



Current Contents

Past Issues

□ Moores, Shaun:

## 'Media Uses & Everyday Environmental Experiences: A Positive Critique of Phenomenological Geography'

Particip@tions Volume 3, Issue 2 **Special Edition** (November 2006)

### **Media Uses & Everyday Environmental Experiences: A Positive Critique of Phenomenological Geography**

#### **Abstract**

This essay offers a critical yet sympathetic engagement with a body of work produced some years ago in the area of phenomenological geography. Despite the limitations of that work – not least its dismissal of media as the technological determinants of growing placelessness – phenomenological geographers have provided various concepts and methods that can be applied in the field of media and communications, with the aim of developing what the author calls a phenomenological investigation of media uses and environments. Their emphasis on practical and emotional aspects of day-to-day existence – more specifically, on habitual movements and unselfconscious senses of place – suggests distinctive ways of exploring media uses in situations of daily living. It is proposed that one point of departure for future research on these matters would be experiences of transnational physical migration, which might be expected to involve a disturbance of lifeworlds and a heightened reflexive awareness of everyday environments – including media environments.

**Key words:** everyday life; experience; media use; migration; phenomenological geography; place

#### **Introduction: Lifeworld, Time-Space Routine and Media**

I want to begin by reproducing a fragment of the (for me) quite fascinating material on 'everyday environmental experience' that appears in a book published over 25 years ago, *A Geography of the Lifeworld* (Seamon 1979: 55-6):

Waking at 7.30, making the bed, bathing, dressing, walking out of the house at eight – so one group member described a morning routine that he followed every day but Sunday. From home he walked to a nearby café, picked up a newspaper (which *had* to be the *New York Times*), ordered his usual fare (one scrambled egg and coffee), and stayed there until nine when he walked to his office. ... 'I like this

routine and I've noticed how I'm bothered a bit when a part of it is upset – if the *Times* is sold out, or if the booths are taken and I have to sit at a counter.'

The 'group member' referred to here was a participant in what the book's author, David Seamon, calls an 'environmental experience group'. Seamon (1979: 20) explains how he set up such groups at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, in order to explore the geographical aspect – sometimes difficult to distinguish from other aspects – of what 'is generally called by the phenomenologist *lifeworld* – the taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday life through which the person routinely conducts his [*sic*] day-to-day existence without having to make it an object of conscious attention'.<sup>[i]</sup>

The main purpose of the environmental experience groups was precisely 'to make the lifeworld a focus of attention' (Seamon 1979: 20) – to describe and reflect on that which is typically the domain of 'a prereflective knowledge'. For Seamon (1979: 40), drawing on the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), that prereflective knowledge is closely related to 'the notion of body-subject' – the idea that the body develops 'its own special kind of purposive sensibility' through the repeated performance of what Seamon terms, rather too romantically, 'body ballet'. In other words, 'habitual movement' might come to feel 'automatic'. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984: xxiii) has the similar idea, inspired in part by the perspective of ethnomethodology, that routine social activity depends on a 'practical consciousness': 'all the things which actors know tacitly about how to "go on" in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression'. Seamon's groups can therefore be thought of, in a certain sense, as having engaged in consciousness-raising – seeking to bring 'precognitive "givens"' (Buttimer 1976: 281) into 'discursive consciousness', through the expression of at least some of these tacitly known things that enable the skilful accomplishment of everyday practices. They did so by attempting to suspend what phenomenologists have called the '*natural attitude* – the unquestioned acceptance of the ... experiences of daily living' (Seamon 1979: 20).<sup>[ii]</sup>

In the passage above, the group member is reported to have described in detail the various elements of his morning 'time-space routine'. This was a regular round of activities, which involved him being in and moving through familiar locations.<sup>[iii]</sup> The pleasurable habit was broken only on Sundays, or else when 'I'm away or something special comes up' (Seamon 1979: 171). As the group member goes on to conclude: 'It's not that I figure out this schedule each day – it simply unfolds' (Seamon 1979: 171). What helped him to reflect on his ordered pattern of movements were those rare occasions when part of the day-to-day routine was 'upset'. If his 'basic contact' with the 'environment at hand' – 'an essential component of at-homeness' – got disturbed, it gave rise to 'noticing': 'A change in the world as known brings itself to attention' (Seamon 1979: 117). Such changes were experienced as a source of mild irritation – feeling 'bothered a bit'.<sup>[iv]</sup>

As someone located in the field of media and communications (spatial metaphors are hard to avoid), I am struck in particular by the participant's remarking on a daily newspaper, the *New York Times*, as an integral part of his 'lifeworld'. Reading that newspaper, much like making the bed, eating scrambled egg on toast or drinking coffee, was an utterly normal and ordinary feature of his morning routine. I am reminded here of Hermann Bausinger's observation that the newspaper may serve a ritual function as 'a mark of confirmation', and so 'reading it proves that the breakfast-time world is still in order' (Bausinger 1984: 344). Indeed, Bausinger actually comments on how regular readers feel a sense of disruption when, for one reason or another, their daily newspaper is unavailable – when, for example, 'the *Times* is sold out' (Seamon 1979: 56).

Having stated that I find the data presented in Seamon's book fascinating, I should add that I am surprised by just how few references there are to media uses in the accounts of environmental experiences offered by his groups' members. The participants in the research were, after all, mainly students living in an 'industrial city' in the US, and they presumably had access to various media of communication in their everyday lives. There are other fragments of material that point to media as parts of a lifeworld. For instance, in the context of an early evening routine that he followed after returning from work, the brother of one of the group members is reported to have regularly eaten his meal 'in front of the seven o'clock news on television' (Seamon 1979: 56). Elsewhere, somebody reports on the ritual of reading a book in a favourite chair before going to bed at night (Seamon 1979: 178). A further, rather different example involves the telephone: 'A few times when using the phone, I've found myself dialling my home number rather than the one I want ... I guess because that number is the one I call the most often' (Seamon 1979: 164-5).<sup>[v]</sup> However, media uses do not feature in the book as a significant aspect of 'day-to-day existence'.

A possible explanation for the low profile of media in the accounts is the fact that Seamon, who guided group discussions, was generally suspicious of developments in 'mass communications'. At one point in his book, then, he declares that 'technology and mass culture destroy the uniqueness of places' (Seamon 1979: 91). His line here is borrowed directly from a fellow exponent of 'phenomenological geography', Edward Relph (1976), and I will now present a critique of their shared position on 'place' and 'placelessness'.<sup>[vi]</sup> Although I disagree fundamentally with the overall line they take on media and social change, and while their work also has other limitations, my critique is not wholly damning – indeed, it is intended to be a sympathetic 'positive critique', in the sense that Giddens (1993) gives this term – because I believe the concepts and methods of phenomenological geography have a valuable contribution to make to the study of media uses in daily living.

## Phenomenological Geography, Place and Placelessness

Phenomenological geography, which is often discussed in the secondary literature as a form of 'humanistic geography' (e.g. Holloway and Hubbard 2001; Cresswell 2004), emerged partly in response to different kinds of 'geography without human agency' (Ley 1996) – in particular, the abstractions of spatial science and structuralist Marxism. In addition, Seamon (1979: 34-5) looks to go beyond rationalist 'theories of *spatial cognition*', in which 'spatial behaviour' was seen to be shaped by people's 'cognitive maps': 'In contrast to the view of the cognitive theorists, I argue that cognition plays only a partial role in everyday spatial behaviour; that a sizeable portion of our everyday movements ... is pre-cognitive and involves a prereflective knowledge *of the body*'.<sup>[vii]</sup> This clearly connects with the ideas on 'body-subject' mentioned earlier, but it is Seamon's related 'notion of feeling-subject' (Seamon 1979: 76) that aligns his approach more closely with the work of Relph (1976) and others (e.g. Buttimer 1976, 1980; Tuan 1977, 1996). The concept of 'feeling-subject' is employed by Seamon to help account for people's emotional, yet frequently 'unselfconscious' (Relph 1976: 65), 'sense of place' (Buttimer 1980). As Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard (2001: 67) note, a common aim of these geographers was to show how 'creativity and emotion are involved in the *making of place*'. An emphasis on place as the product of social actions and interactions – and, crucially, as an experiential construction rather than simply a physical location – is a defining characteristic of this approach.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1996: 455) observes how place 'can be as small as the corner of a room or large as the earth itself', depending on the emotional 'field of care' that constructs it. However, in Seamon's book it is usually understood as made and 'rooted' in specific local settings, such as 'streets, neighbourhoods, market places, ... cafés' (Seamon 1979: 56). Pursuing the choreographic metaphor, he argues that senses of place are fostered by 'place-ballets' (Seamon 1980), which involve an interpersonal mixing of body ballets and time-space routines, and serve to transform spaces – creatively and collaboratively – into significant places.<sup>[viii]</sup> According to Seamon (1979: 25), place-ballet '*appropriates space*'. 'When humans ... become attached to ... a portion of space', comments Tim Cresswell (2004: 10), 'it becomes a place.' The best way of illustrating this argument is with reference to an example. In the passage below, the group member whose morning routine was discussed at the outset describes the 'atmosphere' of the café he frequented 'between eight o'clock and nine':

Several 'regulars' come in during that period ... the undertakers across the street, the telephone repairman and several elderly people, including one woman named Claire, whom I know and say 'Good morning' to each day. ... Many of these people know each other. The owner of the place knows every one of the regulars and what they will usually order. This situation of knowing other people – of knowing who's there at the time, recognising faces that you can say hello to – somehow makes the place warmer.

There was evidently a feeling of 'attachment' to the café setting and its regular inhabitants, which had become an important aspect of his everyday environmental experience.

If the public setting in the account was a site of 'warmth' for the group member, then this warmth can also be felt in the private sphere of a house or apartment – often referred to as a 'home'. On the basis of personal stories told to him by his research participants, Seamon proposes that such domestic places form important 'centres' for day-to-day lives, even in cases where the accommodation is short term. They were found to be sites of 'rest' and 'regeneration', from which physical journeys – long or short – were made and senses of 'reach' were extended 'outward from ... home' towards experiential '*horizons*' (Buttimer 1980: 170).<sup>[ix]</sup> A word of caution is needed, though. As Gillian Rose (1993: 56) and Roger Silverstone (1994: 28) each recognise, Seamon is in danger of idealising the private household, which may equally be a site of misery, division and 'conflict'. Indeed, even Relph (1976: 41-2) acknowledges the possible 'drudgery of place'. There are some very different feelings about daily domestic life, with certain people having rather less opportunity for rest and regeneration than others.<sup>[x]</sup> I would want to add, too, that opportunities for travelling away from home – for being routed elsewhere – are likely to be socially differentiated, as are the types of destination arrived at and the sorts of horizon experienced.

For both Seamon and Relph, a key point of reference in discussing place is Martin Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy – particularly his notion of 'dwelling' (Heidegger 1993). On the one hand, this notion appears to have been imported into their writings as a complement to (what are, in my view) the helpful concepts of '*at-homeness* – the taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable ... with the world in which one lives ... day-to-day life' (Seamon 1979: 78) and 'existential insideness', which Relph (1976: 55) defines as a sense of place 'experienced without deliberate and selfconscious reflection yet ... full with significances'. However, on the other hand, I believe that Heidegger's specific take on dwelling, which reads to me – in large part – as nostalgic and highly conservative, is ultimately the cause of a major problem for these phenomenological geographers. It is telling that his main example of a domestic dwelling-place is 'a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago ... on the wind-sheltered mountain slope, looking south, among the meadows close to the spring' (Heidegger 1993: 361-2).<sup>[xi]</sup> In the work of Relph especially, this conception of dwelling seems to give rise to an evaluative distinction between 'authentic place-making' – the art of which is supposedly being lost – and the 'inauthenticity' of a new 'placeless geography'.

Within the terms of a humanist perspective in geography, it must in principle be possible for there to be 'placeless' space, since not all spaces are routinely inhabited and appropriated as places. David Ley (1996: 193) considers the surface of the moon as a

limit case, although – for some social groups – even a physically remote and deserted landscape might be invested with significance. Still, for Relph the sites of placelessness are not uninhabited wildernesses or moonscapes. Instead, he points to modernist ‘International Style architecture ... with its functional and efficient use of concrete, steel, and glass’, along with locations that ‘declare themselves unequivocally to be “Vacationland” or “Consumerland”’ (Relph 1976: 92-3). His criticism of contemporary built environments is also directed at the ‘subtopia’ of suburban residential development with its ‘endless subdivisions of identical houses’ (Relph 1976: 105).<sup>[xii]</sup> Above all, though, he thinks of placeless geography as a product of mass communication. Relph (1976: 90) includes here, interestingly, modern transportation systems: ‘Roads, railways, airports, cutting across or imposed on the landscape rather than developing with it, are not only features of placelessness in their own right, but ... have encouraged the spread of placelessness well beyond ... immediate impacts’.<sup>[xiii]</sup> In a similar way, Relph (1976: 92) claims that print media and broadcasting have ‘reduced the need for face-to-face contact ... and ... the significance of place-based communities’.

Seamon (1979: 142), as I have already suggested, buys into Relph’s argument about ‘growing placelessness’. For two main reasons, I am not persuaded by it. Firstly, for all their talk of prioritising emotional or experiential constructions in day-to-day existence, these phenomenological geographers end up giving too much importance to issues of architecture, planning and technology.<sup>[xiv]</sup> It is accepted by Relph (1976: 123) that ‘character’ is ‘imputed to landscapes by the intentionality of experience’, but a key target of his criticism is contemporary urban or suburban design itself. The implication, therefore, is that skyscrapers and modern housing estates are somehow innately ‘inauthentic’ environmental features. Media of communication are also prematurely dismissed by Relph as the technological determinants of placelessness, before he has inquired into their everyday social uses.

Secondly, Seamon’s own empirical evidence – gathered in the context of a North American industrial city – does indicate that senses of place are being articulated. Even a car or a ‘transportation terminal’, he notes, can become ‘a temporary centre on a ... trip’ (Seamon 1979: 73). Furthermore, I have previously shown how members of his environmental experience groups occasionally refer in their descriptions to the realm of what he labels ‘mass culture’. So a daily newspaper or an evening television news programme may be used in routine rituals and ‘habitual’ practices of dwelling – helping to facilitate feelings of at-homeness and existential insideness for social actors. This evidence quite clearly contradicts the hasty conclusion that places are necessarily eroded by mass communications.

Elsewhere, in developing a critique of the ‘no sense of place’ thesis advanced by ‘medium theorist’ Joshua Meyrowitz (1985), my point has been that place – far from disappearing – gets pluralised or ‘doubled’ in acts of media use (Moores 2004). For example, when people are engaged in conversation on the mobile phone or listening to

music through the headphones on a personal stereo – in each case a private activity that is routinely conducted in public settings – they might be considered to be, in the words of sociologist Emanuel Schegloff (2002: 286-7), ‘in two places at the same time ... there are two “theres” there’. As well as the spaces they inhabit with their bodily or corporeal presence, then, these people are simultaneously situated in auditory environments that are generated with the assistance of electronic media technologies.<sup>[xv]</sup> Media of communication – not just ‘mass’ media but interpersonal communication technologies too – thus enable forms of ‘virtual coimplacement’ with others, leading to what philosopher Edward Casey (1997: xiv) describes as ‘a genuine, if still not fully understood, phenomenon of place’.

However, in my own discussion of ‘the doubling of place’<sup>[xvi]</sup>, I had a tendency to think of places in a limited way – primarily as physical or virtual locales. I am now looking to build on this work by incorporating from phenomenological geography the insight that places are constructed through human interactions and emotions. Of course, in order to do so it is necessary to jettison the suspicion of media found in Seamon’s book and, to an even greater extent, in the writing of Relph. Instead of dismissing technologically mediated communications as a threat to ‘face-to-face contact’ and ‘place-based communities’, my preference would be for a fuller exploration of those apparently automatic *uses of media in the habitual movements of the daily round* – in what Seamon calls time-space routines, body and place-ballets – and also for an appreciation of what could best be thought of, in general terms, as *everyday experiences of media environments*. When referring to such experiences, I have in mind subjective feelings about precisely the sorts of virtual coimplacement that Casey writes of. Is it possible, in fact, that many people have a prereflective knowledge and practical consciousness of – a basic contact with or attachment to – media environments, from newspapers and television programmes to internet sites, which are regularly ‘at hand’ in day-to-day lives? Can such settings or environments become locations for the emergence of what phenomenological geographers have named senses of place and fields of care? Might the inhabitants of virtual settings come to feel there that they are at home and comfortable, adopting a ‘natural attitude’ to relations with their sometime ‘incorporeal’ (Mitchell 1995: 10) fellow dwellers?

### **An Example: *BlueSky***

At this stage, to help me to unpack the points I am making about media environments, another example is required. Compare the following account, which appears near the beginning of an ethnographic study published quite recently (Kendall 2002: 1-2), with that of the café provided by an environmental experience group member:

The Falcon is a small, out-of-the-way place, known mainly to its regulars, who tend to shun the occasional curious passersby. ... As usual around lunchtime, the bar is

crowded. A few people sit singly at tables, but most sit in small groups, often milling around from table to table to chat with others. As in many such local bars and pubs, most of the regulars here are male. Many of them work for a handful of computer companies in a nearby high-tech industry enclave. The atmosphere is loud, casual, and clubby, even raucous. Everybody knows each other too well here to expect privacy at any of the tables.

As the author, sociologist Lori Kendall (2002: 3-4), goes on to reveal: 'The Falcon is a hangout on ... BlueSky ... a type of interactive, text-only online forum known as a *mud*.'<sup>[xvii]</sup> Nevertheless, much like the café described earlier, it is a unique public setting with its group of 'regulars' who are recognisable to each other. It has its own atmosphere of warmth and friendliness, at least for those insiders who have become familiar with the layout and the social conventions of 'chat' in this 'bar'. The clientele is different here, since many of the regulars are men working in the computer industry in California – hence the shared 'lunchtime' zone, Pacific standard time – but there seems, once again, to be a creative and collaborative process of 'place-making'. In fact, there may even be a 'place-based' community, formed over a number of years in an electronically at-hand environment. Kendall (2002:6) asserts that a 'synchronous' online forum like *BlueSky*, which allows for 'near-instantaneous response' from physically distant others, 'can provide a particularly vivid sense of "place" ... of gathering together with other people'. Despite the absence of any bodily co-presence in the bar setting, Seamon would surely be forced to admit that, in his terms, a kind of place-ballet is being enacted by these participants – who are jointly appropriating and investing significance in a small portion of 'cyberspace'.

Crucially, since this is not just another story of what Kevin Robins (1996: 101) has called 'electronic *Gemeinschaft*', Kendall (2002: 8) also recognises that participants in an online forum are doubly situated: 'Nobody inhabits *only* cyberspace.' Writing of her personal emotions and experiences, she notes that while 'the mud provides for me a feeling of being in a place' there is still the physical environment 'in which my body resides' – where, for instance, her routine 'mudding' depends on the seemingly effortless movement of her hands across the computer keyboard, and her attention to the screen can be distracted by 'someone in the physical room in which I'm sitting' (Kendall 2002: 7). There is the potential, therefore, for 'two experiential worlds' (Kendall 2002: 7-8) to co-exist simultaneously. In referring to two worlds, though, she is not implying that they are somehow entirely disconnected. On the contrary, she thinks there is 'a problem with viewing cyberspace' as a 'sovereign' realm (Kendall 2002: 8).<sup>[xviii]</sup> Her commitment, then, is to understanding how social activities in online and offline settings are interwoven. 'Online relations do not occur in a cultural vacuum', concludes Kendall (2002: 225), and in the forum she investigates there is a ritual performance of certain masculinities that 'intersect' with identities and practices in 'offline realities'.

Indeed, one of the most interesting features of Kendall's ethnography (from my perspective) is her reporting of offline meetings with a number of the *BlueSky*



participants, who occasionally gathered together in situations of bodily co-presence. John Urry (2002: 268), drawing on arguments made by Deirdre Boden and Harvey Molotch (1994) concerning the continued importance of physical proximity in late-modern conditions, suggests that ‘*intermittent* “co-presence”’ – by which he means meeting up ‘corporeally from time to time’ – can be ‘significant even within ... virtual communities’. The virtual proximity afforded by computer-mediated interaction does not straightforwardly substitute for relating to others ‘face-to-face’. In certain cases, as Kendall’s research shows, it actually helps to constitute such face-to-face relations, so that ‘ties exist in both physical space and cyberspace’ (Urry 2002: 268).

### **Further Objections: Issues of Difference and Exclusion**

Following my discussion of place-making practices in a specific media environment and its connection with social activities in physical settings, I now want to extend this critique of phenomenological geography by stating some further objections. These have to do principally with issues of difference and exclusion in the construction of places and place-based communities, but before detailing them it is first necessary to raise a couple of prior issues. I am thinking here of the problematic tendency of phenomenological geographers to approach human experience in essentialist and universalistic ways, and also of their leanings towards what Ley (1996: 209) calls ‘the excess of idealism’.

Seamon’s work offers clear evidence of the tendency towards essentialism and universalism. At one point, then, he characterises the project of phenomenology as an attempt to identify ‘the essential human condition’, which will only be revealed ‘when all “non-essentials”’ – including ‘culture’ and ‘history’ – are ‘stripped’ away, leaving behind ‘the irreducible crux of people’s life-situations’ (Seamon 1980: 149). His general definition of phenomenological geography is as an area of study that ‘directs its attention to the essential nature of man’s [*sic*] dwelling on earth’ (Seamon 1980: 148). As a consequence, he takes (and mistakes) the words of a few American college students in the 1970s as a representation of some universal state of humanity and common condition of geographical being: ‘Their experiential descriptions reflect human experience in its typicality’ (Seamon 1979: 23). The everyday environmental experiences of those students were, of course, inevitably shot through with culture and history. Moreover, the cultural and historical specificities of ‘people’s life-situations’ and ‘dwelling on earth’ – the particular ways in which individuals or social groups construct and inhabit place – are surely of paramount importance for investigations of day-to-day existence. <sup>[xix]</sup>

Earlier, in my brief account of the development a humanist perspective in the discipline of geography, I referred in passing to Ley’s critique of forms of geography without human agency (Ley 1996). He saw the borrowings of geographers from phenomenology as crucial for the reinstatement of human agency as ‘a central theoretical question’ on the discipline’s agenda, but it is also necessary to remember that he warned his fellow

geographers against adopting a wholesale philosophical idealism, which would be marked by the 'uninhibited hegemony of consciousness and subjectivity' (Ley 1996: 209). In other words, it is equally important to avoid forms of geography without social structure. Emphasising the emotional or experiential dimension of daily living, as Seamon and others within the humanist tradition have helpfully done, does not require blindness to matters such as those to which I turn next – of difference and exclusion.

Simon Charlesworth's study of day-to-day existence in Rotherham – a town in South Yorkshire – during the 1990s (Charlesworth 2000) provides an interesting point of comparison with the work done two decades earlier by Seamon in the US. On the one hand, there are notable similarities between the writings of those researchers, despite the fact that Charlesworth is not a geographer and seems unaware of Seamon's 'geography of the lifeworld'.<sup>[xx]</sup> So Charlesworth, like Seamon before him, draws heavily on ideas and concepts from phenomenological philosophy. Without stating it in precisely these terms, he is evidently concerned, too, with the formation of an unselfconscious sense of place. He refers at length to Merleau-Ponty's idea of body-subject, before claiming that: 'Understanding Rotherham means understanding the habituated manner of comportment through which the place exists' (Charlesworth 2000: 92). Although Charlesworth does not adopt Seamon's related notion of feeling-subject, his book is also seeking to explore the 'affective' dimension of place.

Yet on the other hand, the approaches to experience taken by Charlesworth and Seamon are, in at least one important respect, dissimilar. This is because Charlesworth reads the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (cf. Bourdieu 1990, 2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), refusing to accept any essentialist, universalistic or purely idealist conception of consciousness and subjectivity. Bourdieu was himself familiar with the literature of phenomenology and took a critical interest in other 'constructivist' perspectives including ethnomethodology. However, he insists that: 'We need to thoroughly sociologize ... phenomenological analysis' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 73).

Bourdieu's own sympathetic critique of phenomenology involves developing Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on the body through the key concepts of 'habitus' and 'practical sense' (Bourdieu 2000: 142-3), in such a way that more materialist concerns with social division, inequality and reproduction are built firmly into the analysis. While the concept of practical sense, which refers to 'a pre-reflective ... competence' (Charlesworth 2000: 29), clearly resembles that of practical consciousness found in Giddens' sociology, Bourdieu puts far greater emphasis on differences between the embodied dispositions of various social groups in his discussions of class and habitus. A classic example, in which he deconstructs essentialist notions of taste, is his empirical survey of patterns of preference in French cultural consumption in the 1960s (Bourdieu 1984). He therefore seeks to reconcile 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' theoretical positions, arguing that consciousness should be analysed in relation to structural factors.<sup>[xxi]</sup> Taking that lead, Charlesworth (2000: 11) tries to comprehend the 'particularity' of contemporary working-class

experiences, which he sees as ‘overdetermined by economic necessity’ in particular socio-spatial contexts – rather than making general statements about the ‘nature of man’s [sic] dwelling on earth’ (Seamon 1980: 148). The study is designed to specify ‘the sense that life has for Rotherham people ... *their* being-in-the-world’ (Charlesworth 2000: 93). Incidentally, I suspect that – on the basis of what Charlesworth writes about the town – many ‘Rotherham people’ would be quite uncomfortable with the idea that they are enacting a sort of ‘ballet’.

That comparison between the perspectives of Charlesworth and Seamon is useful in highlighting the culturally and historically specific character of life-situations. It would perhaps be better, then, to speak of ‘lifeworlds’ in the plural, since ‘the taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday life’ identified by Seamon (1979: 20) is a socially variable phenomenon. Indeed, even among people who share a common physical locality, there may well be different, possibly competing, place-making practices. With reference to certain districts of London, for instance, geographers Doreen Massey (1991, 1994) and Jon May (1996) have observed the multiple and sometimes conflicting significances of locations – Kilburn, Docklands and Stoke Newington – for residents there who occupy very different social positions and trajectories.<sup>[xxii]</sup>

Alongside such questions of particularity and difference, I would also like to raise those of segregation and exclusion. The key point here is that phenomenological geographers, in focusing on feelings of social inclusion and belonging – of at-homeness, attachment, insideness, community and ‘*centeredness*’ (Buttimer 1980: 171) – did not have a great deal to say about practices of social and spatial segregation, or what David Sibley (1995) calls ‘geographies of exclusion’. To be fair, Relph (1976) does employ the intriguing and (in my view) potentially fruitful concept of ‘existential outsidership’, although – in the context of his work – it ends up playing much the same role as the problematic ideas on placelessness that I have already reviewed. Experiences of existential outsidership, according to Relph (1976: 51), are primarily associated with built environments that increasingly ‘assume the same meaningless identity’.

Places and place-based communities can be described as having a collaboratively produced atmosphere of human warmth and friendliness, as was seen in the examples of café and bar settings above (Seamon 1979; Kendall 2002), but it ought not to be forgotten that senses of place or community usually depend on there being an outside and groups of outsiders. Holloway and Hubbard (2001: 77) remark on how – at ‘different scales’ – “‘home’ is often understood as a place within which only certain people and things belong; it is a place to which a person or group of people can withdraw from the outside world’, while Cresswell (2004: 26) asserts that places are frequently ‘founded on acts of exclusion’. At the scale of the private household, then, physical and symbolic boundaries of various kinds are created in order to separate a home from the public world beyond, even though the everyday use of domestic media technologies may help to make such boundaries more permeable. There are also instances of ‘residential segregation’ at the scale of the local urban or suburban neighbourhood – extreme cases

of which are middle-class enclaves known as 'gated communities' (Harvey 1996). 'Here', writes David Morley (2001: 432), 'we confront the politics of withdrawal and separation, both within the city, and in the flight of privileged groups to the suburbs, or to the countryside.' Similarly, at the scale of the national community, borders are policed with a view to regulating mobility and residence in certain ways.

Returning to Kendall's ethnography of relationships in and around what she terms 'the virtual pub', it turns out that the issue of exclusion is vital in explaining the construction and maintenance of a *BlueSky* community, as was implied by her comment on how 'its regulars ... tend to shun the occasional curious passersby' (Kendall (2002: 1). She is particularly interested in examining the sociable, interactive 'talk' between participants in this online forum, finding that: 'Patterns of speech, persistent topics, and a particular style of references to women and sex create a gendered environment on BlueSky' (Kendall 2002: 72). Her participant observation in that 'gendered environment' led her, she reports, to 'attempt to become one of the boys' (Kendall 2002: 98) on occasion. Nevertheless, Kendall (2002: 100) argues:

BlueSky favors participation by men and excludes most women. ... BlueSky casts women as outsiders unless and until they prove themselves able to perform masculinities according to the social norms of the group. Women who are able to do so find acceptance within the group, but their acceptance reinscribes masculine norms, which continue to define women as assumed outsiders.

In another context, discussing the constitution of sociability in relations between broadcasting and its audiences, Morley (2000: 111-12) advances a similar argument, proposing that – since sociability 'can only ever be produced in some particular cultural (and linguistic) form' – not all viewers and listeners will automatically feel 'at home' with the offer of sociability made by 'a given programme', and so, more generally: 'Any one form of sociability must have its constitutive outside, some necessary field of exclusions by which the collective identity of those whom it interpellates successfully is defined.' Reinterpreting Relph's ideas, it might be possible to perceive the viewers and listeners who do not feel they are addressed by a programme – or else the mudders who are not at home on *BlueSky* – as experiencing a certain 'outsideness' with regard to that specific media environment.

### **Towards a Phenomenological Investigation of Media Uses and Environments**

Despite the limitations of phenomenological geography identified in my critical commentary – especially the suspicion of media and the related argument about growing placelessness, along with the failure to address issues of difference and exclusion – I still believe it is worth recovering (and recontextualising) some of the key ideas and techniques developed by Seamon, Relph and others who were working in that academic area. To repeat, this is intended as a 'positive' critique. I have sought, above all, to stress

the ways in which these geographers provided a distinctive understanding of place as a creative and collaborative appropriation of space. It is by focusing on 'everyday geographies', 'intimate attachments' and senses of place that they have made a 'significant contribution' to their discipline (Cloke et al. 1991: 81) My account of their writings has pointed to a host of theoretical terms – a number of which they drew from philosophy – that might also have future applications in what I would like to call a *phenomenological investigation of media uses and environments*. For example, this includes the concepts of lifeworld, prereflective knowledge, body-subject, time-space routine, feeling-subject, field of care, reach, horizon, existential insideness and existential outsideness.<sup>[xxiii]</sup> In addition, my critique has touched on several complementary concepts employed in work done outside the discipline of geography, such as practical consciousness or practical sense, virtual coimplacement and the doubling of place.

Perhaps the strongest advocate of 'a phenomenological approach' in the field of media and communications at present is Paddy Scannell (1995, 1996, 2000), a theorist and historian of British broadcasting. His pioneering analysis of radio and television foregrounds the orderly, methodical and reproducible ways of 'doing broadcasting', which first had to be discovered and implemented by broadcasters in order to fill the available 'air time' each day – 'today, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' (Scannell 1996: 149). He shows how broadcasting was accomplished with the discovery of fixed schedules, serial-production and continuity techniques, but also with the design of particular styles of broadcast discourse or 'public utterance' that were intended to fit the routine, private circumstances of domestic viewing and listening. 'In and through time', he contends, 'program output, in all its parts and as a whole, takes on a settled, familiar, known and taken-for-granted character' in the everyday lives of audience members (Scannell 1995: 8).<sup>[xxiv]</sup>

Clearly, my own interests overlap to some extent with Scannell's. His main concern is precisely with the historical formation of a 'whole' (national) broadcasting environment in which, he claims, viewers and listeners find their 'way about' in an '*essentially* unproblematic' manner (Scannell 1996: 8). He asks how it is, then, that radio and television are frequently found by their users to be 'ordinary everyday things' (Scannell 1996: 6). This is a highly important line of inquiry, accompanied by a detailed social history of institutional practices and programme formats (cf. Scannell and Cardiff 1991). However, I believe there is a problem with his approach – resulting from his rejection of the need for further empirical research on viewers' and listeners' uses of broadcasting in daily living, and from a related assumption that radio and television programmes have a basic 'meaningfulness' which is '*there to be had* ... by anyone' (Scannell 1995: 5). Having 'set aside' any ongoing requirement to investigate broadcasting's day-to-day significances in specific social circumstances, he is unable to access the detail and variety of particular lifeworlds, or to deal with the possibility that audience members may not always be able to find their way about in broadcasting quite so comfortably – perhaps

especially in today's multi-channel environment. In my view, these matters cannot simply be set aside.

In considering the development of appropriate empirical research methods for the type of phenomenological investigation being proposed here, I wonder whether – in addition to observational work and conversational interviews with individuals – Seamon's innovative idea of setting up environmental experience groups could also be applicable in a more specialised study of media uses and environments? The point of departure for his research, as I have already stated, was the aim of unsettling common-sense knowledge so as to reflect on it – of suspending the attitude of 'unquestioned acceptance' or taken-for-grantedness that tends to accompany everyday activities. 'Group inquiry' is important in this regard, for Seamon (1979: 24), because he sees its potential to facilitate joint exploration and 'intersubjective corroboration' in the description of experiences of ordinary things. Of course, there remain genuine difficulties with the method of group discussion that he employed. Not least, there is the difficulty of bridging the gap between prereflective knowledge and discursive consciousness. Even if it is the case, as Giddens (1984: 328) puts it, that studying practical consciousness 'means investigating what agents already know', the utterly familiar character of their knowledge about how to 'go on' in routine situations makes it hard to express in words. Furthermore, sustaining joint exploration and regular discussion over a lengthy period – as Seamon's groups managed to do on a weekly basis over the course of a university semester – demands a level of availability and commitment from participants that is hard to find in social research. Despite the difficulties, though, group inquiry of this sort, in which members would be encouraged to reflect together on selected aspects of their media uses in daily living, is likely to provide fruitful data.

As a foundation for discussion, Seamon asked the members of his environmental experience groups to engage in prior personal reflection on themes he had chosen for them to explore in their group meetings. Indeed, he notes that the initial themes arose 'out of a previous detailed phenomenology which I had done of my own everyday environmental experience' (Seamon 1979: 27). Anne Buttimer (1980), in an essay on experiences of home that I have cited at various points above, also reflects on her own senses of place – for instance, relating her rather nostalgic memories of growing up in rural Ireland. Like Seamon, she tends to buy into Relph's problematic thesis on growing placelessness, favourably comparing 'the feeling of the grass on bare feet' and 'the smells and sounds of various seasons' from an Irish childhood (Buttimer 1980: 172) with the 'skyscrapers, airports, freeways, and other stereotypical components of modern landscapes' that she witnesses in North America, which have – on her reading – 'derided home' (Buttimer 1980: 174). However, the kind of self-reflexive move made by Seamon and Buttimer might sometimes be helpful in generating lines of inquiry – so long as it is clearly understood that academic researchers' personal reflections or recollections do not give access to a universally shared 'human condition' (Seamon 1980: 149).

From my earlier insistence on recognising the culturally and historically specific character of life-situations, it follows that a phenomenological investigation of media uses and environments should attend to the experiences of particular social groups in particular socio-spatial contexts. In conclusion now, I want to suggest one broad direction – among several possible others – for future empirical research on those issues that are opened up by my critique. This would be to focus on media uses in daily living (on non-uses, too) by people who have recently been involved in a *transnational physical migration*.

The research direction that is being suggested here actually arises out of reflections on my own experience of migrating, with my partner and our then two-year-old daughter, to live in Melbourne in Australia – a move that could have been permanent – before returning to the UK within a couple of years, along with a second child born in Melbourne. I am certainly not presenting this as a typical, representative example of transnational physical migration.<sup>[xxv]</sup> Nevertheless, I suspect that many migrants, on arriving in their new locations of physical residence, are likely to feel some degree of what my family and I initially experienced in Australia – a *disturbance of lifeworlds*. Whilst our destination was not completely unfamiliar to us, since we had already visited it both physically and virtually, we were moving out of social circumstances in which there had been what Seamon conceptualises as a basic contact with the everyday environments at hand – including media environments – and into a situation marked by numerous elements of strangeness.

I remember, for example – especially in the first few months following our arrival, and to my surprise – missing what were previously quite ordinary, regular features of the daily round, such as the sounds of *BBC Radio 5 Live* in the house or car. From Melbourne, I accessed the station's web site via the internet, yet this provided a far more occasional and increasingly detached experience of listening. During the same period, my outsider experience of watching Australian television was one of only gradually finding my way about in the various channels, with just a few points of recognition on the screening of certain drama series or children's programmes. After a year in Australia, though, I felt my fingers moving automatically and effortlessly across the buttons on the remote control device. Moments in the weekly schedule were pleasurable anticipated, and I had become familiar with several of the formats and personalities appearing on screen. In addition, telephone, email and web cam contact – virtual proximity – with family members and friends in the UK was valuable, as we attempted to find our feet in a new country. On most mornings, the home computer was ritually turned on to check for messages deposited for us, from across the globe, in the inbox overnight. There was also an intermittent to-and-fro of cards, small gifts and home videos exchanged via the international postal system, as well as the odd corporeal visit from a relative or friend.

Migration is of interest to me here, then, precisely because it can bring a disruption of day-to-day existence that might, in turn, give rise to a noticing and heightened reflexive awareness of environmental experiences. It also raises questions about the ways in which a migrant – considered both as body-subject and as feeling-subject – might

subsequently begin to accomplish the practical and emotional task of re-establishing habitual movements or senses of place. How are time-space routines and dwellings – at different geographical scales – reconstructed, with the possibility that experiences of at-homeness could be modified and multiplied? Is there a reorganisation of senses of reach and experiential horizons that accompanies this process? Crucially, from my perspective, do media sometimes figure significantly in those transformations?

Of course, I am well aware that there is now a rapidly expanding literature in cultural studies on the role of media in what Marie Gillespie (2000) labels 'diaspora communities'. In fact, in a recent critical contribution to that literature, Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy (2006) draw productively on Scannell's phenomenological approach to broadcasting. Given the focus of their empirical research, which is on 'London Turks' watching television broadcast live from Turkey via satellite, it is perhaps surprising that Scannell – whose 'overall project ... is very national in its orientation' (Robins and Aksoy 2006: 93) – should be a key point of reference for the arguments they make about the meanings of this 'transnational' flow of media images and sounds. However, what Robins and Aksoy (2006: 95) suggest is that, while Turkish migrants living in London 'enjoy and appreciate' many of the programmes accessed via satellite, 'the care structures of television' – its 'for-anyone-as-someone structures' (Scannell 2000) – can occasionally 'break down' in situations of transnational communication. This is because – outside of Turkey, in the British context of physical residence – the 'conditions no longer exist' for established members of migrant cultures to feel completely at home in 'Turkish broadcasting': 'they can no longer watch ... from the inside, as it were' (Robins and Aksoy 2006: 96-7). The way in which these researchers apply such notions of insideness and outsideness, in a discussion of complex connections (and disconnections) between the physical and media environments inhabited by migrants, appears to be entirely in line with my positive critique of phenomenological geography.

Still, the excellent work done by Robins and Aksoy by no means exhausts the issues that I am raising. The overwhelming emphasis in current cultural studies of diaspora communities is on the established members of migrant cultures, and often on the formation of second-generation, diasporic identities (e.g. Gillespie 1995). As a consequence, to date, little specific attention has been paid to media uses and non-uses in the period immediately following a transnational physical migration. An investigation of this initial period of potential disruption and reconstruction offers the best prospect, in my view, for a phenomenological analysis of 'how it is that migrants experience migration, and how they ... make sense of their experiences' (Robins and Aksoy 2006: 98).

### **Acknowledgements**

Versions of the arguments made in this essay have been presented to the 2005 International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Conference in Taipei – with Tony Wilson's kind assistance – and the 2006 Media, Communication and



Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) Conference in Leeds, as well as in talks that were given at Universität Bremen and Goldsmiths College, University of London. I am grateful to David Seamon, who has taken the time to write a response to this essay for publication in the journal. Although we disagree on certain matters, I very much welcome the dialogue between us. In addition, I am indebted to the late Roger Silverstone for his comments on a previous talk of mine that was given at the London School of Economics and Political Science (cf. Moores 2003), in which he insisted on the relevance of phenomenological geography to my interests in media and place. To my knowledge, Roger has been the only academic in the field of media and communications to make more than a passing reference to the ideas of the phenomenological geographers – in his important book, *Television and Everyday Life* (Silverstone 1994: 26-8).

## References

Augé, M., *Non-Places: Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London: Verso, 1995.

Bausinger, H., 'Media, Technology and Daily Life', *Media, Culture and Society*, 6: 343-51, 1984.

Boden, D. and Molotch, H., 'The Compulsion of Proximity', in R. Friedland and D. Boden (eds) *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1994.

Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Bourdieu, P., *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity, 1990.

Bourdieu, P., *Pascalian Meditations*, Cambridge: Polity, 2000.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L., *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity, 1992.

Bull, M., *Sounding Out the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life*, Oxford: Berg, 2000.

Buttimer, A., 'Grasping the Dynamism of Lifeworld', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 66: 277-92, 1976.

Buttimer, A., 'Home, Reach and the Sense of Place', in A. Buttimer and D. Seamon (eds) *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, London: Croom Helm, 1980.

Buttimer, A. and Seamon, D. (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, London: Croom Helm, 1980.

Casey, E., *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1997.

Charlesworth, S., *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Cloke, P., Philo, C. and Sadler, D., *Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates*, London: Paul Chapman, 1991.

Cresswell, T., *Place: A Short Introduction*, Malden MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Crossley, N., *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*, London: Sage, 2001.

Deem, R., *All Work and No Play? The Sociology of Women and Leisure*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1980.

Garfinkel, H., 'Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities', in *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Cambridge: Polity, 1984.

Giddens, A., *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge: Polity, 1984.

Giddens, A., 'Time, Space and Regionalisation', in D. Gregory and J. Urry (eds) *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.

Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity, 1991.

Giddens, A., *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Cambridge: Polity, 1993.

Gillespie, M., *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Gillespie, M., 'Transnational Communications and Diaspora Communities', in S. Cottle (ed.) *Ethnic Minorities and the Media: Changing Cultural Boundaries*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

Harvey, D., 'From Space to Place and Back Again', in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1996.

Heidegger, M., *Being and Time*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962.

Heidegger, M., 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Basic Writings*, revised edn, London: Routledge, 1993.

Hermes, J., *Reading Women's Magazines: An Analysis of Everyday Media Use*, Cambridge: Polity, 1995.

Holloway, L. and Hubbard, P., *People and Place: The Extraordinary Geographies of Everyday Life*, Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2001.

Jacobs, J., *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Vintage, 1961.

Kendall, L., *Hanging Out in the Virtual Pub: Masculinities and Relationships Online*, Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 2002.

King, P., *Private Dwelling: Contemplating the Use of Housing*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Ley, D., 'Geography Without Human Agency: A Humanistic Critique', in J. Agnew, D. Livingstone and A. Rogers (eds) *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, Malden MA: Blackwell, 1996.

Lull, J., *Inside Family Viewing: Ethnographic Research on Television's Audiences*, London: Routledge, 1990.

Massey, D., 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today*, June: 24-9, 1991.

Massey, D., *Space, Place and Gender*, Cambridge: Polity, 1994.

Massey, D., 'The Conceptualization of Place', in D. Massey and P. Jess (eds) *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Massey, D., *For Space*, London: Sage, 2004.

May, J., 'Globalization and the Politics of Place: Place and Identity in an Inner London Neighbourhood', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21: 194-215, 1996.

Merleau-Ponty, M., *Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.

Meyrowitz, J., *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Miller, D. and Slater, D., *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*, Oxford: Berg, 2000.

Mitchell, W., *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995.

Moores, S., 'Media, Flows and Places', Media@LSE Electronic Working Paper 6 (accessible online), London School of Economics and Political Science, 2003.

Moores, S., 'The Doubling of Place: Electronic Media, Time-Space Arrangements and Social Relationships', in N. Couldry and A. McCarthy (eds) *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Moores, S., *Media/Theory: Thinking About Media and Communications*, London: Routledge, 2005.

Morley, D., *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*, London: Routledge, 2000.

Morley, D., 'Belongings: Place, Space and Identity in a Mediated World', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4: 425-48, 2001.

Pred, A., 'The Choreography of Existence: Comments on Hägerstrand's Time-Geography and Its Usefulness', in J. Agnew, D. Livingstone and A. Rogers (eds) *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, Malden MA: Blackwell, 1996.

Relph, E., *Place and Placelessness*, London: Pion, 1976.

Robins, K., 'Cyberspace and the World We Live In', in *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision*, London: Routledge, 1996.

Robins, K. and Aksoy, A., 'Thinking Experiences: Transnational Media and Migrants' Minds', in J. Curran and D. Morley (eds) *Media and Cultural Theory*, London: Routledge, 2006.

Rose, G., *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*, Cambridge: Polity, 1993.

Scannell, P., 'For a Phenomenology of Radio and Television', *Journal of Communication*, 45(3): 4-19, 1995.

Scannell, P., *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Scannell, P., 'For-Anyone-as-Someone Structures', *Media, Culture and Society*, 22: 5-24, 2000.

Scannell, P. and Cardiff, D., *A Social History of British Broadcasting, 1922-1939: Serving the Nation*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Schegloff, E., 'Beginnings in the Telephone', in J. Katz and M. Aakhus (eds) *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Seamon, D., *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest and Encounter*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1979.

Seamon, D., 'Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines and Place-Ballets', in A. Buttimer and D. Seamon (eds) *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, London: Croom Helm, 1980.

Seamon, D., 'A Singular Impact: Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness*', *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 7(3): 5-8, 1996.

Sibley, D., *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Silverstone, R., *Television and Everyday Life*, London: Routledge, 1994.

Thrift, N., 'Summoning Life', in P. Cloke, P. Crang and M. Goodwin (eds) *Envisioning Human Geographies*, London: Arnold, 2004.

Tuan, Y-F., *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Tuan, Y-F., 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', in J. Agnew, D. Livingstone and A. Rogers (eds) *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, Malden MA: Blackwell, 1996.

Turkle, S., *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996a.

Turkle, S., 'Parallel Lives: Working on Identity in Virtual Space', in D. Grodin and T. Lindlof (eds) *Constructing the Self in a Mediated World*, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1996b.

Urry, J., *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, London: Routledge, 2000.

Urry, J., 'Mobility and Proximity', *Sociology*, 36: 255-74, 2002.

Wilson, T., *Watching Television: Hermeneutics, Reception and Popular Culture*, Cambridge: Polity, 1993.

---

<sup>[i]</sup> In a later version of this definition, Seamon (1980: 149) inserts the qualifying term 'constantly' before 'an object of conscious attention'.

<sup>[ii]</sup> It is worth noting that there are some parallels between the efforts of Seamon's groups to suspend such an attitude and the breaching experiments conducted by Garkinkel (1984), in his ethnomethodological studies of the 'routine grounds of everyday activities'. In each case, an unsettling of common-sense knowledge and taken-for-granted ways of doing is designed to demonstrate their largely unnoticed existence.

<sup>[iii]</sup> These locations are known in time-geography as 'stations' on the daily 'time-space path' (cf. Giddens 1984, 1985). Pred (1996) provides a helpful summary of the 'time-geographic' perspective on 'the choreography of existence', of which Seamon would have been aware. Hägerstrand – the key figure in time-geography – wrote the foreword to

Buttimer and Seamon (1980), and visited Clark University in the 1970s. Indeed, Seamon went on from there to work as a research fellow in Hägerstrand's department in Sweden.

[iv] Of course, there is a danger that routine social actions can become compulsive – so that their disruption is experienced as more than simply a source of mild irritation – but time-space routines are also an important basis for creativity, according to Giddens (1991: 40-1).

[v] I am reminded here of comments made by Merleau-Ponty (1962: 144) on the 'knowledge in the hands' of the typist – 'a knowledge bred of familiarity'. Crossley (2001: 122) pursues this point in a fascinating account of his own use of the keyboard on a word processor: 'I seem actually to be thinking with my fingers ... when I am in full flow ... *I could not give a reflective, discursive account of the keyboard layout.*' As he goes on to conclude, 'knowledge I have of the keyboard is a practical, embodied knowledge, quite remote and distinct from discursive knowledge' (Crossley 2001: 122).

[vi] Seamon (1979: 10) recommends 'the interested reader' to Relph's *Place and Placelessness*, as 'a complement' to his own work. Elsewhere, he describes their common approach as 'phenomenological' geography (Seamon 1980). Years later, Seamon (1996) also published a retrospective piece on Relph's book.

[vii] More recently in geography, Thrift (2004: 85) – in advancing his arguments for the relevance of 'non-representational theories' – has put a similar emphasis on 'non-cognitive dimensions of embodiment'. He asserts that 'only the smallest part of thinking is explicitly cognitive' (Thrift 2004: 90).

[viii] As well as drawing on time-geography, with its conception of day-to-day movements as 'a weaving dance through time-space' (Pred 1996: 638), Seamon (1979: 58) also refers to the idea of 'an intricate sidewalk ballet' that is found in the work of Jacobs (1961).

[ix] Here, it is crucial to remember that 'mobilities' – 'imaginative' or 'virtual' as well as 'corporeal' (Urry 2000, 2002) – and senses of reach, which can now be 'infinitely extended through ... involvement with the mass media' (Silverstone 1994: 28), may lead to complex reconstructions of home and lifeworld.

[x] With regard to gender, this point has been established for many years now – in feminist research demonstrating the uneven distribution of leisure and labour in some households (cf. Deem 1980). The findings of such research raise doubts about a wholly 'happy phenomenology of the home' (Sibley 1995: 94).

[xi] King (2004) has a far less nostalgic take on 'the use of housing' for 'private dwelling', while still borrowing the insights offered by Heidegger.

[xii] The aversion of phenomenological geography to modernist architecture and to what Relph (1976: 89) calls 'quasi-scientific planning' in an urban or suburban environment is perhaps understandable in historical context, because at the time they were widely perceived as leading to the destruction of older, settled patterns of life. Yet he concedes that 'being lived-in confers some authenticity on even the most ... unrelentingly uniform landscapes' (Relph 1976: 80).

[xiii] Augé (1995) later makes much the same case for understanding motorways, service stations, high-speed trains and airport departure lounges as 'non-places'.

[xiv] Interestingly, although Seamon was trained in the discipline of geography, he now has a professorial position in an architecture department in the US.

[xv] Bull (2000) has presented a pioneering, qualitative empirical study of the uses of personal stereos in urban environments. Of particular interest there, for me, is his attempt to develop a 'critical phenomenology' (Bull 2000: 11) of users' experiences. For instance, he writes about how personal-stereo use can help to reconfigure the 'site' and 'horizon' of everyday experience (Bull 2000: 31-41).

[xvi] This phrase is coined by Scannell (1996), in his analysis of 'eventfulness' in broadcasting. In borrowing it from him, I have sought to extend its applications.

[xvii] 'Muds' are internet 'Multi-User Domains' (Kendall 2002: 4; cf. Turkle 1996a, 1996b).

[xviii] A valuable critique of internet studies that approach cyberspace as '*apart from*' rather than as '*part of* everyday life' is to be found in the 'ethnographic approach' to internet use advocated by Miller and Slater (2000: 4-7).

[xix] Which is not to say that there are no human universals. An obvious example would be mortality – the 'finite' character of the lifetime of any individual, which Giddens (1984: 35), alluding to the thought of Heidegger (1962), refers to as 'being towards death'.

[xx] Charlesworth (2000: 11-12) describes his own research approach as a form of 'philosophical anthropology'.

[xxi] Once again, there are some parallels with Giddens' theory of 'structuration' (Giddens 1984).

[xxii] I have discussed Massey's important work on place elsewhere (Moores 2003, 2005). While recognising the significance of boundaries, she has stressed 'the openness of places' – places as the product of multiple and unevenly experienced 'connections and interrelations' (Massey 1995: 59) on a potentially global scale. Her work is, therefore, an implicit rejection of aspects of the conceptualisation of place found in phenomenological geography: 'place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic' (Massey 2004: 6).

[xxiii] Some of these concepts have already been employed in the field of media and communications in the past. I have noted the use of the idea of reach by Silverstone (1994), and the notion of horizon by Bull (2000). See also Wilson's analysis of popular television and its conditions of reception (Wilson 1993) – he writes there of lifeworlds and horizons – and Scannell's reflections on the 'care-structures' of broadcasting (Scannell 1996), to which my attention turns shortly. In addition, there is other work in the field that is highly relevant to my concerns here – most notably, Lull's ethnomethodological perspective on the practical accomplishments of television viewing in household life (Lull 1990) and Hermes' qualitative study of readers of women's magazines (Hermes 1995), in which she draws on the phenomenological sociology of Schutz.

[xxiv] See my much fuller account of his work on radio and television, which includes a discussion of the important concept of 'dailiness' (Moores 2005).

[xxv] Since we were a white, English-speaking, British middle-class family moving freely from one predominantly Anglophone culture to another, after I had secured a position at the University of Melbourne. It is significant, too, that there was the option for us to return – a choice which is certainly not open to all migrants.

### Biographical Note

Shaun Moores is Professor of Media and Communications at the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies, University of Sunderland, UK. He is the author of *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (Sage, 1993), *Satellite Television and Everyday Life: Articulating Technology* (John Libbey Media, 1996), *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000) and *Media/Theory: Thinking About Media and Communications* (Routledge, 2005). His latest book, co-edited with Andreas Hepp et al. and published in German, is entitled *Konnektivität, Netzwerk und Fluss: Konzepte Gegenwärtiger Medien-, Kommunikations- und Kulturtheorie* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006).

Contact (by email): [Shaun Moores](#)

Read David Seamon's [response](#) to this article...

