim even if this is not explicitly formulated)” (2001:412). “The value or virtue of a particular habitus resides in the actuality of its enactment ... A habitus is something we continually *put into action*” (Casey, 2001:412). Casey argues that “the activation of habitus expresses an intentional and invested *commitment to the place-world*” because “even if it is the internalization of social practices by way of origin, in its actual performance a given habitus is reaching out to place. The primary way in which the geographical subject realizes this commitment to place is by means of *habitation*” (2001:412). Furthermore, habitus is not only connected to ‘rootedness’, but also to our ‘sense of place’. Because the actions that we make on the basis of our habitus are consciously experienced, we are able to think about our experiences within a given place, and because habitus is not only habitual, but also “improvisational and open to innovation” (Casey, 2001:409), we are able to make choices about, and innovations regarding, our interrelations with that place within the constraints imposed upon us by our habitus. That is, we are able to foster a (conscious) sense of place. This process is important because when the places in which our habitus is enacted are changed rapidly by external forces (such as those increasing in our era of globalisation and escalating uncertainty) the possibility of a feeling of rootedness diminishes, and our need to create a sense of place as “secure and stable” is heightened (Harvey, 1989 in Massey, 1995:48).

#### TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ‘HOME’

Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that we feel ‘at home’ in the fields where our habitus has developed (1992:128 in Friedman, 2002:300). Similarly, we feel

<sup>7</sup> A use not originally intended by Bourdieu.

at home in the places where our habitus has developed. But, what *is* 'home'? "Home" is a contested concept in the academic literature. Much discussion has focused on the need to expand definitions of home away from a simple spatial definition of home as 'house' or 'collection of houses and associated social amenities'. However, there is much contention over exactly what home *is*. Home has been seen as a socio-spatial entity, a psycho-spatial entity and an emotional 'warehouse'.

Saunders and Williams (1988) argue that home is a socio-spatial entity, the result of the "fusion" of the "physical unit of the house" and the "social unit of the household" (1988:83). They base their analysis on Giddens' theory of structuration and in particular his concept of 'locale', the idea that "social interaction is in part constituted by its spatial setting" (1988:81). They argue that home is a crucial 'locale' because it is where "basic" social relations and institutions are constituted and reproduced (1988:82), particularly because the 'household' (the mode of social organisation distinctive to the home) "represents the core domestic unit of contemporary society"<sup>8</sup>. Because the home is both a household and "a physical unit located spatially", it is a socio-spatial system reducible neither to the social unit of the household, nor the physical unit of the house (1988:83).

The psycho-social approach to home concentrates on the individual's psychological experiences of home. For example, Porteous argues that the home provides humans with all the satisfactions that territory provides to many species of animal, namely identity, security and the stimulation of its occupants (1976:383). Personalization of one's home promotes security and identity, while the defence and modification of one's home promotes stimulation (1976:383–385). Such descriptions of home as a place where one feels ontologically secure also focus on the 'satisfactions' of identity and security and, to a lesser extent, stimulation. For example, Dupuis and Thorns state that ontological security is experienced in the home when the following four conditions are met:

- i) home is a site of constancy in the social and material environment (*security*)
- ii) home is a spatial context in which day to day routines of human existence are performed (*security*)
- iii) home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives (*stimulation*) because they feel free from the surveillance that is part of the contem-

porary world (*security*)

- iv) home is a secure base around which identities are constructed (*security and identity*).

This discussion of ontological security in the home also hints at the social aspects of home, for example providing a degree of constancy in the social environment and undertaking day to day routines. However, the social is not given as much weight as the psychological.

Giuliani (1991) also addresses psychological attachment to the home, addressing an "attachment" bond with the home as "the psychological state of well-being experienced by the subject as the result of the mere presence, vicinity or accessibility of the object" and "the state of distress set up by the absence, remoteness or inaccessibility of the object" (1991:134). It is important to note here that Giuliani treats the home as an object. However, if we replace Giuliani's use of the term 'home', with the term 'house', and recognize that she has assumed that one's home is located within one's house, then her analysis remains useful. Her definition of well-being in the presence of home and distress in its absence is interesting and is similar to arguments about the role of the home in providing ontological security to an individual. In addition to the well-being and distress caused by the presence and absence of the home, Giuliani discusses the quality of the attachment to home "which largely coincides with its emotive connotations". Giuliani recognises that home is an emotive space and that the significance of emotions in understanding 'home' has been largely neglected. A major exception is the work of Gurney (2000). Gurney argues that the emotive significance of home has been rendered "either [as] un-problematic, or as common sense and taken for granted" (2000:33). Gurney's conceptualisation of the importance of emotions in understanding home is informed by two research traditions. The first is a relatively recent sociology of the emotions, which has concentrated on the effects of emotion in such areas as identity construction, narratives of the self (Jackson, 1993 in Gurney, 2000) and inequalities in the division of emotional labour between men and women (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993 in Gurney, 2000). The second is the interdisciplinary social constructionist work on the social, cultural and biological dimensions of emotion, in particular the work of Harré (1986) on the strategic significance and social function of emotions (Gurney, 2000). Gurney describes the home as "an emotional warehouse wherein grief, anger, love, regret and guilt are experienced as powerfully real and, at the same time, deposited, stored and sorted to create a powerful domestic geography, which, in turn sustains a complex

<sup>8</sup> Rather than the family, as the family is just one specific form of household (Saunders and Williams, 1988:82).

and dynamic symbolism and meaning to rooms and spaces" (2000:34).

Somerville (1992, 1997) has combined these approaches and has addressed the social, psychological and emotive aspects of home in his papers. He points to a need for an approach to home that incorporates, spatial, psychological (in which he includes emotive) and social definitions of reality, because neither psychological nor sociological approaches are sufficient in themselves to explain the concept of home. Rather, domestic relations (the focus of sociological accounts of home) are constituted by experience and action (the focus of psychological and phenomenological accounts of home), just as domestic experience and action issue from "the material and social realities of domestic structures" (1997:237). Hence, home is understood as simultaneously a socio-spatial unit and a psychospatial unit.

In summary, the concept of home has been understood in a multitude of different ways. 'Home' has been seen as spatial, social, psychological and emotive. A person's home is usually understood to be situated in space (and time). However, it is not the physical structure of a house, nor is it the natural and built environment of a neighbourhood or region that is understood to make a home. Rather, it is when such spaces are inscribed with meaning that they also become homes. Hence, homes are 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups. In understanding a person's connection with their home, then, we go some way towards understanding their social relations, their psychology and their emotions and we can begin to understand their 'lived experiences'.

It is very important at this point to warn against rigid definitions of 'home'. Since 'home' is a term imbued with personal meanings, different people are likely to understand 'home' to mean different things at different times and in different contexts. As Lawrence notes, "the analysis of homes should include a study of continuous processes rather than isolated actions" (1985:129). It is therefore impossible to provide a detailed, solid and static definition of 'home' that is relevant in all situations. We cannot say that home is always a locale where 'basic' social relations are constituted and reproduced (Saunders and Williams, 1988:82), nor that home always provides territorial satisfactions (Porteous, 1976) and ontological security (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998), even if this is the case in some instances. It is important to explain the concept of 'home' as it is understood in different contexts by different people. Detailed conceptions of the meaning of 'home' should not be developed *a priori*. However, the literature on the concept of 'home' outlined above

remains relevant precisely because it provides an indication of a broad selection of ideas regarding the meaning of 'home'. So, what *can* we say about home? What appears clear in all of the reviewed literature is that home is, first and foremost, a special kind of place.

#### A PLACE CALLED HOME

In the academic literature the concept of home has been understood in a multitude of different ways. 'Home' has been seen as socio-spatial entity (Saunders and Williams, 1988), a psycho-social entity (Giuliani, 1991; Poteous, 1976), as an emotive space (Giuliani, 1991; Gurney, 2000), or as a combination of the three (Somerville, 1992, 1997). What is common to all of these approaches is that while a person's home is usually understood to be situated in space (and time), it is not the physical structure of a house or the natural and built environment of a neighbourhood or region that is understood to make a home. While homes may be located, it is not the location that is 'home'. Instead, homes can be understood as 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups.

This connection between 'home' and 'place' has already been recognized by a number of academics. For example, Prohansky et al. state that among those theorists who discuss place-identity, "without exception, the home is considered to be the 'place' of greatest personal significance" (1983:60). McDowell points out that Heidegger argued that the home is "the key location in which a spiritual unity is formed between humans and things" (1999:71) and that for Bachelard, the home is "a key element in the development of people's sense of themselves as belonging to a place" (1999:72). Bourdieu, in his discussion of "the regulated improvisation effected by habitus" has also used the house (understood here to also be 'the home') as an example (Casey, 2001:410). Tuan also notes that topophilia "manifests itself most often in attachment to home places, places that vary in scale from the nation to the bedroom" (in Duncan & Duncan, 2001:41). Doreen Massey also makes the connection, saying that "integral to ideas of places as stable and settled ... is often – explicitly or implicitly – a notion of place as 'home'" (1995:64). However, Massey challenges the idea of the home as a bounded place of security and retreat. She notes that "a large component of the identity of that place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it" (1992:14).

One's home, then, can be understood as a particu-

larly significant kind of place with which, and within which, we experience strong social, psychological and emotive attachments. The home is also understood as an open place, maintained and developed through the social relations that stretch beyond it.

#### PLACE AND POLITICAL-ECONOMY

Not only does the nature of people's attachments to place (including home-places) have significant social, psychological and emotive consequences, such attachments also have economic consequences. People do not always (if ever) act as rational economic beings. Their economic decisions are influenced by a number of factors, including their attachment to specific places. Furthermore, Harvey argues that our interest in specific places and the meaning of 'place' more generally has been growing in recent times. Since the 1970s, there have been rapid changes in "the relative locations of places within the global patterning of capital accumulation", partly due to the increased speed and decreased costs of transport (Harvey, 1996:297). Because we feel less secure in our places in this turbulent time, we begin to "worry about the meaning of place in general" (Harvey, 1996:297) and we become much more aware that we are competing with other places for capital. As a result, people "try to differentiate their place from other places and become more competitive" (1996:297).

It is true that we live in "a climate of greater risk, insecurity and market volatility" in which "we can no longer assume job security", and flexible labour markets "create conditions which are not ideal for the promotion of home-ownership" (Forrest, 2003:6). However, while these conditions may not be ideal for the promotion of home-ownership, investment in speculative place-construction (the construction of both physical infrastructure and *images* of place) has increased among those individuals and organisations who have become the 'winners' in the new global economic order of mobile capital (Harvey, 1996:298). The 'image' of places is becoming increasingly important, and we are increasingly moving away from an experience of (unselfconscious) 'rootedness' and towards an (image conscious) 'sense of place'. This is increasingly true of our dwelling-places, as people spend more and more money on improving the images of the houses and apartments where they live. Hence, as a result of the perceived threat to place posed by the volatile processes of globalisation, there has been an increasing trend for people to invest more money in place construction.

An understanding of these processes can help housing researchers and practitioners to understand how some areas can become economically depressed

while others prosper, how people can invest a lot of time and money in places, and how, as a result, housing prices can fluctuate and the character of places can change. It also provides an indication that such changes are seldom permanent, with both the threat of place decline and the possibilities for place 'improvement' always evident.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE FOR HOUSING STUDIES

It has no doubt become evident during the course of this paper that the benefits to be gained by housing researchers in dealing with 'home' as a significant kind of place are great. In understanding 'home' as a significant type of place we are no longer limited to working within a false dichotomy of house as a physical structure and home as a social, cultural and emotive construct. The concept of 'place' irrevocably ties the physical world with the social, cultural and emotive worlds of people. A home-place is not simply a physical location, but it is located in both time and space. 'Place' provides the missing link between the false Cartesian dichotomy of 'mind' and 'body', and between 'home' as a social, cultural and emotive construct and house as a physical locality. The long acknowledged link between one's dwelling place and one's well-being (and identity) among housing researchers (and architects and public planners) finds theoretical explanation through the concept of 'place'.

As well as this theoretical benefit, there are a number of more practical benefits for housing researchers in understanding 'home' as a particularly significant kind of place. First, the literature on identity and place, combined with a notion of home as a particular kind of place, provides a framework for addressing connections between people's home-places and their psychological well-being. Second, understanding homes as particularly significant places means that housing researchers who are concerned with home must look beyond the house in their investigations, since homes (like all places) are nodes in networks of social relations. In order to understand home, we need to understand these networks. Third, the literature on place provides a basis for understanding the dynamics of conflicts surrounding home-places. This is particularly important for housing researchers concerned with issues of neighbourhood and community creation and cohesion. Finally, an understanding that people often make economic decisions not as purely rational actors, but rather based on their ideas of the nature of different 'places' is invaluable for housing researchers concerned with, for example, house prices, home ownership rates, or the success or failure of neighbourhood regeneration projects.

## CONCLUSION

Places can be understood as nodal points within networks of social relations that have a particular significance for a person or group of people. Understood in this way, the concept of place is taken to mean more than physical locality. Casey argues that, while places exist in space, they have no privileged relationship to space because place and space are different orders of reality (Casey, 2001:404). Such an understanding of the concept of 'place' provides an interesting tool for housing researchers. It provides a new avenue for addressing the nature of people's social, psychological and emotive attachments to place(s) and for understanding the related political-economies of places.

A number of theorists (see for example Casey, 2001; Harvey, 1996; Massey, 1995; Tuan, 1980) have argued that the relationship between people and places influences the identities of individuals and groups. Two such relationships were discussed here, rootedness and a sense of place (or topophilia). While rootedness means being 'at home' in an unselfconscious way, sense of place implies a conscious appreciation of place (Tuan, 1980). The nature of such attachments to place was then examined through the work of Heidegger and Bourdieu. Heidegger argues that the mind and body cannot be conceived of as separate entities and shows us that "place and self are intimately interlocked in the world of practical work" (Casey, 2001:406). Bourdieu's concept of habitus can then be used to elucidate this link between self and place (Casey, 2001).

Throughout the literature, 'home' emerged as a particularly significant type of place. Massey (1992) challenges the idea of 'home' as bounded and settled, and instead argues that homes, like all 'places', are nodal points, open to, and created by, the social relations which extend beyond them. The benefits for housing researchers in looking at home as a particularly significant type of place are fivefold. First, and foremost, in understanding home as a significant type of place we are no longer limited to a false dichotomy of 'house' as a physical structure and 'home' as a social, cultural and emotive construct. The concept of place irrevocably ties the physical world with the social, cultural and emotive worlds of people. In this way, the long acknowledged link between one's dwelling place and one's well-being (and identity) among housing researchers (and architects and public planners) finds theoretical explanation through the concept of 'place'. Second, and related to this, the literature on identity and place, combined with a notion of home as a particular kind of place provides a framework for addressing connections between people's home-places

and their psychological well-being. Third, understanding home as a particularly significant type of place opens up numerous new research approaches for housing researchers who, if they wish to comprehensively address the issue of 'home', must now look beyond the house in their investigations, because homes (like all places) are nodes in networks of social relations. For example, network theory approaches and research into globalisation and migration may prove particularly useful for housing researchers concerned with the concept of 'home' in our increasingly globalising world. Fourth, the literature on place provides a basis for understanding the dynamics of conflicts surrounding home places. This should prove interesting for housing researchers concerned with issues of neighbourhood and community creation and cohesion. Finally, an understanding that people often make economic decisions not as purely rational actors, but rather based on their ideas of the nature of different 'places' is invaluable for housing researchers concerned with, for example, house prices, home ownership rates, or the success or failure of neighbourhood regeneration projects.

This is not to say that many housing researchers have not already implicitly realised and utilised these ideas. However, the literature on the theory of place (and on home as a particularly significant type of place) makes these implicit realisations explicit. The literature on place has provided a framework and vocabulary through which human-environment interactions and their social, psychological, political-economic and environmental consequences can be comprehensively addressed. This framework is a valuable resource for all those concerned with human-environment interactions, not least housing researchers.

Future research that uses and expands upon the existing literature on 'place' and 'home' would undoubtedly prove interesting for housing researchers. Future research into the connections between home and psychological well-being, the dynamics of conflicts surrounding homes and neighbourhoods and the political economies of homes have much to gain from the existing literature on place and home. Furthermore, housing researchers can also add a new dimension to the literature on place and home, which to date has been predominantly (but not entirely) concerned with the relevance of these issues at regional, national and international scales. Housing researchers have the capacity to add a more local flavour to the literature on 'place' and 'home', while at the same time looking beyond the house, and integrating their findings at all scales with the realisation that home-places are nodes in networks of social relations. Hence the contemporary literature and theories of place, and in particular home-places, has much to offer housing researchers

interested in the dynamics of human-environment interactions. At the same time, housing researchers have the potential to enrich this literature on place through conducting further studies of a more local flavour within the tradition of 'place' research.

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