Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning

The latter part of the twentieth century witnessed the resurgence of strategic spatial plans and perspectives at various scales, ranging from the European to the regional and local levels.

This book examines the ways in which this new wave of spatial planning has been informed by the concepts of space and place and how these concepts have been used in the construction of plans. The authors, both academics and practitioners, provide an historical analysis of the different ways in which the notions of space and place have been adopted in planning thought and practice. Also, through an exploration of recent experiences of strategic spatial plan making in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, they consider the ways in which contemporary spatial planning practices employ ideas about space and place.
Using six illustrative case studies of practice, this book examines which conceptions of space and place have been articulated, presented and visualised through the production of spatial strategies. By bringing together leading planning researchers, it produces accounts of spatial strategy making that are theoretically informed, empirically grounded and practice relevant.

Although there is widespread support for reorienting planning towards space and place, there has been little common understanding about what constitutes ‘spatial planning’, and what conceptions of space and place underpin it. This book addresses these questions and stimulates debate and critical thinking about space and place among academic and professional planners.

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Notes

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INTRODUCTION

Simin Davoudi and Ian Strange

Approaching space and place in strategic spatial planning

The latter part of the twentieth century witnessed the resurgence of strategic spatial planning at various scales from pan-European to the local level. In the UK, this ‘spatial turn’ in planning was contingent on two significant developments which have come to epitomise the demand for new ways of conceptualising spatial planning and making spatial strategies in practice. The first of these developments was the Royal Town Planning Institute’s (RTPI) New Vision for Planning (RTPI 2001:1), which was built around the core idea of planning as Spatial, Sustainable, Integrative and Inclusive. The second impetus for change came from new legislation, in the form of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004, which, for the first time, defined a statutory purpose for planning, stating that planning should ‘contribute to sustainable development’ (ODPM 2004). These developments were complemented with the reform of planning education which placed the emphasis on ‘seek[ing] to promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention’ (RTPI 2003:1, our emphasis). It was this renewed enthusiasm for spatiality in planning that motivated us to embark on this book project. Although there is widespread support for reorienting planning towards space and place, there is little common understanding about what constitutes ‘spatial planning’ and what conceptions of space and place underpin approaches to spatial plan making. It is the latter question that lies at the heart of our inquiry. Hence, the aim of this book is to examine which conceptions of space and place have been articulated, presented and visualised in the making of spatial strategies.

We do this primarily through an analysis of spatial strategy making in six case study areas. Here the various contributors to the book explore the potential tensions or synergies between different conceptualisations of space and place and the way these affect the mobilising power of the spatial strategies. The six cases have been selected to represent strategic planning at a variety of scales, ranging from a large conurbation (London) to regional (Northern Ireland and Yorkshire and Humber) and national (Ireland, Scotland and Wales) levels (Figure 0.1). We acknowledge that there are many ways to choose case studies; our choice has been to accept existing institutional boundaries to define the selected cases.
We have chosen this selection mechanism because, first, our focus is on analysing existing documentation (the spatial strategies), second, they represent a discursive expression of the spatial and place imagination being used in the strategy and, third, that imagination is designed to have specific material impacts and territorial outcomes. Furthermore, all cases represent a 'new' generation of spatial strategies whose formulation in the early 2000s has been welcomed as a sign of a departure from land use to spatial planning. The temporal overlap in their process of production, as shown in Table 0.1, is not accidental. Indeed, the impetus for their production has a degree of common ground related to a major.

**Table 0.1** Spatial strategies in the case study areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study area</th>
<th>Spatial strategy</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>People, Places, Futures: the Wales Spatial Plan</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>National Planning Framework for Scotland</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>The Yorkshire and Humber Plan</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
constitutional change in the United Kingdom, leading to devolution and regionalism, and the peace process in Northern Ireland, providing new perspectives on the multi-dimensional relationships between Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland and Great Britain.

**Organisation and structure**

The book is structured around eight chapters, six of which are devoted to case studies. In order to provide an overall coherence and consistency between the case study chapters, a guiding conceptual framework was developed from the outset as part of the work undertaken for Chapter 1. The framework outlines our understanding of conceptualisations of space and place and their relationship to each other and to spatial strategy making. It is designed to guide each case study in its individual discussion of the spatial strategy productions and contents. The case studies examine the process of strategy making through an analysis of the institutional context and political/power relations within each locality. They also analyse the content of strategies, exploring which conceptions of space and place have been articulated and presented, drawing out the potential tensions and/or synergies between such conceptions. Whereas the latter is about what, the former is about how and why. A key set of objectives for the case study chapters has been to address questions such as:

- How did certain conceptions of space and place come to dominate the plan?
- Whose conception of space and place counted more and hence influenced the content of the plan?
- What mechanisms, institutional frameworks and power relations were drawn upon to explore various conceptions?
- What compromises/bargains were made and why?

Overall, the thread running through the chapters is how conceptions of space and place have been deployed analytically to understand spatial change in different places. By adopting this framework our aim was to ensure both structural consistency and analytical coherence within and between case study chapters. Based on our understanding of the conceptualisations of space and place outlined in Chapter 1, we have identified a set of criteria for analysing the extent to which elements of these conceptualisations are reflected in both the content of the spatial strategies and their production. Each case study chapter uses both the process and content criteria to guide its analysis of the spatial strategy, drawing on each set of criteria to explore its individual case. The chapters do not necessarily explore each criterion (process or content) within their analysis, but rather examine how each strategy’s spatial and place imagination is represented through the criteria, often varying according to cases, presenting a differentiated set of criteria for analysis in individual chapters.

The case study chapters are not designed to be critiques of the success or failure of the strategies, or indeed assessments of their implementation. Rather, each chapter produces a critical and conceptually informed analysis (based on practical reflection) of how the content and process of the strategy production reflect different notions of spatiality. What we have been seeking to avoid is overly descriptive discussions of spatial strategy implementation. Instead, we aim to provide analytical critique of both the processes of production and the conceptualisation of space and place that underpin strategies. The intention is that each
Engaging with practic

The world of spatial practice is a rich tapestry where space, ideology and representation intertwine sometimes even when it is being woven or becoming unraveled. (Ligget and Perry 1995:11)

From the outset, our intention was to engage fully with planning practice by inviting experienced practitioners who have been closely involved in the production of the selected spatial strategies to be the co-authors of case study chapters. Although the initial response to our invitation indicated a great deal of enthusiasm, this began to fade away during the writing process. For some it was the sheer volume of their day-to-day workload that discouraged them from taking part. For others it was the perceived conflict of interest that formed a barrier to co-authorship. A third group, however, remained committed to the project and played their part to the full. What mattered at the end and was valued by the contributors to the book was the continuing insight and support provided by colleagues from planning practice. In return, we hope that the book appeals to reflexive planning practitioners as well as the academic community. We agree with Gilles Deleuze that ‘practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another and theory is a relay from one practice to another’ (Foucault and Deleuze 1990:9). Seen in this way, theory and practice are relational and their continued viability depends on mutual referral. Although the book is frontloaded (deliberately) by clarification of theories and development of conceptual frameworks (Chapter 1), this is done to help us make sense of the rich tapestry of the world of practice. The contributions to this volume clearly confirms the view that

conventional categories of space, of symbolic meaning, and of practical use are not just the purview of academic speculation, nor are they discrete areas of inquiry; they are active components of ongoing political play and struggles to define and enforce social realities. (Ligget and Perry 1995:5)

Strategic planning arenas are the key sites where these struggles are played out. Yet their significance has been systematically neglected in public policy with inadequate attention given to spatiality and strategies for place making. In the UK this was highlighted by the statement of the Permanent Secretary of the planning ministry (DCLG), stating that in recent years governments had concentrated on health, education, housing and other services rather than the place where they were delivered. ‘In the next few years, we will be thinking in a more rounded way about place.’ This shows recognition of the need to move away from place-blind policy agendas towards more place-focused practices.

Whereas the role of planning in place making has been reinforced, little attention has been paid to the widening gap between changing conceptions of spatiality and the policies and practices of planning. Hence, our aim in this book is to provide a grounded understanding of the changing conceptions of space and place, and to explore the extent to which and the ways in which such conceptualisations have shaped the current and emerging spatial strategy making and thinking. By bringing together leading researchers who work in the field of spatial planning, the book aims to expand and develop recent work on spatial planning (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2006) and particularly on space and place in spatial plan making (Healey 2004, 2007). It aims to produce accounts of spatial strategy making that are theoretically informed, empirically grounded and practice relevant.

Our analysis shows that the interpretive approach to intellectual inquiry has fundamentally reconceived ideas of spatiality and of socio-spatial processes and, hence, has advanced the understanding of how places and habitats are economically, socially and culturally produced. These relational conceptions of spatiality, developed most notably in human geography (Amin and Thrift 2002; Massey 2005) and sociology (Giddens 1984), see space not as a container but as something that is dependent on the processes and substances
that make it up. The emphasis is on fluidity, reflexivity, contingency, connectivity, multiplicity and polyvocality. These are far from the apparent reified fixities and certainties that are conveyed by the spatial imagery of traditional planning practices. Although it is true that planning systems have changed considerably in the last fifty years, in many respects their underpinning ideas have not, as will become evident from the contributions to this book. There is a broad concern that those engaged in place making, including the planning profession, have not engaged with this agenda sufficiently (Healey 2007; Liggett and Perry 1995). This has led to a lack of faith in planning in many quarters and the frequent accusation that the planning profession is ‘outdated’. We believe that, if planning is to remain useful, it needs substantial strengthening of the theoretical and empirical foundations that underpin its intervention and action. It is to this end that we hope and believe that our book makes a contribution.

However, whereas the focus of our inquiry is on spatial planning, its outcome has much wider ramifications. The conceptualisation of space and place has significant and tangible effects not only through interventions in development processes, but also with consequences for a range of government policies such as macroeconomic policy, regional economic policy, housing policy, sustainable communities, settlement, and transport policies. Such policy interventions may be premised on outdated ideas of socio-spatial processes because of inadequate knowledge development, poor connections between researchers and practitioners, or a lack of investment in translating new conceptions of space and place into practical knowledge. The development and communication of new knowledge and skills in this field are fundamental to an evidence-informed society (Davoudi 2006a) taking better decisions about its future.

Note

1 Peter Housden’s speech at CIH Annual Conference in Harrogate, 2006.

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CHAPTER 1

SPACE AND PLACE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY PLANNING

An analytical framework and an historical review

Simin Davoudi and Ian Strange

As with terms like ‘society’ and ‘nature’, space is not a commonsense external background to human and social action. Rather, it is the outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the means which render them durable and sustainable. (Thrift 2003:95)

The ascendancy of place

Across Europe, the latter part of the twentieth century is considered as being the era when place and territory regained prominence as the focus of policy attention (Le Gales 1998; Vigar et al. 2000). The rediscovery of place and space was triggered by and reflected major changes in the political economy of Europe and other advanced industrial societies. For economic geographers this transition was articulated as the restructuring of economic organisation from Fordist mass production to post-Fordist flexible
specialisation (Jessop 1995; Piore and Sabel 1984), resulting in new cycles and patterns of space productions and consumptions. Within this context, place has become seen as something that ‘adds value’ to economic development. Place-quality is thus viewed as an asset to be drawn upon to ‘pin down’ footloose companies that are working in an increasingly competitive global market (Amin and Thrift 1995).

Political scientists have seen this transition as a shift from a post-1945 Keynesian welfare state to more market- and kinship-oriented welfare systems (Esping-Anderson 1990; Mingione 1992). For them, the focus on territory is therefore linked to the significance of individual and localised forms of service delivery which have increasingly surpassed nationally organised and universal forms of provision. Cultural analysts, on the other hand, have highlighted the growing diversity of lifestyles, household types and interests as the signs of a transformation from modernism to post-modernism (Dear 1995). Within this perspective, the importance attached to the quality of places and place identity arises from their association with what has come to be known as the quality of everyday life. Another aspect of this transition is the changing scope and scale of environmental issues to embrace not only amenities but also ecological concerns, with localities and local actions playing a central role in sustaining the carrying capacity of biospheres and environmental systems (Davoudi and Layard 2001).

Wrapped around and responding to these multifaceted socio-economic transformations has been the profound restructuring of the state and its changing role in governing the relationships between society and economy. In the last few decades, the system of political authority that emerged within European states has been giving way to a new order. National governments now look increasingly to regional economies, the private sector, urban partnerships and citizen activism for securing their position as key elements of advanced industrial society (Sellers 2002). This process has been conceptualised as a shift from traditional forms of government (understood as the formal organisations and procedures of the public sector) into governance (understood as the multiplicity of governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in mobilising and managing collective action) (Pierre 2000). In many parts of Europe, and particularly in Britain, this process has been facilitated by the neo-liberal policy agenda of the rolling back of state activities, deregulation/reregulation, and increased privatisation of service deliveries (Salet et al. 2003). In its normative sense, governance is defined as an alternative model for managing collective affairs. It is seen as ‘horizontal self-organisation among mutually interdependent actors’ (Jessop 2000:15), of whom government is only one and with only ‘imperfect control’ (Rhodes 1997:8).

Whilst the process of transition from government to governance has led to the expansion of the policy-making space and engagement of a wider range of actors, it has also led to institutional fragmentation; complex webs of relationships; disparity of powers and responsibilities across different governmental and non-governmental bodies; and the increasing role of market forces in the spatial distribution of economic activities (Davoudi and Evans 2005). Hence, the challenge of governance is how to create new forms of integration out of fragmentation and new forms of coherence out of inconsistency. As Stoker points out, governance is ‘a concern with governing, achieving collective action in the realm of public affairs, in conditions where it is not possible to rest on recourse to the authority of the state’ (Stoker 2000:93). Availability of strategies of coordination to actors who are involved in governing of a locality is therefore a key concern.

The spatial turn in planning

In this context, the emerging attention to place and space in public policy (Sellers 2002) is associated with
the significance of territory in providing a basis upon which such coordination strategies can be achieved. As Madanipour et al. (2001:3) have put it, "the new ways of "doing governance" need to be linked to new ways of thinking about space, place and territory". Overall, these dramatic changes in the social, political, environmental and institutional context are a reminder that territory matters! Indeed, as Henri Lefevbre (1991) has argued, production and use of space is deeply embedded in the socio-political landscapes of a society.

An inevitable outcome of this renewed appreciation of space and place was an increasing pressure on planning systems to become more spatial, and on planners to act spatially. For some, a focus on spatiality was the essence of a substantive domain for a planning profession; one that no other profession could legitimately claim as theirs. John Friedmann, for example, considers planners' unique competence as having 'a grounding in knowledge about the socio-spatial processes that, in interaction with each other, produce the urban habitat' (Friedmann 1998:251). The emphasis on integrating space into planning was also stressed by Castells, who, in an interview published in *Cities*, highlighted the need for ‘the defence of locale, of their meaning, of their uses’ and the role of planners as ‘making new spaces, meaningful places with connecting capabilities’ (Cuthbert 1996:8).

Yet, at the time when the centrality of space in social theory and in disciplines such as sociology, cultural studies and economics was on the rise, planning was slow to respond to this renewed enthusiasm for spatiality, despite the fact that space and place are at the centre of its disciplinary focus. This slow turn to spatiality was perhaps a product of the specific trajectory of planning practice in the late 1970s and 1980s. Planning had grown out of architecture with a particular interest in designed urban spaces, and in the 1960s and 1970s this evolved into a system of strategic planning. In the 1980s, however, planning practice began to retreat from its traditional concern with space, and abandon the conception of strategic development (Thornley 1993; Ward 2004). Instead, it became fragmented into a series of disjointed and project-based initiatives, and was stifled by bureaucratic regulatory procedures; a trend which continued well into the 1990s in the UK (Davoudi 2000; Vigar et al. 2000) and elsewhere in Europe (Boelens 2006). Some argued that the shift of emphasis was 'fuelled not only by the neoconservative disdain for planning, but also by postmodernist scepticism, both of which tend to view progress as something which, if it happens, cannot be planned' (Albrechts 2004:743).

The late twentieth century, however, witnessed the resurgence of strategic spatial planning. In many parts of Europe, traditional conceptions of preparing plans began to give way to the proactive task of place making (Healey et al. 1997). As the evidence from the case study chapters in this volume shows, an important contribution to the spatial turn in planning came from the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) by the EU Informal Council of Ministers responsible for planning (CEC 1999). The ESDP and its follow-up actions and research programmes not only raised the significance of a territorial focus in coordinating the EU sector policies but also contributed to the emerging spatial turn in planning in many EU member states (Davoudi 1999; Faludi and Waterhout 2002). Its conceptualisation of European space as an imbalanced core–periphery and its promotion of polycentric development to redress that and to achieve territorial cohesion (Davoudi 2005a, 2007) attracted the attention of not only European but also American planners (Faludi 2007). These concepts began to find their way into many emerging strategic spatial plans in Europe (see *Town Planning Review* 2005 special issue).

Thus, by the end of the millennium, spatial planning became once again à la mode (Albrechts et al. 2003; Parr 2005; Salet and Faludi 2000). This change of emphasis was particularly striking in the UK and Ireland – the case study focus of this volume. Here, the transformation was manifested in a move from a land use planning tradition to a spatial planning practice, legitimised through a change in legislation in 2004. The focus on space and place became central to the 'New Vision' of the professional body for planning, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). The RTPI advocated that the planning system should be (RTPI 2001:1):
• spatial: dealing with the unique needs and characteristics of places;
• sustainable: looking at the short-, medium- and long-term issues;
• integrative: in terms of the knowledge, objectives and actions involved;
• inclusive: recognising the wide range of people involved in planning.

In its subsequent reform of planning education, emphasis was placed on ‘seek[ing] to promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or inter-vention’ (RTPI 2003:1). It was stressed that ‘spatial planning education should be designed to provide a broad understanding of the main principles relevant to the making of place and the mediation of space and of alternative ways in which such principles can be applied in practice’ (RTPI 2003:3).

Together, these developments have come to epitomise the demand for new ways of conceptualising spatial planning and making spatial strategies. They have also sparked a relentless search for defining what is spatial planning and how it can be implemented in practice (Healey 2006). Many argued, quite reasonably, that spatiality in planning was not new (Madanipour et al. 2001). Some suggested that the term was an example of ‘Euro-English’ referring variously to, for example, l’amenagement du territoire, Raumordnung, planificazione territoriale, and urban and regional planning (Salet and Faludi 2000). Others suggested that we can

have ‘too little or too much’ of spatial planning and pointed to ‘the dangers of spatial planning’ particularly when ‘the question of space and spatial organisation is treated separately from other considerations, or when it assumes primacy over these’ (Parr 2005:120).

The main objective of this chapter, however, is not to dwell on these accounts, but rather to explore what conceptions of space and place have underpinned the evolving nature of the planning system in the twentieth century. The main thrust of this enterprise is not whether planning is spatial or not but what type of spatiality it conveys. The chapter provides a conceptual framework for addressing this question and analysing the ways in which space and place are articulated, presented and visualised in the practices of making spatial strategies. In the subsequent case study chapters, this framework is drawn upon to examine different and competing conceptualisation of space and place in contemporary spatial plan making in the UK and Ireland. Table 1.1 presents the key aspects of planning contents and processes which guide both the historical review in this chapter and the empirical analyses in the case study chapters.

**Conceptualising space and place**

The notions of space and place have become important theoretical terms in a wide range of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and literature. Since the mid-twentieth century, notions of space and place have provided a way of breaking free from the theoretical rigidities of using spatial units, such as ‘urban’, ‘region’ or ‘global’, as the application of spatiality, in a number of disciplines (notably human geography and planning). However, debates about space and place have a far longer history. Indeed, a focus on space is seen as the hallmark of modernity and its origins in seventeenth-century intellectual inquiry (Agnew 2005). A new view of the world was emerging which saw the universe as mechanically ordered and hence susceptible to scientific discovery of the causes and functions of its parts without having to be concerned about the purpose or meaning of the whole. Cartesian duality separated questions of why the world exists from

**Table 1.1 Spatial strategies: key aspects of contents and processes**
questions of how it works. The subsequent grand attempt which aimed to discover all nature’s secrets, including those of humanity, has become known as ‘the Enlightenment project’. It began with exploring the physical world and then grew into encompassing the social sciences in the eighteenth century. A significant part of the debate was related to the conceptualisation of space, and was associated with the work of Descartes, Newton, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Minkowski and Einstein.

Although the primary focus of this chapter lies with the more recent conceptualisation of space and place within geographical and planning thought, we believe that our understanding of the multiple ways in which space and place are interpreted would be at best partial, and at worse confused, if we overlooked or bypassed the foundational contributions from philosophy, physics and geometry. Geometry has not only shaped the debate about space, but also remained at the centre of a fundamental distinction between an absolute and a relational view of space. We consider this in the next section.

**Absolute and relational space**

The absolute view of space has its roots in Euclidean geometry, an astonishing intellectual achievement which enjoyed a long uninterrupted sovereignty. Its role as a leading example of the use of a priori knowledge and intellectual intuition was forcefully supported by Immanuel Kant. For Kant, nothing that violates Euclidean principles could be envisaged as a space, in which objects are situated and through which they can move (Scruton 1996). For Kant, space is by nature unitary, three-dimensional and infinite. These are seen as precise features required if space is to be the frame of reference within which we locate the objects of our perception. It is argued that the spatial character of the world is imposed by our own cognitive capacities. Hence, we can know it a priori. It is only because our experience is ‘organised spatially’ that we have the conception of a world at all (Scruton 1996).

Euclidean geometry was for so long accepted because ‘it had been covertly built into Newtonian physics,
which was in turn *built into* Euclidean geometry’ (Scruton 1996:361). The picture given by Isaac Newton
was of space as an infinite container, in which objects could be situated at any point, but which had no
boundaries. For Newton, the absolute character of space was bound up with its infinity; space just exists,
everywhere and for ever and independent of any other fact. As suggested by Agnew (2005:83),

In the Newtonian view, space is absolute, in the sense that it is an entity in itself, independent of whatever
objects and events occupy it, containing these objects and events, and having separate powers from them.

Euclid’s geometry was challenged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on a number of grounds. First
was the discovery of non-Euclidean, $n$-dimensional (as opposed to three dimensional) geometries by
Riemann, Minkowski and Lobachewski. Second was the recognition that one cannot describe the geometry
of the world without describing the forces that are at work in it. Finally, it was the recognition that one
cannot describe physical space without considering the dimension of time. Agnew (2005:83) asserts that in
the history of thinking about space it is only with Einstein’s space–time concept that space is finally
considered as interdependent with the distribution of objects and events. As Harvey (1996:53, original
emphasis) puts it,

Space and time are neither absolute nor external to processes but are contingent and contained within
them. There are multiple spaces and times (and space-times) implicated in different physical, biological and
social processes. The latter all *produce* – to use Lefebvre’s (1974) terminology – their own forms of space
and time. Processes do not operate in but actively *construct* space and time and in so doing define
distinctive scales for their development.

These challenges showed that the popular seventeenth-century image of space that conformed to a
Euclidean geometry was indeed based on subjective assumptions masquerading as objective inquiry.
Despite this, the legacy of Euclid, reinforced by a Newtonian view of spatiality, dominated geographical
thought as well as planning ideas and practices in the first half of the twentieth century, and has remained
influential to date (Graham and Healey 1999) to the extent that it has led John Friedmann to suggest that
‘the conventional concept of planning is so deeply linked to the Euclidian mode that it is tempting to argue
that if the traditional model has to go, then the very idea of planning must be abandoned’ (Friedmann
1993:482).

The *relational* view of space is often attributed to Einstein’s theory of relativity, and he in turn built upon
the geometry of Minkowski. However, the idea that space is relative and not absolute is far older. It has
played a large part in the development of Leibniz’s philosophy; he suggested that ‘spatial properties are
relational, and the position of any object is to be given in terms of its relation to any other objects’ (Scruton
1996:362). In the Leibnizian view, space is relational in the sense that it does not exist independent of
objects and events but is constructed from the relations between them. Drawing on Leibniz, Harvey (1996)
argues that space is not a container but something that is dependent on the processes and substances that
make it up. These in turn are constituted from relations. Thus, ‘any kind of spatial “permanence” arises as a
system of “extensive connection” out of processes’ (Murdoch 2006:19, quoting Harvey 1996:261). In
Harvey’s view, space is made not by underlying structures but by diverse social, economic, cultural and physical
processes, which themselves are ‘made by the relations established between entities of various kinds’
(Murdoch 2006:19).

An important feature of the distinction between an absolute (i.e. Newtonian or Leibnizian) and a relational