

Perspectives of Seeing the Interactions among Space, People, and Society*

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공간, 사람, 사회의 상호작용에 대한 관점들*

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Abstract : This study is to critically examine a variety of perspectives of seeing the interactions among space, people, and society. According to Tuan, place is a center of meaning constructed by people's experience, and its attributes consist of natural and built-up environments. Entrikin suggests a way of seeing place from a contrary perspective, that is, the subjective and existential sense of place and the objective and naturalistic conception of place. Lefebvre examines the historical transformation of social space through the dialectics among the perceived space, the conceived space, and the lived space. Social space is (re)produced and changed through the conflictual unit of the spatial triad. The project of Foucault's spatial metaphor is to tightly combine three critical concepts, power, knowledge, and space. Those concepts are not objectively existed regardless of specific times and spaces, but they are socially and culturally constructed through the networks of people under particular environments. In the following papers, it is needed to comparatively examine the various perspectives mentioned above to make a new conceptual framework of understanding the interactions among space, people, and society.

Key Words : space, place, society, experience, power, spatial metaphor

요약 : 연구의 목적은 공간, 사람, 사회의 상호작용에 관한 다양한 관점들을 비판적으로 검토하는데 있다. 먼저 인본주의 입장에서 장소와 사람의 관계가 논의되었다. 인간 그리고 자연과 건조 환경으로 구성된 장소는 사람들의 주관적 경험에 의해 의미가 생성되며, 이러한 장소의 이해는 장소를 객관적·자연적 관점으로 개념화시키려는 시도와 대비된다. 인본주의적 관점에서 장소와 사람의 관계 이해는 역동적인 사회적·정치적 현상을 설명하는데 한계점에 부딪혔다. 르페브르와 하버는 마르크스 정치경제학적 입장에서 공간과 사회를 변증법적으로 설명하였다. 르페브르는 지각공간, 개념공간, 생활공간 사이에 전개되는 모순을 통해 사회공간의 역사적 전환을 분석하였다. 인문학에서 입지, 거리, 경계 등과 같은 공간적 개념들이 은유적으로 많이 사용되었다. 푸코는 공간적 은유를 통해 권력, 지식, 공간의 관계를 비평적으로 검토하였다. 권력과 지식은 구체적 시간과 공간으로부터 독립되어 존재하는 것이 아니라 특정 환경에 살고 있는 사람들의 사회적 관계망과 문화에 의해 구성되어 진다. 후속 연구에서 상이한 관점들이 보다 정교하게 검토되어 발전된 개념들이 수립될 필요가 있다.

주요어 : 공간, 장소, 사회, 경험, 권력, 지식, 공간적 은유

1. Introduction

The study of geography including regional one has been always related to space as a physical and social reality and its conceptual (or cognitive) perspectives after the beginning of modern geography. Particularly from the late 1960s or early 1970s, two concepts, space and place have been much discussed not only in geography, but also in sociology, philosophy, literature. Therefore,

a variety of theories to space and place have been developed. Under the relationship between space and society, we can talk about endless topics, that is, space and time, modernism and postmodernism, object and subject, men and women, culture and nature, spirit and body, and so on.

Postmodernists asked the philosophical and political questions of modernist thinking and its practical project. Society is not constructed on a

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pin point and timeless (or dead) space and it is always being influenced from an already established social and spatial structure through time. Traditionally social scientists did not seriously deal with space in explaining a society. They assume that space is a physical container of social entities or the physical expression of various types of social relations, organizations, and structures. Also place was marginalized or excluded in the understanding of society. Actually, there is not one way, but two ways between space and society. That is, society makes space and it is also influenced by a socially constructed space through time. In a practical sense, space is related to many social problems. For example, there are different types of unequal spatial development which will cause social and political conflicts among class, gender, and interest groups.

Based on the importance of space and place in the (re)production of (post)modern society, this study is to critically examine a variety of perspectives of interpreting the interactions among space, people, and society. It focuses on a few important thinkers under the perspectives like humanism, Marxian political economy, and the politics of spatial metaphor.

2. Humanistic perspectives : relations between place and people

Human geography has been built on the concepts, space, place, people, and society. Here I want to discuss Tuan's perspectives about place and people. Generally speaking, the key theme in which Tuan is interested is people's understanding about place. His perspective usually called as a humanistic approach is based on two philosophies, phenomenology and existentialism(Tuan, 1971, 1974, and 1976). More specifically, he is interested in both people's perception toward the relationship between human beings and their environments

and the creation of meaning about place from a person's experience.

A humanistic approach rejects the reduction of place to the geometrical concept of surface. The space defined by physical sciences and geometry is itself based on the unverified preconception that "there exists one true objective space" (Entrikin, 1976). Instead of trying to establish the general law or theory of space, "the study of place from a humanistic perspective, is the study of people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience" (Tuan, 1974:213). Here the term 'experience' means a variety of modes such as feeling, seeing, smelling, and imaging through which a person knows his or her world. Tuan usually deals with space and place in his writings, but he does not clearly define what space and place mean. Place is particular. and space is abstracted. The former is a mental construct, and the later is a social construct.

Tuan gives us much ideas toward place. Place is a center of meaning constructed by experience. The character of place is a composite of natural and built-up environments, and its modifications have been done by successive generations of human beings. A sense of place has two meanings. One is visual or aesthetic, and the other is known through the senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch (Tuan, 1974). He also mentions two different types of place. One is place as public symbols such as sacred place, monument, and public square, and the other is place as a field of care like park, home, and town.

To understand the making of place, Tuan suggests a narrative-descriptive approach whose main tool is language (Tuan, 1991). The felt quality of a place can never be fully revealed by describing the physical and social structures. Nor is it merely a stable attribute that can be elicited through the use of restrictive questionnaires. A quantitative approach like a questionnaire survey

must be supplemented by the study of a person's speech as it appears naturally in the course of day-to-day.

In sum, Tuan suggested a humanistic approach mainly based on people's subjective understanding to place. He also suggests a methodology of examining place. However, he does not consider a social and political perspective toward the relations among space, place, people, society.

Now I examine the underlying tension between objective (or universal) and subjective (or particular) discourses in the understanding of place and a way of solving the tension through narrative forms. Entrikin suggests a way of seeing place. He tries to look at the two ways from a contrary perspective. One is 'the relatively subjective, existential sense of place' and the other 'the objective, naturalistic conception of place' (Entrikin, 1991). This kind of division is much similar to the idiographic-nomothetic dichotomy in geography as a general. In the former, place is specific because each place is fused with meaning and cultural significance, that is, place as the meaningful context of human action. In the later, place becomes the location of objects and events. In this case, place means geometric and abstract space. The aim of making the objective perspective of place is to find a general law, that is, scientific explanation of generic relations among objects and events on a geometric space. The objects and events are independent from a particular place.

Let us examine why Entrikin tries to look at place through the underlying tension between a subjective and objective perspective. More specifically, what is Entrikin's criticism toward the two perspectives which are much controversial after the quantitative revolution in geography in the 1960s. The subjective perspective is mainly based on the specificity (or uniqueness) of place. The critique of the objective perspective expressed as a spatial-analytic one by Entrikin is that

"uniqueness is a quality of all objects and events and that the role of the scientist is to look beyond this uniqueness to find the general" (Entrikin, 1991:17). Here a question is whether or not the objects and events observed in the objective perspective are independent from place. That is to say, place is thought just as a container in which the objects and events exist. According to the subjective perspective, place is seen as a mental construct and the center of meaning constructed by human cognition, experience, and activity. Entrikin's reaction to the subjective perspective is that the attachment of meaning to place in modern world is characterized as instability.

"The rapid transformation of places that we associate with modern societies has been described as a source of the destruction of the meaning of places. Another source is the increased ease with which we move among places" (Entrikin, 1991:57).

The objective perspective is made from the prevailing concepts of scientific rationality drawn from physical sciences. Scientific geography refers to the work of spatial analysts who seek macro-scale generalizations as well as to the work of behavioral geographers who seek explanations at the micro-scale. One criticism on the objective or scientific perspective is that place loses much of its significance for human action because it mainly focuses on the generalization between the objects and events in a place objectively given.

Entrikin is interested in the narrative understanding of place to solve the underlying tension between the two perspectives. He believes that such a tension can be solved through narrative synthesis or explanations.

"Narrative understanding has been characterized as a way of seeing things together.

It has been described as a distinct form of knowing that derives from the redescription of experience in terms of a synthesis of heterogeneous phenomena”(Enrikin, 1991:23)

It seems to me that he likes an interpretation approach of understanding place whose main tool is language. He accepts a dualistic perspective of place, that is, a sense both of being in a place and of being at the points in an abstract world. Place is best understood from a perspective in between the two.

Sack and Relph give us a good framework to look at space and substance called as a thing, environment, and society. The conceptual framework used by Sack is the relations between a sophisticatedly fragmented and unsophisticatedly fused pattern.

“Space is an essential framework of all modes of thought. ... People are conceptually - not actually - isolating and separating space from substance”(Sack, 1980)

Relph suggests formal geography and geographical experience, and he deals with being-in-the-world for the study of space and substance.

“Being-in-the-world embraces the fact that there is always and already an environment for each of us before we become curious about the earth and the location and character of its different places. ... In modern academic geography, space is, in effect, geometric. ... In geographical experience, space is rarely encountered in a pure and abstract way” (Relph, 1985: 19, 24-25)

Generally speaking, Sack uses the combination of scientific realism and phenomenology to develop his perspective toward space and substance. The strategy of making a framework by Sack is mainly based on an abstract idea and

its categorization even if he accepts that “geographical space is seen and evaluated in different ways at different time and culture. There is a critical question about the relationship between the objectivity of space in physical and social sciences and real space in the world. The objectivity of space is constructed in a geometric space which is represented by three dimensions. It is not the objectivity of reality, but just one of the modes of representation toward reality. There is also a big problem when we try to relate the objectivity of space to the subjectivity of space. I am not sure whether or not Sack separately or simultaneously thinks the ontology and epistemology of space.

Relph’s framework is built mainly on Heidegger’s thought about being, time, and space. It seems to me that Heidegger’s thought is more related to the ontology of being. Based on Relph’s framework, there is a difference among formal geography, people’s geographical experience, and being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is that space is tightly related to human being’s existence. That is, “no matter how much we may reflect and abstract space, we are already in a direct and immediate relationship with the world” (Relph, 1985). Under being-in-the-world, the categorization of the objectivity and subjectivity of space is just one of strategies to understand reality or being itself. One interesting point in Relph’s framework is the difference of geographical space called by scientific geographers and by people’s experience on realities. The geographical space defined by scientific geographers generally mentions geometric space which is homogeneous, uniform, and neutral. For example, using geometric space, we can easily find the locations of cities, industries, transportation routes, and so on. In people’s geographical experience, space is rarely encountered in such a pure and abstract way. But there is strictly divided or separated between the two.

In sum, even if there is a difference between Sack's and Relph's perspective toward space and society, the conclusion is very similar. That is, we should comprehensively look at space and society to deeply understand being-in-the-world.

3. Dialectical Relationship of Space and Society

Traditionally, Marxian political economy(MPE) has been established from the dialectics of capital and labor. It neglected space closely related to the modes of production and their social relations. This means that MPE is generally explained by abstract space and historical time. According to Lefebvre(1991), the dialectic in Marx's thought ought to be spatial as well as temporal. He also mentions that space is more important than time because space can be organized as different ways and people's experiences can be different based on differently organized spaces. Generally speaking, Lefebvre criticized that Western social thought has been developed upon the duality such as mental - material, subject - object, theory - practice, and so on. Based on this kind of thought, space is fixed, physical, or the just reflection of the social relations of production. So he tried to develop the new interpretation of Western Marxism through the production of space(Lefebvre, 1991).

His basic position is that society and space are about each other, that is, they contain each other. Here the key concept is social space. According to him, social space can be treated as a commodity like car or book which is bought, sold, valued, or junked. It is a product of human imagination, cognition, and labor. Unlike material objects or spatial relationships produced by physicists and mathematicians, social space is real space which is the material product of social relations of production. It arises from practices, that is, the everyday lived experience that is

externalized and materialized through action by all members of society. Each society produces its own social space within the framework of a particular mode of production. Social space incorporates social action as a practical, representational, and symbolic form, and it constitutes a process of production.

Lefebvre analyzed the historical transformation of social space through the dialectics among the perceived space (or spatial practice), the conceived space (or representation of space), and the lived space (or representational space). Social space is (re)produced through the conflictual unit of the spatial triad. Spatial practice embodies a close association between daily life and urban reality such as the roads and networks which link up the places. The representation of space is the conceptualized space produced by planners, architects, and social engineers. Finally, representational space is the space of symbols and images. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Each of these categories is conflictual and thus political.

"Representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practices: established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinated to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency"(Lefebvre, 1991:41).

Broadly speaking, social space is produced and changed through the contradiction between two conflict forces under the capitalist mode of production: homogenization by exchange value and differentiation by use value. The constructed social space under capitalism possessed its own dialectical moment, that is, two conflict forces of space, homogenization and differentiation. Lefebvre was much interested in a new and homogenizing space produced by the urbanized mode of production after 1950.

In sum, Lefebvre gives us a powerful framework to look at both society and space. I am particularly interested in the concept, 'social space' and his dialectical materialism between absolute and abstract space. However, I have two questions. One is "what is the relationship between the production of social space and non-economical forces like culture, gender, ethnic, and so on?" More specifically speaking, has social space been produced and changed only by the different modes of production? The other is "how can we explain the regional (or local) different aspects of the conflicts from the general principle of dialectical materialism?"

Based on MPE, the future society will be constructed by the contradictions between the old and new time - space logic and practice.

"The opposition between being and becoming has been central to modernism's history. That opposition has to be seen in political terms as a tension between the sense of time and the focus of space. ... the proposition that post-modernism is some kind of response to a new set of experiences of space and time, a new round of time-space compression, is well worth exploring"(Harvey, 1989)

Harvey did a great job to examine the time - space of modern capitalism. He was one of the important geographers to insist that space is not given and absolute or a 'container' into which intrinsically 'non-spatial' things are stuffed. Social practices and processes create spaces, and the socially produced spaces, in turn, constrain, enable, and alter those practices and process. There is no doubt that Harvey gives us a wonderful and essential explanation (or interpretation) of the time - space of modern capitalism based on a Marxist perspective. I will briefly examine two subjects: money, time, and space from the logic of capitalism and the contradiction of exchange and use value from a dialectic logic.

The logic of capitalism is very simple, but extremely powerful. The capitalists use money (M1) to get more money (M2) (or surplus value) through commodity production. Time and space is a necessary condition in the process of producing and distributing the commodities. Given the logic of capitalism, we have a strong power to explain the time - space of modern capitalism. For example, why have transportation and communication system been rapidly developed in modern capitalism? The development of such a system is a necessary condition to reduce physical distance in terms of time whose main goal is for the capitalist to get more money.

Simply speaking, a dialectical world view is that things or beings themselves have two conflict and opposite characters like positive and negative values, Everything is continuously changed by the contradictory character of beings or things. Let me look at this perspective in terms of class conflicts of space use. The capitalists want to organize space to get profit, but the workers try to oppose the spatial organization by the logic of capital because they will sometimes lose their living space, The two forces are sometimes being happened on one place, so we can find the class conflicts in terms of the utilization of space. The community is a place in which labor power necessary for production is reproduced. It provides a social milieu out of which distinctive value system, aspiration, and expectation may be drawn. However, in the long run, whole residential neighborhoods including working-class one must be transformed to meet the needs of capital accumulation. Harvey took a great work to look at what has been happened on the space - time of modern capitalism.

4. Spatial metaphor and Politics

Why are geographers as well as other social scientists very much interested in Foucault's

thought about space, particularly his spatial metaphors. The main project of Foucault's spatial metaphor is to tightly combine three concepts, power, knowledge, and space. According to Foucault's thought, power and knowledge are not objectively existed regardless of a specific time and space, but they are socially and culturally constructed through the networks of people who live in under a particular environment. Power and knowledge are also institutionalized and objectified. Simply speaking, Foucault rejects the essence or a priori (or transcendental) structure of things or worlds.

According to Foucault, space is necessarily needed when realities or ideas like nationalism, home, factory, and region are thought and implemented. Space is here defined both as an abstract idea and as a concrete reality. The major concern of Foucault's spatial metaphor is to find the processes of how the spatial knowledge has been objectified and institutionalized during a specific period. He was not much interested in the contradictions of socialized space through time.

The spatial concepts like center and marginality, the first and third world countries are well covered under Foucault's grand project. They can defined both as an abstract idea and as a concrete reality. For example, the north and south countries can be used as a concept to explain a particular real situation. Here are two questions. One is whether or not they are thought without using spatial metaphors. The other is who makes those concepts or ideas. The north and south countries have been used as a concrete reality. For example, America and France are north countries and Peru and Ethiopia are south world countries. In this case, what is the relation between the north and south country as a reality and metaphor? Is there any basic or necessary condition between a spatial metaphor and reality? It is highly difficult to

explicitly answer these questions.

In sum, though we can deconstruct our past time and space in terms of Foucault's project, we are not much sure how we (re)construct our present and future society. According to Foucault's logic, all kinds of (re)construction of present or future society will be continuously deconstructed because power and knowledge are not objectively existed regardless of time and space.

Here I examine a spatialized politics expressed as the deconstruction of mappings. Let me follow their arguments in terms of mapping projects. The first argument of mapping activity is related to "what is a map?" or "what does a map mean?" A map is a representation to combine both realities such as mountain, river, and road and ideas such as center, nation, world. The hegemonic theory of mapping in modern society is rooted in a scientific epistemology of the map as an objective form of knowledge. It is assumed that map objectively represents the reality based on a two dimensional space which is figured in Euclid's geometry. There are two general questions. One is "can mapping represent an objective knowledge of the realities?" and the other is "can an absolute space express real space as a geographical basis for social and political intercourses?" The answer to the two questions is no. People under post-modernism and post-structuralism try to severely criticize a scientific epistemology of the map as an objective form of knowledge.

The second argument of mapping is related to spatial metaphors. According to this argument, a map is a concrete expression of spatial metaphor by cartographers. Spatial metaphors have been used by many different types of people such as painters and novelists. We can think that map is just a particular human way of looking at the world. It can not have a privilege to express the world. Broadly speaking, spatial metaphor in

map, painting, and novel have been strongly influenced by a scientific and abstract concept of space in modern society. The criticism is that spatial metaphors do not seriously consider a social and political process in the (re)making of space and society.

The third argument of mapping is that a map is a tool or medium of implementing social and political power in and with real space. In modern Western society maps quickly became crucial to the maintenance of state power, to its boundaries, to its commerce, to control its population, and to its military strength. Mapping soon became the business of the state. Maps embody specific forms of power and authority. For example, in colonial North America, it was easy for Europeans to draw lines across the territories of Indian nations without sensing the reality of their political identity.

5. Conclusion

Space is a necessary condition for (non)human being to exist. It was, however, thought as a static or container in a modernized project based on reason and scientific thought. Modernistic perspective to space had been basically changed after the late 1960s. Geographers as well as other social scientists were much interested in the meaning of place, differences between space and place, and interactions between space and society. Based on the importance of space in the (re)production of (post)modern society, this study is to critically examine a variety of perspectives of interpreting the interactions among space/place, people, and society. The study also focuses on a few important thinkers who took an initiative role of improving the understanding of space, people, and society.

Firstly, I examined a few thinkers, Tuan, Entrikin, Sack, Relph whose humanistic ideas were generally developed from phenomenology,

existentialism, scientific realism, and Heidegger's thought. It is much difficult to simplify or combine those thinkers' perspectives toward the relations between space/place and people because of diversification. According to Tuan, place is a center of meaning constructed by people's experience. A sense of place has two meanings. One is visual or aesthetic, and the other is known through the senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Entrikin suggests a way of seeing place from a contrary perspective, that is, the subjective and existential sense of place and the objective and naturalistic conception of place. According to Entrikin, place is best understood from a perspective in between the two. Relph's framework is mainly built on Heidegger's thought about being, time, and space. It mentions that there is a difference among formal geography, people's experience, and being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world means that space is tightly related to human being's existence.

Secondly, a humanistic perspective to the relations between place and people did not consider social and political aspects occurred among space, people, and society. Lefebvre analyzed the historical transformation of social space through the dialectics among the perceived space, the conceived space, and the lived space. Social space is (re)produced through the conflictual unit of the spatial triad. Harvey did a great job to explain the time - space of modern capitalism. Space is not given and absolute or a container. Social practices create spaces, and the created spaces, in turn, constrain, enable and alter social practices and process.

Thirdly, main concepts in geography such as location, boundary, and space are metaphorically used in humanities. The project of Foucault's spatial metaphor is to tightly combine three critical concepts, power, knowledge and space. Power and knowledge are not objectively existed

regardless of specific times and spaces, but they are socially and culturally constructed through the networks of people under particular environments. He was not much interested in the contradiction of institutionalized (or socialized) space through time. The points of 'grounding metaphor' are three: the criticism of absolute and geometric expression of space, spatial metaphors developed by literary and artistic theories, and the relationship between space (or spatial practice) and political power.

It is much difficult to logically combine different perspectives to space, people, and society because each perspective has its own logics. In the following papers, it is much needed to comparatively examine the different perspectives to make a new conceptual framework of understanding the interactions among space/place, people, and society.

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