Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics

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The aim of this book is to highlight and begin to give "voice" to some of the notable "silences" evident in recent years in the study of contentious politics. Specifically, the authors offer agenda-setting chapters on the following important, yet underrepresented, topics: emotion, temporality, the spatial dimensions of contention, leadership, threat as a stimulus to contention, religion, and demographic and life-course processes. In doing so, they also provide a partial synthesis of various literatures that have grown up around the study of non-routine or contentious politics. As such, the book not only undermines conventional disciplinary understanding of contentious politics, but also lays out a number of provocative new research agendas.

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Space in Contentious Politics

William H. Sewell, Jr.

To claim that the literature on contentious politics ignores questions of space would be inaccurate.[1] Studies of contentious politics often provide descriptive narratives of protest actions and such accounts frequently include a description of the places where the action occurs. It is not unusual for analysts to highlight, at least in passing, spatial considerations that affect the strategies of actors or the dynamic or impact of protest events. Accounts of the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington are likely to say something about the layout of the Mall or evoke the symbolic significance of addressing a crowd from the foot of the Lincoln Memorial (Fairclough 1995; Miller 1968; Oates 1982). Accounts of the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 will mention that the Jallianwala Bagh, where General Dyer's machine guns mowed down hundreds of Indian demonstrators, was surrounded by walls and was accessible only by very narrow gates so that protesters were trapped once the shooting began (Draper 1981). But most studies bring in spatial considerations only episodically, when they seem important either for adequate description of contentious political events or for explaining why particular events occurred or unfolded as they did. With rare exceptions, the literature has treated space as an assumed

[1] Charles Tilly and I originally intended to produce a collaborative chapter on this question. It is significant, given the topic of the chapter, that our collaboration proved impossible for basically spatial reasons: Our expectation of spending a few weeks in the same place to work out a joint conception of the chapter was frustrated by events beyond our control. Nevertheless, I have drawn shamelessly on Tilly's conversation and preliminary drafts in writing this chapter. I would also like to thank Neil Brenner, Debbie Gould, Lynn Hunt, Howard Kimeldorf, David Laitin, Mark Traugott, Lisa Wedeen, members of the Wilder House Faculty Seminar, and members of the Mellon Seminar on Contentious Politics for their useful (although not always heeded) comments.

and unproblematized background, not as a constituent aspect of contentious politics that must be conceptualized explicitly and probed systematically.[2]

Over the past few years, there has been a spate of journal articles, mostly written by either geographers or historians, that take on spatial issues directly.[3] Many of these contributions are quite impressive. However, nearly all of them are resolutely in the genre of case studies; each examines the importance of some particular aspect of space in the context of a given empirical instance. My ambition in this chapter is to attempt a more systematically theoretical account of the role of space in political contention. I believe that questions of space cannot move into the foreground in studies of contentious politics as long as the concept remains insufficiently theorized. I attempt therefore to provide a rudimentary theoretical vocabulary for thinking about space in contentious politics and to begin putting such a vocabulary to work. The chapter has two parts. The first specifies concepts of spatial analysis and illustrates them briefly with examples from the study of political contention. The second attempts to put the theoretical vocabulary to work in two more extended examples of spatial analysis, one dealing with the Beijing student movement of 1989 and the other with the role of Paris in the French Revolution.

What is Space? And How Does It Matter for Contentious Politics?

Space is a semantically complex concept; it has multiple meanings both in ordinary language and as used by professional geographers and other social scientists. For this reason, the seemingly simple admonition to "take space seriously" is quite unclear in practice. I will therefore begin by attempting to sort out some of the ambiguities of the concept.

[2] Two early exceptions to this backgrounding of spatial factors in contentious politics are Tilly (1964) and Bezucha (1974). I discuss both of them briefly later in this chapter.

[3] Two journals have been particularly prominent in these discussions of space and political contention. *Political Geography* published a special issue in 1994 on the topic "Empowering Political Struggle" that included articles about space and contention (especially, Miller 1994; Staeheli 1994; Staeheli and Cope 1994; Steinberg 1994). Since that time, the same journal has published several additional relevant articles (for example, Adams 1996; Herbert 1996; Herod 1997; Miller 1997; Routledge 1996). In 2000, the journal *Social Science History* published a special issue on "The Working Classes and Urban Public Space," which also included several interesting works on spatial aspects of political contention (Hurd 2000; Pagan 2000, Porter 2000; Reiff 2000; Rosenthal 2000; Witwer 2000).

Abstract and Concrete Conceptions of Space

A measure of the semantic complexity of the term *space* in ordinary language is that entries under this word occupy more than two full pages in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The meanings of the term most relevant for the study of social life tend to cluster around two poles – what might be called abstract and concrete conceptions of space. Abstract space is based above all on Cartesian and post-Cartesian metaphysics, according to which space is "continuous, unbounded, unlimited extension in every direction, regarded as void of matter or without reference to this" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971). Space in this sense may be thought of as a pure, abstract, three-dimensional mathematical grid. The application of this abstract metaphysical concept of space to the material world results in a metrical approach to space. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, space in this sense signifies "linear distance; interval between two or more points or objects" or "superficial extent or area; also extent in three dimensions." Here, space is conceptualized as a quantifiable characteristic of the real world. It is a matter of distance, area, and volume; of vastness, narrowness, nearness, or remoteness – which can always, at least since Descartes, be expressed in a universal, strictly comparable, quantitative form.

But in ordinary language, we also speak of space in a more concrete sense. To quote the *OED* again, space may refer to "a certain stretch, extent, or area of ground, surface, sky, etc.; an expanse." Space in this sense is a definite location of a particular size and shape. Used in this way, space is defined not by objective quantifiable characteristics, although, of course, it might well be measurable. Rather, concrete space is defined in relation to human occupation, use, or gaze. Concrete space is a space for some person or collection of persons. It is a space that is used, seen, and experienced.

Both abstract and concrete conceptions of space also appear in the language of the social sciences, although at any given time one may be emphasized more than the other. In the immediate post-World War II decades, the avant garde of professional geography was dominated by a metrical conception of space, one that rested on an essentially abstract spatial metaphysics. This movement within geography was a part of the general positivist wave that washed over the social sciences in these years. Positivist geographers were searching for universal geographical laws – laws that operated across time and space and that could be specified quantitatively. The spatial metrics developed by geographers then and since may

be highly sophisticated and are by no means limited to measurements of absolute linear spatial distance. One can, for example, produce maps of space based on time and/or cost of travel rather than on kilometers, maps that show how spatial technologies "distort" simple physical distance.

Beginning in the 1960s, a number of geographers began to fault the positivists for their lack of interest in concrete space, which, by the 1980s, they increasingly designated by the term *place* (Massey 1994). These insurgents insisted on a more historical approach to space, a stronger focus on the significance of the built environment, and a greater understanding of the cultural meaning of specific spaces. This trend swelled in the 1970s and became a serious rival to positivist approaches within the geographical profession by the 1980s. Moreover, during the 1980s and 1990s, spatial approaches, primarily in the "concrete" mode, have become increasingly prominent outside the academic discipline of geography – for example in cultural studies (for example, Sorkin 1993; Zukin 1992) and in social theory (for example, Giddens 1984). According to Edward Soja we are now experiencing a wide-ranging "reassertion of space in critical social theory" (Soja 1989). But it is important to recognize that both concrete and abstract/metrical conceptions of space remain alive and well in the contemporary geography profession and in the work of other social scientists. Indeed, given that mapping remains a central technique of geography, and that modern mapping depends crucially on mathematical operations, it is hard to imagine a geography entirely shorn of abstract and metrical conceptions of space.

Spatial Structure and Spatial Agency

Social scientists tend to think of space as objective or given, as constituting a kind of container within which social processes are constrained to take place. For this reason, space seems a prime example of what social scientists call *structures* or (alternatively) *social structures*. Spatial or geographical structures might be regarded as parallel to economic structures, occupational structures, political structures, or demographic structures – that is, as entrenched facts of social life that have their own autonomous (or at least relatively autonomous) logics and that determine or at least tightly constrain social action. I think it is entirely appropriate to think of space as a structure or an aspect of structure – but only if structure is properly understood. As Anthony Giddens has pointed out repeatedly, the objective or given character of structure, while real, is only one of struc-

ture's faces. Structure must be conceptualized as *dual*: as simultaneously the *medium* and the *outcome* of social action (Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984; see also Bhaskar 1998 [1979]; Sewell 1992). Structures shape people's actions, but it is also people's actions that constitute and reproduce structures. Moreover, as Giddens insists, "structures must not be conceptualized as simply placing constraints on human agency, but as enabling" (Giddens 1976:161). Structure forms the capacities and provides the resources necessary for human agency, enabling humans to reproduce themselves and their social world, but also enabling them to act in innovative ways and therefore occasionally to modify the very structures that shaped them. Spatial structures, like other sorts of structures, are durable and constraining, but they also are subject to transformation as a consequence of the very social action that they shape.

Such spatial structures as the built environment, transportation and communications infrastructures, the distribution of pilgrimage sites, or the conformation of mountain ranges, coastlines, and river valleys pose very real constraints on social actions of all kinds. But even the seemingly most solid and durable of these constraints are also enabling. For example, river valleys divided by steep mountain ranges constrain communication between adjacent valleys. But this very spatial constraint gives certain advantages to those who are positioned – for example, by their occupation or geographical location – to serve as agents of communication between adjacent valleys. Moreover, the relative isolation of mountain valleys, combined with superior local knowledge of the arduous terrain, enhances the likelihood that mountain dwellers will be able to engage successfully in illegal or subversive activities like smuggling and guerilla warfare.

Contentious politics might almost be defined as concerted social action that has the goal of overcoming deeply rooted structural disadvantage. It follows therefore that in studying the role of space in contentious politics we should be especially attentive to what might be called spatial agency – the ways that spatial constraints are turned to advantage in political and social struggles and the ways that such struggles can restructure the meanings, uses, and strategic valence of space. Social movements and revolutions not only are shaped and constrained by the spatial environments in which they take place, but are significant agents in the production of new spatial structures and relations. (On the idea of the production of space, see Lefebvre 1991 [1974].) Insurgents are normally resource-poor – at least by comparison with the states, established churches, local oligarchies, corporate capitalists, and other entrenched interests against whom they are

contending. This limits the forms of spatial agency that are available to them. Whereas business corporations or states can engineer massive changes in the physical environment – by building factories, roads, canals, ports, new urban neighborhoods, and the like – insurgents involved in contentious politics must generally accept the physical environment as a given. Insurgents produce space above all by changing the meanings and strategic uses of their environments. The second part of this chapter, and most particularly the discussion of space in the French Revolution, attempts to demonstrate that insurgents' spatial agency can have far-reaching political consequences.

Location and Spatial Differentiation

All social life is located. The fundamental fact on which all theories of space are built is that a thing cannot be in two places at the same time. Obvious as this statement may seem, it has profound consequences for thinking about social life. Social life is located in the double sense that it takes place in specific locales – neighborhoods, factories, forests, fields, streets, bedrooms, bars – and that these locales stand in specific relation to other locales and to social, economic, and political processes that operate at wider scales – for example, flows of investment, modes of political representation, or international migration regimes.[4]

Because varying activities are carried out in different locations, social life is spatially differentiated. This is true on a micro level, in that a person's daily succession of tasks will be performed in different places – kitchens, bathrooms, parks, offices, fields, public squares, shops, back yards. It is also true on a more macro level. Cities are divided into distinct areas – business, shopping, residential, industrial, entertainment, warehouse, or gallery districts; gold coasts, slums, and bungalow belts; Italian, Jewish, African-American, Polish, and Chinese neighborhoods. Rural areas are also highly differentiated, ranging from swamps to cultivated fields, to woodlands, to sand dunes, to range lands. Agricultural regions specialize – for example, in livestock, wheat, fruits, dairying, soybeans, vegetables, sugar cane, cotton, or vines – and these different crops entail different modes of cultivation, settlement patterns, densities of settlement, relations of production, and class structures. At an even more macro level, the world

[4] John Agnew calls these two aspects of the locational dimension of social life "locale" and "location" (Agnew 1987).

is divided into politically and culturally distinct nation states, and into different global regions – into tropical, subtropical, and temperate zones; into zones of savannas, rain forests, deciduous forests, deserts, and tundra; into core, semiperipheral, and peripheral zones of the world economy. Different spaces vary not only in function and in their natural and built environment, but also have different cultural meanings, both to those who live and work in them and to outsiders. City neighborhoods may be coded as chic, dangerous, sedate, or youthful; rural areas as sleepy, industrious, scenic, hardscrabble, or pious; nations as rich, poor, warlike, peaceful, internationalist, or xenophobic.[5]

Like any other aspect of spatial structure, location and spatial differentiation are changed over time by concerted human action. Forests may be cut down by lumber companies or settlers – or may be spared the ax as a consequence of social movements. Poor countries may become rich; farmland may be turned into suburban subdivisions and shopping malls; neighborhoods previously regarded as dangerous may become chic. The meanings, demographic characteristics, economic values, and landscapes of different locations are always potentially subject to change. The initiation, management, and content of such changes may be targets or occasions of contentious politics.

Space and Copresence

Spatial location enables and constrains *copresence*. In order for persons to interact with one another, they must be brought into each other's presence, either personally and bodily or in some mediated fashion (for example, by writing or electronic media). (On the general significance of copresence in social life, see Giddens 1984.) Where people and things are located in space powerfully constrains or enables copresence, especially bodily copresence. The question of copresence is relevant to many aspects

[5] Because persons and activities are so differentially located in space, analysts of revolutions and social movements have often used the location of contentious episodes or the residences or workplaces of insurgents as clues to the etiology of events. When George Rudé remarks that the insurrection that overthrew the French monarchy in 1792 drew disproportionately from inhabitants of the faubourg Saint-Antoine and the faubourg Saint-Marcel, he means to imply among other things that this was above all a revolt of the *menu peuple* – both neighborhoods were populated above all by skilled artisans (Rudé 1959). Space, in the sense of location, can thus serve as a proxy for explanations that are not exclusively spatial in nature. This is a point I owe to Charles Tilly.

of contentious politics. Here I will merely mention some of the ways it matters.

The physical assembling of large numbers of people into limited spaces is an important feature of nearly all forms of contentious politics. Insurgent movements generally pit groups with relatively little by way of financial, coercive, and organizational resources against resource-rich organizations – most commonly states. One means by which insurgent groups overcome their general inferiority in resources is to take advantage of one resource they have – the force of numbers. Movements attempt to mass large numbers of people into public spaces where they can rally, march, and demonstrate as a means of pressing their claims. Such massing of insurgents can have a number of positive effects for movements. It gives an insurgent group publicity, both in person, by its ostentatious occupation of public spaces, and indirectly, through mediated accounts of the gathering – whether by word of mouth, by newspapers, or by modern electronic media. Secondly, it also serves to enhance the group's solidarity. Big demonstrations or mass meetings not only persuade the political authorities that the insurgents are, in Charles Tilly's words, "Worthy, United, Numerous, and Committed," but also help to persuade the insurgents of the same things (Tilly 1998). Mass demonstrations give participants the sense of being engaged in a common cause with a vast number of like-thinking persons. The collective experience of the demonstration – the chants, the cheering, the exhilaration – results in the kind of contagious excitement that Durkheim called "collective effervescence," and which, as he pointed out, enhances the participants' sense of efficacy and feeling of solidarity with other participants (Durkheim 1995 [1912]). Finally, mass demonstrations also serve (in the military sense) as a kind of "concentration of forces" that will enable the crowd to stand up to the repressive forces assembled to control and intimidate it.

The strategies of movements and of those attempting to suppress or dampen movements very frequently revolve around the question of enhancing or preventing the physical and/or mediated copresence of insurgents. Authorities may concentrate overwhelming coercive forces at the place where demonstrations are expected, refuse permits to demonstrators, or negotiate restricted itineraries for their marches. When demonstrations cannot be physically prevented, regimes with tight control over the electronic or print media may suppress news coverage of marches or even of street battles. During "The Events of May" in 1968, when the

French state had a monopoly on television, the evening newscasts for several days made only the briefest mention of the street battles that were occurring every evening in the Latin Quarter and showed no images of the fighting whatsoever – in what turned out to be a futile attempt to keep the French in cities outside Paris from taking advantage of the chaos in the capital to mount strikes and demonstrations of their own.

A perennially important task facing movement organizers is to establish mediated forms of communication between units of the movement organization or between the organization's militants and its supporters. States normally have impressive space-bridging technologies at their disposal: networks of scribes; centralized bureaucracies; mobile agents (whether judges riding the circuit or automobile state troopers); secret police; dedicated telegraph, telephone, or computer links; and so on. Modern states are, from a certain perspective, organizations that specialize in information gathering and in the control, policing, and coordination of activities over wide-flung territorially defined jurisdictions. In order to challenge states, insurgent organizations must build their own rival communication networks. The nature of the insurgent networks, of course, varies with the available communication technology and with the degree of repressiveness of the regime.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, movement organizations took advantage of the regular mail services that were an important aspect of the emerging public sphere. The Committees of Correspondence during the American Revolution, the French Jacobin Clubs during the French Revolution, and the network of British radical clubs pioneered in the 1790s by the London Corresponding Society: All of these early insurgent political societies were linked by an incessant flow of letters that assured coordination of initiatives and rapid flow of information between organizations distant in space. Among the most treasured resources of organizations working in oppressive conditions has been the clandestine printing press or mimeograph machine, which assured the organization would be able to get its broadsheets, posters, pamphlets, or announcements out to a wide public. One of the first acts of social movements in the United States in the 1960s or 1970s was to form a "telephone tree" to make it possible to get decisions about meetings, protest demonstrations, and the like to a spatially scattered membership in a hurry. By the 1990s this problem was solved largely by email list servers.

Time-Distance

As some of the above examples illustrate, copresence is enabled and constrained by sheer physical distance, but more importantly by time-distance, the length of time required for persons, objects, or mediated messages to get from one place to another. Time-distance is determined both by natural conditions (for example, topography and climate) and by the existing modes of communication and transportation and by their cost and availability. Different classes and organizations usually face different effective time-distance conditions, as do different types of goods. A wealthy person in late eighteenth century France could travel by coach from Paris to the German border in a couple of days, but a poor person who could not afford the fare might require a few weeks to cover the distance on foot. In the contemporary world, oil crosses oceans relatively slowly in tankers but oil price quotations from New York can be posted in Singapore in a few milliseconds. The technological advances of the past two hundred years or so have resulted in dramatic general declines in time-distance, what David Harvey dubs "time-space compression" (Harvey 1989). Hence the space-time constraints facing contemporary movements are very different from those operating in earlier periods. One general effect on social movements is that it is now much easier than it was in the past to organize movements on a national – or even international – scale. For example, the antivice societies that were formed in a number of American cities in the late nineteenth century operated primarily on a strictly local scale (Beisel 1997), whereas comparable movements in the present, for example Mothers Against Drunk Driving or the antiabortion movements, are national in organizational scope.

Time-distance is such a common strategic preoccupation in contentious politics that it is hard to think of any contentious action in which it is not an issue. The local or grass-roots organization of most movements of poor people is largely a consequence of their concentration in certain neighborhoods (which makes them easy to reach by door-to-door organizing) but also of their relatively restricted mobility and limited access to communications technology (it's not easy for them to fly to Washington to lobby Congress and they don't have email networks because they don't have computers.) Strategies based on calculations of time-distance are also important in revolutions. The Chinese Communists were more difficult to put down when they switched to a strategy of organizing peasants (because it was very difficult for the government to get sufficient con-

centrations of troops to widely dispersed locations in the countryside) than when they attempted the Bolshevik strategy of urban insurrection. Guerrilla movements, which became the dominant type of revolutionary movement in the third world in the era following World War II, are always based on a strategy of minimizing the length of guerrilla supply lines (guerrillas live off the local peasants) and stretching government supply lines to the breaking point.

Built Environment

Copresence is also enabled and constrained by the built environment. Space is, in a very literal sense, culturally and historically constructed. Because it is largely the networks of roads, city streets, canals, ports, railways, and airports that govern movement through space, the built environment is a major determinant of the time-distance constraints under which social movements operate. But the built environment has effects beyond mere time-distance constraints. By shaping social interaction, the built environment also shapes the nature and possibility of social protest. For example, a densely built pedestrian city with urban squares or a college campus with quadrangles, plazas, and other clearly marked public gathering places provides ready-made spaces for political demonstrations and assures that an appropriate audience will witness them. In suburbs predicated on the automobile, the only well-populated public spaces may be privately owned shopping malls, where dissidents have no legal right of assembly or free speech.

The rural built environment is no less important in determining the shape of political contention than the urban. Charles Tilly showed that the counterrevolutionary Vendée Revolt of 1793 was limited precisely to the areas of Western France known as the *bocage*, which had scattered settlements and enclosures, and entirely spared the *plaine*, adjacent areas that had nucleated villages and open fields. Among the crucial differences between these regions is that the clergy played a particularly pivotal role in the social lives of inhabitants of the bocage, acting as the primary intermediary between the dispersed households and the outside world, whereas inhabitants of the plaine had a much wider range of intermediaries to choose from in the more diverse populations of their nucleated villages. When the revolutionary state began to persecute the clergy, it was in the bocage, where such persecution appeared as an attack on the rural community itself, that a popular movement formed in defense of the Church.

Peculiarities of the rural built environment thus did much to determine the extent and the character of the deadliest civil war of the revolutionary era (Tilly 1964).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European capital cities were the classic locus of urban insurrections. Old cities such as Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Rome had a particularly flammable combination. Not only did they have densely built poor neighborhoods whose labyrinthine streets were susceptible to barricades, but these working-class quarters were within easy striking distance of the neighborhoods of the rich and of the grand public squares of the ceremonial city. (For a similar argument, see Traugott 1995a.) Contemporaries were, in fact, quite aware that the built form of the old capital city posed a danger to public order. It is well known that one motive for Haussman's rebuilding of Paris during the Second Empire was to make it harder for insurgents to defend against cavalry and artillery in case of insurrection (Jordan 1996:188–92; Pinkney 1958:36).

Spatial Routines

Social life is organized into spatial routines. In addition to the unavoidable constraints imposed by time-distance and the nature of the built environment, copresence is determined by spatially located, socially constructed routines. Categories of social actors perform particular kinds of social actions in particular places (and at particular times). The commute to work, the funeral procession, summer vacations at the seashore, the Sunday afternoon stroll after church, the backyard barbecue with family and friends, the weekly meeting of the sewing club in members' living rooms, the drink with coworkers at closing time, the shopping trip to the mall: People's lives are marked by a succession of spatially sited routines and specific places or locations are marked by particular kinds of activities.

The sites and the strategies of contentious political movements are shaped in various ways by the spatial routines of daily life. Contentious events often arise out of spatial routines that bring large numbers of people together in particular places. Food riots commonly began at weekly or daily markets where women gathered to buy provisions and where grievances about high prices could build into very public disputes (Tilly 1972). Funeral processions for men or women who have come to symbolize political causes often become political demonstrations and sometimes result in riots or insurrections. Spatial routines also shape the strategy of move-

ments: Labor organizers will haunt the pubs and wineshops where workers go for a drink after work; antiabortion activists are thick at Southern Baptist conventions. But spatial routines can also affect movement strategies in more surprising ways. Jessica Sewell (forthcoming) shows that suffragists in San Francisco in 1911 used women's financial potential as shoppers to persuade downtown storeowners to fill their windows with displays of yellow-colored goods (yellow was the official color of the suffrage campaign), and sometimes to display prosuffrage posters and banners as well. The shop-window displays enabled the suffragists to reach not only the thousands of middle-class shoppers (mostly female) who patronized the downtown stores, but also the equally numerous but enfranchised male lawyers, insurance salesmen, brokers, bankers, accountants, and businessmen who worked in the nearby business district and walked the same streets as the shoppers. This case nicely illustrates the duality of spatial structure and the nature of spatial agency in contentious politics. From the standpoint of a historian of consumer capitalism, the shopping landscape was an entrenched structure with a specific purpose and effect: The shops with their large display windows lured women into downtown San Francisco and defined them as gendered subjects of a particular kind – passive middle-class shoppers. But the suffragists saw this structured space with its well-established window-shopping routine as an opportunity and appropriated the conventional visual language of shop-window display for unconventional political purposes. By doing so they effectively demonstrated that female consumers were also active and ingenious citizens, fully capable of participation in the public sphere of politics.

Contentious politics, then, is shaped by and responds to the spatial routines of everyday life. But it is also true that contentious politics develops its own specific spatial routines with their own histories and trajectories. Charles Tilly coined the phrase *repertoires of contention* to refer to the historically changing array of means available to a given population for making contentious political claims (Tilly 1977, 1983, 1995; see also Tarrow 1994:2). A moment's reflection makes it clear that the routines composing these repertoires – whether the charivari, field invasion, grain seizure, and forced illumination of buildings common in the eighteenth century; or the strike, election rally, public meeting, and demonstration that became prominent in the nineteenth and twentieth; or the sit-in made famous by the American Civil Rights movement; or the barricade whose longue durée history has been sketched out by Mark Traugott (1995b); or the use of shop windows to publicize a political cause – are themselves

spatial routines. They are, that is, known and transposable formulae for particular kinds of occupation and use of space. The question of how the spatial routines of contentious politics and the spatial routines of daily life are related – for example, how changes in spatial relations of work, leisure, or public ceremony affect and are affected by changing modes of protest – seems a particularly promising avenue of research.

Space and Meaning

Spaces are culturally marked as particular kinds of places. Places may be designated as private or public; they have different symbolic values as sacred, festive, banal, trendy, sedate, politically charged, dangerous, and so on. Spaces are gendered, raced, and classed. In San Francisco in 1911, downtown shops were regarded as feminine spaces and offices as masculine; when the term *South-Side man* is used in the Chicago press (as in "South-Side Man Slain in Shoot-Out"), the clear implication is that the man is black; in New York in the 1950s *Fifth Avenue* meant rich while *Bowery* meant destitute. In part, these differences in meaning correspond to real differences in the places' built environments, inhabitants, and activities. The South Side is in fact home to a disproportionate number of Chicago's African-Americans; most shoppers in downtown San Francisco were women. But the meanings of spaces are by no means simple reflections of the facts on the ground. In San Francisco in 1911, downtown shops were largely owned and staffed by men. Many North-Side Chicagoans are afraid to visit South-Side neighborhoods like Hyde Park or Beverly that are actually more middle-class and safer than their own, and trendy shops open in refurbished workers' cottages that line many North-Side streets while magnificent Victorian mansions are boarded-up ruins on the South Side. The meanings of place are socially constructed and therefore open to change; they are, in the words of Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen, "accomplishments" (Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen 1998). Real estate developers, who have seen artist colonies turn run-down neighborhoods like New York's SoHo, Chicago's River North, or San Francisco's South of Market into desirable gentrified loft districts, are only too aware of this fact.

The meanings of places are crucially important to contentious politics both as contexts and as stakes. Sometimes the normative meanings and uses of places are themselves a significant focus of social movement activity. One of the most important and most universally achieved goals of the

American Civil Rights movement was the desegregation of public accommodations – lunch counters, busses, beaches, drinking fountains, theaters, public washrooms, and the like. It was the sit-ins, swim-ins, bus boycotts, and freedom rides that challenged and eventually overturned the previously authoritative marking of certain spaces as white only. Similarly, the Take Back the Night marches by feminists and kiss-ins by Gay Rights activists also challenge the standard cultural marking of permissible or hegemonic uses of public spaces.

Protesters typically attempt to mount demonstrations or rallies in places with politically salient meanings. By occupying such locations as Tiananmen Square in Bejing or the Mall in Washington, D.C., protest marches and demonstrations not only gain the public limelight but make a particular sort of statement – that the cause they represent belongs at the top of the national agenda. But while insurgent movements make use of the preexisting meanings of places, they can also – either intentionally or unintentionally – transform the significance of protest locations. Sometimes places with no particular political associations gain such significance in the course of contentious actions. During the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in the 1960s, Sproul Hall Plaza became a highly politicized gathering place where students could catch up on the latest turns of campus politics by listening to the harangues of student orators from the Sproul Hall steps. This meaning became so entrenched, that the University recently renamed these the "Mario Savio Steps" in honor of the most famous of those orators. Protest actions can also transform the significance of spaces that already have political meaning. The 1963 March on Washington gathered on the Mall in front of the Lincoln Memorial for the obvious symbolic reason that Lincoln had been the author of the Emancipation Proclamation. But the success of the March had the unintended consequence of changing the meaning of the Mall, of making it henceforth the preeminent site for national protest marches, beginning a long series of gigantic demonstrations ranging from marches against nuclear energy, to gay rights marches, to the Million Man March.

This example points out one of the most remarkable effects that protest activities can have on the meanings of places – their sacralization as sites of transcendent significance. In sacred spaces, actions take on an enhanced significance, in the eyes of the participants and witnesses alike. In these sacred places, participants' emotions are heightened, orators' tongues are loosened, and citizens dream impossible dreams. Sometimes, as in the case of the various demonstrations on the Mall, the sacred quality of the site

seems to carry over from one event to the next. But in other cases, the site becomes highly contested – sometimes being desecrated or desacralized before it can be resacralized with a new significance. The hunger strikes and endless political discussion carried on by Chinese democracy activists in 1989 effectively de- and resacralized Tienanmen Square. Tienanmen was already a politically potent sacred place. During the Maoist period, it was a key point of contact between the Chinese "masses" and the Communist Party leadership, but the contact always took the form of carefully staged ceremonial acclamations of Party leaders by an anonymous crowd. By staging public fasts in this spot, the demonstrators were proclaiming that this supposed site of inspiring regeneration, of unity between the Party and the masses, was in fact a site of continuing fraud and, symbolically, a place of death. But while the hunger strikers were engaging in an act of desacralization, they were also resacralizing Tienanmen by staging their own public martyrdom. At the same time, the resacralization was given a positive content through the students' incessant and frenetic exercise of democratic freedoms, which were eventually symbolized by the famous statue of the Godess of Democracy. The square became a microcosm of the new order projected by the students, an inspiring site of political discussion, debate, and self-government, where the protesters acted out and lived with maximum intensity the form of democracy they envisaged for China as a whole (Calhoun 1994:188–89, 195–96). It was partly their astonishing success at changing the political meaning of Tienanmen that made the Chinese leaders willing to use deadly force against the demonstrators – effectively desacralizing it yet again. In the ten years since, the government has been wary of the square's sacred powers, making little use of the square for ceremonial purposes and turning it into an increasingly commercialized tourist destination.

Spatial Scale

Spatial processes are organized simultaneously at multiple scales, ranging from households and neighborhoods to states and the capitalist world system. Until fairly recently, geographers tended to think of scale as a matter of the level at which the analysis of spatial phenomena is carried out, much as scale on maps in an atlas may vary from 1:25,000,000 for a map of the Eurasian landmass to 1:100,000 for a map of Quebec City. But more recently, analysts have begun to insist that scale is also a produced quality of social relations itself (Brenner 1997; Lefebvre 1991 [1974];

Marston 2000; Smith 1992, 1993). Different social relations are carried on and constructed at different spatial scales. A business corporation controls the labor process within the bounds of a particular factory, recruits labor from an urban region, and may advertise and sell its products and obtain capital in national or global markets. But these scales are not fixed for all time. The business corporation may produce different scales by shifting the geographical range at which a given activity is carried out – by, for example, using a national-scale headhunter to recruit labor or tailor its advertising to particular local markets. Or a labor union may produce a new scale of industrial decision making by coordinating its collective bargaining campaigns over a larger and larger region – as the International Association of Longshoremen did on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from the 1950s to the 1980s (Herod 1997).

Questions of scale figure prominently in social movements and revolutions. Local labor struggles in the contemporary United States must simultaneously engage the local scale where scabs must be prevented from strikebreaking, the national scale on which the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) rules on the legitimacy of tactics, and the scale of international capitalism on which the company weighs the option of moving its production facilities to lower-cost labor markets in other countries. One of the means available to insurgents for transforming the spatial structures that face them is to engage in what Neil Smith calls jumping scales (Smith 1993; see also Adams 1996). Labor organizers operating at a power disadvantage in a particular workplace may get assistance from the national union or appeal to the NLRB to enjoin employers from using intimidating tactics. Of course, analogous moves may be made by the other side: Employers who are unable to change work-rules because of the power of a local union will use the threat of shifting production to nonunion locations in other states or countries as a means of gaining local leverage. Indigenous communities in Brazil, hopelessly overpowered by the superior power of settlers, the national army, international corporations, and a state apparatus controlled by urban interests may be able to call in international nongovernmental organizations, North American and European rock and film stars, and world media to block projects that would be detrimental to their way of life (Turner 1991). The Civil Rights Movement in the American South overcame its crushing local disadvantages partly by using media coverage to mobilize northern liberals who then pressured the federal government to intervene on behalf of southern Negroes (McAdam 1982). Although scale jumping is usually a matter of calling

broader-scale forces into a local struggle, it can also work in the opposite direction, with national-scale forces seeking refuge from unequal struggles by retreating to a more local scale where their chances are much better. This is, for example, the classic strategy of guerrilla warfare.

The Spatiality of Power

Space is an object-and-a-matrix-of-power. All power is, ultimately, power over people. One way of exercising control over people is by controlling the spaces where people live and work. The organization of power in the modern nation state is particularly space-based, or territorial, in character. The laws and administrative apparatus of the modern state are at least supposed to extend equally over the whole of the national territory; the territorial boundaries of the state are carefully mapped and marked; people or goods passing across the boundary must pass through immigration and customs checks; and the internal territory of the state is meticulously divided up into districts, provinces, states, or counties that have their own boundaries and jurisdictions. This is in marked contrast to a feudal polity, in which territorial boundaries were relatively fluid and power was exercised primarily through control over chains of vassalage, and in which jurisdictions were often based more on the status of the person than on territory – so that free men were judged by different courts than serfs and clergy by different courts than laymen. It was only in the aftermath of the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century that purely territorial jurisdiction became the universal rule even in such Western European countries as France, Britain, and the Netherlands.

Crucial to states' control over territory is policing – the surveillance of the activities of citizens and the use of coercion to enforce laws and maintain order. Not all state policing is carried out by police forces. The military, the tax authorities, and various branches of the bureaucracy also engage in policing in this sense. To be fully effective, the state's policing must cover the entire space of the territory. But there are also limits on the police powers of the state, limits both intrinsic and legal. Policing is intrinsically limited because the police are vastly outnumbered by the people whose activities they are supposed to monitor and control. Policing is legally limited by restrictions on access to certain spaces. Police can exercise their functions only within their territorial jurisdictions and entry to certain kinds of spaces is restricted or forbidden. For example, in many countries police officers must have a valid search warrant in order to enter

a private dwelling. But it is not only states that engage in the policing of space – that is, in activities of surveillance and coercion. Both private firms and labor unions police the factory floor, youth gangs cruise their neighborhoods protecting their boundaries against incursions by gang members from other neighborhoods, and eighteenth century neighborhoods were kept under informal surveillance by gossiping shopkeepers and market women. This private policing ranges from highly formal to extremely informal in both its procedures and its punishments. Large corporations employ armies of supervisors who enforce an elaborate code, while neighborhood gossip networks depend on volunteered time and punish by means of slander and ostracism.

Safe spaces of one kind or another are a sine qua non of social movements.[6] Oppositional movements need to control spaces in order to organize their activities and to recruit activists without being subject to crippling surveillance and repression by the state (or by landlords, employers, or other dominating groups or agencies). In the case of legally tolerated social movements in liberal states (for example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Sierra Club, or the United Auto Workers) most of an organization's business can be conducted in public – even state-policed space is safe for them. Nevertheless, when the UAW attempts to organize a new workplace it needs significant sheltering against management surveillance and coercion – although the state may be liberal, workers still check many of their civil liberties at the factory gate. And when the state is repressive and hostile – as in the American South during the Civil Rights Movement, in Korea during the students' prodemocracy movement of 1987, in silk-weaving neighborhoods of Lyon during the revolt of the canuts in the 1830s – the very survival of the movement depends on the creation or appropriation of safe spaces.

The nature of the safe spaces varies enormously from case to case. The reasons why they are safe often involve either intrinsic limits of police power (the impenetrability of insurgent networks) and/or legal or customary limits on repression. The segregated character of religious institutions and America's strong tradition of noninterference in religious affairs made Black churches effective sanctuaries for Civil Rights activities that eventually overthrew the segregationist order in the American South (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). Radical republicans in rural Provence during the Second Republic were able to operate beyond the reach of the

[6] Again, I owe this point to Charles Tilly.

state authorities partly by penetrating the traditionally private social clubs or *chambrées* that met in the back rooms of cafes, thereby taking advantage of socially enforced conventions about privacy (Agulhon 1970). The age-segregated character of university life and the partial autonomy of universities from state surveillance and repression made it possible for Korean students to sustain a radical movement under a harsh dictatorship and to provide the crucial leadership for an urban uprising that led to democratic reform in 1987. The extraordinary concentration of silk weavers in the Croix-Rousse quarter of Lyon and the weavers' strong tradition of tolerating quasicorporate organization enabled the canuts to launch an epoch-making workers revolt in 1831 and to rise again in response to repressive legislation in 1834 (Bezucha 1974). These examples all involve insurgent control over particular localities within the formal jurisdiction of state authorities. But it is also sometimes possible for insurgents to make use of spaces on scales wider than those controlled by the authorities they are opposing. Thus the Freedom Summer civil rights campaign of 1964 was organized largely at universities outside the South and the prodemocracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 made use of a safe hyperspace of fax and email networks to get out news and coordinate international support (Adams 1996; Calhoun 1994:204; McAdam 1988).

Once an insurgent movement is up and running, authorities are likely to respond by attempting to gain or regain control of the insurgents' safe spaces by such means as increasing police presence, attempting to change or bend legal rules that impede the police, using paid informers, reorganizing jurisdictions, making use of private antiinsurgent citizen's groups to gather information or intimidate rebels, or declaring martial law. Meanwhile, the insurgents will attempt both to defend spaces they already control and to extend their control to additional spaces. The struggles between challengers and authorities that are so ubiquitous a feature of contentious politics are to a very considerable degree struggles over the control of space, and they frequently have the effect of transforming spatial structures.

Contentious Politics and the Spatialities of Power: Two Examples

In the previous section, I have used a number of examples in an attempt to demonstrate that a self-conscious theoretical vocabulary might illuminate the role of space in contentious politics. But thus far the examples have been very brief and no more than suggestive. In this concluding

section of the chapter, I shall attempt to demonstrate the value of spatial analysis by looking more systematically and in somewhat greater detail at the spatial dimensions of two important moments of contentious politics: the Beijing students' prodemocracy movement in 1989 and the French Revolution of 1789–94. One value of these two extended examples is that they illustrate with some clarity both the importance of spatial structure in shaping protest and the significance of spatial agency in reshaping structure.

The Spatial Ecology of Student Insurgency in Beijing: April 27, 1989

The Beijing students' prodemocracy movement in the spring of 1989 was one of the most astonishing developments of that astonishing year – although the denouement of the movement, the army's assault on the demonstrators massed in Tiananmen Square, had more in common with the Soviet troops' tragic suppression of the Prague Spring of 1968 than with Prague's "Velvet Revolution" of 1989. Dingxin Zhao has recently published an analysis of one of the most important episodes of the student democracy movement, the demonstration of April 27, 1989 (Zhao 1998). Zhao argues that questions of space were of crucial importance in this event, which was unquestionably a turning point in the student movement (see, for example, Calhoun 1994:49–54).

The student movement arose in a time of widespread prodemocracy dissent among Chinese intellectuals, but it was the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15 that launched collective protests. Hu was a former head of the Communist Party who had been demoted in 1987 when he failed to suppress by force a previous student movement. He was regarded by dissidents as the most sympathetic to democracy and western ideas of the current Chinese leadership. In the days following April 15, students marched in mourning for Hu and made speeches and put up posters contrasting Hu's integrity with the hypocrisy of the remaining leadership. The protests mounted daily and met little government opposition until April 26, when a harsh editorial in the *People's Daily* denounced the students as attempting to undermine the government and forbade further demonstrations. The students responded by staging a gigantic march on April 27 that swept through several police lines and continued on to Tiananmen Square. The April 27 demonstration was a huge victory for the students. In the words of Craig Calhoun, it was "a transformative experience for those who participated," one that reshaped "people's ideas about

themselves and about what was possible" (Calhoun 1994:52). Without the victory on April 27, the better-known events at Tiananmen a few weeks later would have been unthinkable.

Zhao closely examines the "ecology" of the student movement that made the victory of April 27 possible, particularly emphasizing the importance of the built environment. Nearly all of Bejing's sixty-seven universities, he points out, are clustered in the Haidan district, about eight miles to the northwest of Tiananmen. The campuses are generally separated from the surrounding neighborhoods by brick walls, and contain not only dormitories, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and faculty offices, but also dining halls, a cinema, barber shops, a hospital, grocery stores, and recreational facilities. They are "so self-contained that hard-working students can live on campus for a whole semester without going outside once" (Zhao 1998:1502). Undergraduate students live six to eight in a dormitory room and dormitory social life is very intense. The institutional autonomy of the universities, combined with their physical separation from surrounding neighborhoods, made it possible – given the right political circumstances – for them to be made into safe spaces for the development of dissident ideas and the organization of contentious political action. The densely networked and self-contained character of campus social life also made for quick communication of ideas and for very strong pressures to conform with majority sentiments. This ecological condition may have fostered political conformity during the Maoist period, when it made surveillance by informers particularly easy, but it enhanced dissidence in 1989. During the student movement, waverers tended either to fall in line with the majority or were ostracized (Zhao 1998:1506–07). At the same time, the close proximity between campuses meant that ideas and information could pass quickly from one university to another.

The built environment of Beijing universities affected student mobilization partly by shaping what sociologists would call social networks. The layout of the campus and the structure of dormitories was a crucial condition for the establishment of dense social ties within each university's student body – ties that could then be mobilized in the prodemocracy movement. But, as Zhao points out (1998:1508–12), the spatial ecology of the universities also influenced the student democracy movement in ways that escape the conceptual equipment of social network analysis, which assumes that actors are linked by relatively enduring and stable social relations that serve as conduits for the exchange of privileged information and resources (Laumann and Pappi 1976). Much of the communication that

was crucial to the success of the student democracy movement was based more on copresence in public spaces than on diffusion through pre-established social networks. For example, activists at Beijing University capitalized on students' ordinary spatial routines – and developed new politicized spatial routines that constructed an activist student spatial culture. They would recruit participants for demonstrations by putting up posters at "the Triangle," a centrally located area through which nearly all students on that particular campus would pass in the course of a day. The posters would announce a time and an on-campus meeting place. Once a group of students had assembled at the announced place, the demonstrators would march back and forth through the dormitory area chanting slogans. This would attract more students from the dormitories, eventually swelling the crowd to the point that the leaders felt ready to go out onto the streets (Zhao 1998:1508–09). This common scenario for recruiting demonstrators can be described better by a vocabulary of spatial analysis than by a network vocabulary. The organizers of the demonstrations took advantage of students' ordinary spatial routines by placing posters in the Triangle. They recruited more students by taking advantage of the tightly clustered built environment of the dormitory area, using the fact of spatial copresence to lure students into the demonstration. And the massing of bodies into a marching column that loudly chanted slogans created a collective effervescence – a nearly irresistible sense of excitement that attracted waverers into the march. It was the physical proximities of the campus and the powerful emotional effects of public spatial massing, not just the operation of space-based social networks, that swelled the demonstrations to their enormous size.

Zhao's analysis of the April 27 demonstrations has equally interesting things to say about the spatial relations between universities within the Haidan district. The demonstration of April 27 was potentially an exceptionally dangerous affair. The *People's Daily* editorial had declared that the student dissidents were unpatriotic and had forbidden further demonstrations – with the clear implication that demonstrators would be dealt with very harshly. The editorial was greeted with outrage on the campuses and the autonomous student unions decided to stage a protest on April 27. But students who decided to participate did so in spite of palpable fear. A number of them went so far as to write wills in anticipation of their deaths (Calhoun 1994:50–51). The problem facing the students on April 27 was how to make a public demonstration of their outrage without precipitating a bloodbath. This was a strategic conundrum at two levels. First, within

each university, the crucial task was to get very widespread participation – in a dangerous situation like this, there was considerable comfort in numbers. Second, once a given university had achieved a high level of mobilization, the key problem was to assure that students on other campuses were equally willing to put their bodies on the line.

Within universities, the mobilization took place according to the means discussed above – wall posters, speeches in the "Triangle" (or in the comparable public meeting ground on other campuses), intense discussions and the exertion of social pressure in the dormitory rooms, and marches within the confines of the campus until a sufficiently large contingent had joined. On the campus of People's University, a sizable group of students gathered but hesitated to march outside the campus and began by filing around the campus itself. After five or six tours of the campus, the demonstration grew large and excited and finally broke out onto the streets. Although the presumed destination of the march was Tiananmen Square, the People's University students headed off in the opposite direction, avoiding a police line, hoping to meet up with students from Beijing University and Qinghua University who would swell the demonstration's numbers. They were preceded by "liaison men" – who constitute a fascinating case of spatial agency specific to the Bejing student movement of 1989. The liaison men were students on bicycles who, over the course of the crisis, had become unofficial interuniversity political couriers. On April 27, the liaison men at People's University rushed to adjacent universities and announced that People's University had come out (Zhao 1998: 1514–15). Analogous scenarios were played out on other campuses, with excited but anxious demonstrators from each hesitating to come out of the campus gates and to face the police lines that barred the way to Tiananmen; hoping, once they took the plunge, to join forces with demonstrators from other universities; and with liaison men rushing back and forth providing informal coordination. Before long there were thousands of students in the streets, pressing on police lines all over the district, sometimes from both sides simultaneously. The police, who turned out to be unarmed, could offer only token resistance and were repeatedly swept aside. Contingents from all over the Haidan district gradually merged into one vast column at least a hundred thousand strong and marched triumphantly to Tiananmen Square. They had achieved the first great victory of the democracy movement (Calhoun 1994:51–52; Zhao 1998:1515–18).

The key to the success of the April 27 demonstration was the complex and fluid interaction of groups of demonstrators from different univer-

sities. Once the students on a given campus had amassed sufficient numbers and worked up enough courage to go out into the streets, they still faced a serious collective action problem. By itself, the contingent of any single university was extremely vulnerable to repression – and was keenly aware of this vulnerability. But every university's contingent was also aware that it was in close proximity to dozens of other universities. Each of these constituted a safe space in which the students of other universities knew that a parallel process of mobilization might well be going on. But none knew for sure exactly which universities would turn out, or in what numbers, or how they would act when they confronted police lines. It was once again a feature of the built environment – the close physical clustering of universities in a single district – that made it possible for the disparate groups of students to sound out each others' intentions. But this, of course, was only a condition of possibility for coordination. It was the spatial practices developed over the past weeks of intense political activity that rendered coordination practicable in this moment of crisis. Thus the contingents of students marched off in search of one another once they entered the streets – guided by the information provided by the liaison men and buoyed by the knowledge gained over the previous weeks of struggle that students from other universities must be engaged in a similar search. The initial fear turned to confidence and then to exhilaration as contingents of different universities met up, swept past police lines, merged with yet more contingents of demonstrators, and surged on to Tiananmen. Any adequate understanding of the particular course and the ultimate success of the April 27 demonstration requires a spatial analysis. The immense massing of bodies and the tremendous collective effervescence that ensued was dependent on the particular built environment of the Haidan district and on the innovative practices of spatial agency, both preexisting and improvised in the heat of the moment, that made coordination of distinct university groupings possible.

Paris and the Politics of Space in the French Revolution

Zhao's spatial analysis of the Beijing student's demonstration concentrates on a relatively restricted scale – the ecology of a particular urban district, of campuses within that district, and of particular spaces such as "the Triangle" or dormitories within the campuses. It also treats a brief period of time, the few days leading up to and including April 27. Finally, it deals mainly with strategic questions – about how the built environment and

specific spatial practices both enabled and constrained student mobilization in April 1989. Finally, these practices were components of a movement that ultimately was unsuccessful – although it grew to immense proportions and effectively challenged existing forms of politics in China by late May, it was brutally crushed in early June. For this reason, the structural transformations of spatiality effectuated by the student movement, however significant in their context, proved ephemeral. The second example of spatial analysis I shall present in this chapter differs in a number of respects. First, it is concerned with a much wider scale: The key question it attempts to answer is why French national politics were so dominated by the local politics of Paris during the heroic years of the French Revolution, 1789 to 1794. Second, although questions of strategy certainly figure significantly in the analysis, the central issues concern the meanings or imagination of space no less than its strategic uses. Finally it treats a much more enduring set of spatial transformations. The analysis covers a period of five years, and the phenomenon of Parisian revolutionary primacy remained an issue for nearly two centuries, at least through the Parisian "events of May and June" in 1968.

Although France was formally governed during the 1789–1794 period by a nationwide representative democracy, its fate was repeatedly decided not by majority votes of the legislature, but by violent action in the streets of Paris. Pick up virtually any history of the French Revolution and you will find that much of the narrative hinges on a series of Parisian revolutionary "journées" (days) that drove the revolution farther and farther to the left – the taking of the Bastille on July 14 and the October Days in 1789, the Champs de Mars Massacre in July 1791; the Revolution of August 10 and the September Massacres in 1792; and the insurrections of May 31–June 2 and September 4–5, 1793 that purged the Girondins from the National Convention and led to the so-called "economic terror."[7] It was only after the execution of Robespierre in Thermidor of the Year III (July 1794), that the opinions of the great majority of Frenchmen who lived outside Paris – or at least of their elected representatives – began to predominate definitively over the actions of the Parisian crowd in decid-

[7] The best general account of these journées remains Rudé (1959). Even if one agrees with François Furet (1981 [1978]) and like-minded "revisionists" that the movement from a liberal revolution in 1789 to the Terror in 1793–1794 was semiotically inscribed in revolutionary ideology from the beginning, it must be admitted that it was the political striking power of the Parisian crowd that made possible the realization of this semiotic potential.

ing the affairs of the state. Historians have come to take this sustained domination of political life by the populace of the capital for granted. Yet this experience was uncharacteristic of the history of revolutions elsewhere in the world, and it was even uncharacteristic of subsequent French history. In 1830, 1848, and 1870, the people of the French capital once again took center stage and overthrew the existing regime. But in all three of these later revolutions, it took only a few weeks or months, not five years, for the Parisian populace to lose its predominant influence in the state. There clearly was a powerful and very specific spatial chemistry at work in the French Revolution.

At the time of the French Revolution, Paris was a very large city of about a half million inhabitants. Among European cities, only London was more populous. It was the nation's center for finance, law, intellectual life, the arts, publishing, fashion, and luxury industries. It had always been the political capital as well, until Louis XIV moved the court to the distant Parisian suburb of Versailles in the late seventeenth century – in part to sequester the royal government from the rebellious potential of the Parisian crowd, whose activities had terrified the young king during the Fronde uprising in the 1650s. But Paris still functioned as a kind of co-capital in the eighteenth century and its crowds remained riotous. In short, the city had the necessary ingredients for a radical and dynamic politics once the revolution got under way: a very high population density; a large number of skilled artisans who combined class-based economic and social grievances with strong organizational resources; hundreds of writers and publicists capable of becoming political journalists and orators; and a long-standing tradition of popular political unrest. It is therefore hardly surprising that Paris developed a vigorous revolutionary movement in the years following 1789.[8] What is surprising is that Parisian politics so dominated the policies of the national government in these years.

Paris's dominance of the national agenda was especially puzzling because in many respects it ran counter to the revolution's dominant ideological thrust. In their new "regenerated" political order, the revolutionaries wished to overcome the twin afflictions of despotism and aristocracy and to replace them with the countervailing principles of popular sovereignty and equality. Because this regeneration was intended as a transformation of the French state and society as a whole, it should not be surprising that it had important spatial dimensions. Under the old regime,

[8] For an overlapping argument see Traugott (1995a).

places, no less than people, were profoundly unequal. Different provinces or cities had different laws, fiscal obligations, forms of government, and relations to the monarch. The revolutionaries attempted to annihilate this spatial inequality by abolishing the provinces, canceling the particular privileges of cities, and elaborating a new spatial partitioning of the national territory. The old royal provinces were replaced by new "departments," which were made as equal to each other as possible in area and population. To mark the departure from the old system, the names assigned to these departments were without historical reference and were instead referenced features of the natural landscape – the High Alps, the Mouths of the Rhone, the Lower Loire, or Land's End. Each of these departments was to constitute a political and administrative unit of the nation. Under the constitution of 1791, they were endowed with legislative bodies and broad authority over local affairs – as were the "cantons" and "communes" into which they were subdivided (Ozouf-Marignier 1989). The goal of this legislation was what one might call isotopic – an attempt to make every place in France politically and morally equivalent to every other place (Sewell forthcoming).[9] That Paris became a kind of privileged political space, with powers and responsibilities effectively denied to other places, was not foreseen or intended by the revolutionary legislatures. If Paris came to dominate French political affairs, this was in spite of, not because of, the ideological intentions of the revolutionary leaders. Parisian political privilege in the revolutionary era must be understood as a specific product of popular revolutionary agency.

That such agency was possible at all depended on certain preexisting structures of copresence and time-distance. Parisians had one huge advantage over French people living elsewhere: They enjoyed physical

[9] I owe the term and concept of *isotopism* to Mona Ozouf (1988 [1976]), who uses it in the very different context of revolutionary festivals. She notes that officials preferred to hold their public celebrations in vast open spaces that lacked or had been stripped of previous historical meanings. Even sites where notable revolutionary triumphs had taken place were generally avoided – except the place de la Bastille, which, once it the Bastille fortress was demolished, was itself a vast and featureless open space. The urban places in which festivals were staged were invariably bedecked with foliage, in an attempt to restore them to a sort of state of nature. The ritual activities at the center of the festivals were performed in the open air under the natural canopy of the sky, and the spectators, who were arranged so as to be able to see one another at a glance, were to experience a sense of perfect equality with their fellow citizens. That a parallel urge to isotopia was manifested in activities so different as the redrawing of internal boundaries of the state and the planning of festivals makes one suspect that both were manifestations of a deep structure of revolutionary ideology.

proximity to the institutions and personnel of government – to the king and his court, the legislatures, and the ministries. This meant that it was possible for crowds of common people to exercise intimidation, subtle and overt, over governmental agents. Crowds could cheer their champions, mill about menacingly, or, on extreme occasions, use armed force against the king, the army, the police, or the legislature. In addition to acts of intimidation, the Parisians did much to set the tone and the issues of political debate. Legislators and government officials lived in Paris and were necessarily influenced by the intense political life of a city awash in clubs, newspapers, pamphlets, and oratory. This spatial proximity of Parisians to their governors was far more important under the technological conditions of the late eighteenth century than it was in the later nineteenth century or would be today, when modern means of communication and transportation, starting with the railway and the telegraph, made legislators and government officials less dependent on strictly local sources of information and more able to call on either opinion or armed force from the provinces to counter the local Parisian balance of political forces.

But if the physical proximity of the Parisians to their governors was a necessary condition for their exercise of extraordinary power over the state, it was far from a sufficient condition. Political leaders before and after the French Revolution, both in France and elsewhere, found means of overcoming the spatial advantage enjoyed by citizens of the capital – means that included and often combined bread and circuses, state cooptation of crucial urban classes, and the threat of deadly force. The political preeminence of the Parisian people during the revolution required both a forbearance on the part of the state about using deadly force and a certain complicity between the people and at least a portion of the governmental authorities. It was, in fact, only because the governing authorities and the dominant political culture recognized insurrectionary actions of the Parisian people as having a certain ambiguous legitimacy that the Parisians were able to maintain their domination of national politics.

The Parisian people's claim to legitimacy had its origins in the taking of the Bastille, on July 14, 1789. The taking of the Bastille was an important political turning point because it gave popular forces control of Paris and assured the victory of the National Assembly in its ongoing struggle with the king. But the successful assault on the ancient fortress also had truly epochal effects on the fundamental assumptions that underlay French politics. It gave rise to the modern conception of revolution – as a legitimate rising of the sovereign people that transforms the constitutional basis

of the state. The Assembly in effect sanctioned the legitimacy of its own triumph over the king in July 1789 by recognizing the crowd violence at the Bastille as a sovereign act of "the people," whose will, according to the Assembly's own political doctrines, was supposed to be the foundation of all legal authority.[10] By doing so, the Assembly effectively sacralized the people of Paris as capable of representing and enacting, in cases of extreme crisis, the will of the nation as a whole. In short, the new revolutionary regime was founded upon an implicit bargain between the Parisian crowd, which was effectively recognized as the emergency arm of the sovereign nation, and the elected representatives of the people in the National Assembly, which gained political supremacy thanks to the Parisian insurrection. This implicit bargain, which singled out the Parisian people and gave them a special role in the nation's politics, was ambiguous, dangerous, and unstable; although the doctrine of legitimate revolution was the foundation of the National Assembly's ascendancy, it also had the potential to nullify, by means of future insurrections, the power of an elected representative body.

This ambiguous bargain was renewed and revised periodically by further Parisian insurrections. The first, and one of the most significant from the point of view of the spatial story I am recounting here, was the "October Days" of 1789 (Lefebvre 1947 [1939]). On this occasion a column of National Guardsmen from Paris, accompanied by a crowd of common people among whom market women were particularly prominent, marched from Paris to Versailles. They were protesting a rumored royal desecration of the tricolor cocarde, which had become a key symbol of the revolution, and demanding an increase in supplies of grain to Paris. While they were in Versailles, skirmishes broke out between the crowd and the royal guards, and in the aftermath the crowd and the National Guard forced the Royal Family to return with them to Paris. The National Assembly acquiesced in the transfer and followed a few days later. This event had the effect of moving the seat of government from Versailles back to Paris, where, of course, it would be under the close daily scrutiny of the Parisian people. By means of this crucial act of spatial politics, the Parisians assured their continuing influence over the state and fortified their effective power-sharing bargain with the National Assembly.

[10] See the McAdam and Sewell chapter in this volume for a fuller exposition of this process. A more extended discussion is in Sewell (1996a).

Over the next several years, the Parisian people renewed their claim to emergency sovereignty in countless demonstrations and three successful insurrections. The most significant of these was the Revolution of August 10, 1792. This insurrection overthrew both the king and the Legislative Assembly, which had been elected under the limited monarchical constitution ratified by the National Assembly in 1791. This led to the declaration of a republic, the trial and execution of the king and queen, and the election of a new National Convention charged with writing a republican constitution and serving as interim legislature. The period from August 1792 to July 1994, when Robespierre and his closest collaborators were overthrown and executed, was the most turbulent of the Revolution and was the heyday of the Parisian popular movement. During this period there were numerous acts of popular violence, countless demonstrations, and two events that were regarded by contemporaries as insurrections – one that took place from May 31 through June 2, 1793, and resulted in the purging of the moderate Girondin faction from the Convention, and another that took place on September 4–5 of the same year and led to the imposition of price controls on basic necessities.

During the two years following the Revolution of August 10, 1792, Paris was subjected to a very particular spatialization of power. By means of what has since become known as the sans-culotte movement, the "Parisian people" increasingly became an organized and quasiinstitutionalized political force capable of exerting control over the entire space of the city. There were, of course political clubs and newspapers, of which the Cordelliers Club and *Le Père Duchesne* were the most celebrated. But the crucial institution was the "sections" – the forty-eight wards into which the city was divided. Each section was governed by an assembly of all adult male citizens that was charged with overseeing the application of revolutionary legislation in its neighborhood. The sectional assemblies maintained political surveillance over residents and issued or denied certificates of civic virtue, oversaw the operation of wartime requisitions, and examined the conduct of state employees. Originally constituted as electoral assemblies, they had by 1792 become de facto administrative and political bodies, jealous of their autonomy and engaged in a direct application of popular sovereignty to local affairs (Soboul 1964:106–27). During this period, the policing of space in Paris was in large part ceded to the popularly controlled sections. The sections also discussed and made declarations on national issues of all sorts, constantly sending petitions,

statements, and delegations to the municipality and the Convention. Although open to all citizens, they were in fact dominated by a minority of leftist political militants, who alone found time to attend them on a daily basis. The sectional assemblies coordinated their initiatives and their policing efforts with other sections, constantly sending each other correspondence and delegations. A fascinating spatial strategy of the sectional movement was what was known as "fraternization." If a section deemed its neighboring section to be falling into the hands of "moderates," it would engage in the ritual of "fraternization" – visiting the offending section's meeting hall en masse, expelling the moderates, embracing and exchanging fraternal kisses with the remaining sectionnaires, and then holding deliberations in common. By this means the leftist sectional militants effectively managed to extend their political control even to relatively conservative areas of the city (Slavin 1986:23–46; Soboul 1964:153–95).

Virtually all of the mass demonstrations of this period emerged from the sections, and it was the sections that mobilized the mass of insurrectionaries who imposed their will on the Convention in May–June and September. The insurrection was a highly elaborated spatial routine. One after another, the sections would declare themselves "in insurrection," sending delegations carrying this declaration to other sections. They would then march into the street carrying pikes and muskets, often to the sound of the tocsin – the great bell of the local church, which was rung repeatedly whenever a general alarm was necessary. Ringing the tocsin was a specific spatial strategy that immediately communicated the imminence of insurrection to all within earshot and called the would-be insurrectionaries, as well as the merely curious, into the streets. The insurrectionaries would then converge on the Place de Grève in front of the city hall – a destination consecrated by its key role in the taking of the Bastille in 1789. By 1793 it was routine to gather there, obtain the support of the generally compliant Paris Commune (the municipal government), and only then march on the Convention. In this period of sans-culotte dominance of Parisian political life, to engage in insurrection did not necessarily mean using violence against existing authorities. To enter into a state of insurrection was to make it manifest that "the people" (represented synechdochically by the people of Paris) was resuming its sovereign power. The armed Parisians would march into the Convention, declare "the people's will," and fill the galleries and the streets outside while the members of the Convention debated the measures the people had

proposed. In September 1793 the Convention complied without any insurrectionary violence, and in May–June 1793 the violence was very limited. In neither case was there anything like the bloodshed that had accompanied the taking of the Bastille or the Revolution of August 10 (Rudé 1959; Soboul 1962:165–75; Soboul 1964:129–34). By this time both the Parisian militants and their radical Jacobin allies in the Convention knew the routine well enough to make it work without significant loss of life.

As the preceding paragraphs make clear, Parisian political dominance was based on a number of Paris-specific conditions – the copresence of Parisians and legislators in the city, the marking of Paris as a whole and of particular locations within Paris as politically sacred spaces, the ceding of significant police power to the sections (which made their meeting halls the ultimate safe spaces), the evolution of specific insurrectionary spatial routines, and an effective alliance between the popular militants – who could control the local Parisian political scale – and radical Jacobin deputies who aimed to control the national political scale. But the dominance of Parisian political initiatives over the rest of the country was also constructed outside of Paris, or in the relations between Paris and the provinces.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the French Revolution was the construction of a new *national* political scale – a set of institutions and a political culture that would give substance to the statement that "the principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation," to quote article three of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The Declaration and the various revolutionary constitutions that followed it meant to establish the sovereignty of the nation by election of representatives to a national legislative body, which would, of course, meet in the capital. But the making of national politics also meant the elaboration of uniform national administrative and political institutions; the development of a sphere of public debate and opinion in which persons from all areas of France might be heard; and the development of a sense of loyalty to the *nation* of France as what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls an "imagined community" – that is, a sense that citizens of France everywhere shared a common destiny and a felt powerful bond of loyalty. In a country of great geographical scope and regional diversity that had long been used to passive, if sometimes grudging, obedience to an absolute monarch, the construction of a national scale of political action and imagination was a major achievement.

But if the new national scale of politics was built on a presumption of equality, it is also true that the sudden and revolutionary character of the break with the old regime and the concentration of the most dramatic actions in Paris tended to reinscribe within the structure of politics a certain hierarchy – with the people of the capital generally taking the initiative and the people of the provinces responding. The pattern of Parisian initiative began with the taking of the Bastille, which sparked off a wave of local uprisings, some peaceful and some violent, in cities all over France. This widespread movement, which Lefebvre dubbed "the municipal revolution," put new "patriot" municipalities in place virtually everywhere and helped to guarantee the success of the Parisian insurrection of July 1789 (Lefebvre 1947 [1939]). In the days following July 14, these new municipalities flooded the National Assembly with declarations praising the heroism of the Parisian people and pledging adherence to the cause of the National Assembly. By means of the municipal revolutions, provincial cities at once demonstrated their solidarity with Paris and recognized Paris's revolutionary primacy in the creation of the French nation.

This primacy was extended and elaborated in part by contentious political movements. One of the prime agents was the Jacobin club. (See Furet 1989; Gueniffey and Halévy 1989; Kennedy 1982.) Originally formed in Versailles by the "patriotic" Bretton delegation to the National Assembly in the summer of 1789 as a forum for discussing issues facing the Assembly, it was soon joined by patriot deputies from other provinces. After the October days, it took over the abandoned Jacobin monastery in Paris as its meeting place (whence its name), accepted nondeputies as members, and became the most prestigious and influential of the many political clubs that formed in the capital. The Parisian Jacobins soon began to accept provincial clubs as affiliates. The provincial clubs adopted constitutions modeled on that of the Parisian society and were integrated into a Paris-centered network. In addition to an endless flow of correspondence and circulars, the deliberations of the Paris Jacobins were printed and distributed to the provinces both by the private press and by the Jacobins' own journal. The provincial clubs took an active role in local politics, where they exerted continuing pressure on municipal and departmental officials, and they supported the Paris Jacobins' efforts on the national level. The local Jacobin societies systematically employed strategies of scale-jumping. If they were relatively weak in the purely local balance of forces, they could call on the extra-local Jacobin network for support – for moral encouragement, for effective revolutionary rhetoric, for strategic

advice, and in some cases for coercion from the National Guard units of a nearby Jacobin-controlled town. By this means local rivalries of all sorts were overlain – and frequently restructured – by being recast in terms of national political issues. In this way and in many others, the country-wide network of concerted opinion and civic activism constituted by the Jacobin societies was probably as central to the creation of a national scale of politics as was the organization of national elections.

In the wake of the taking of the Bastille and the victory of the National Assembly, provincial civic enthusiasm was spontaneous – and was spontaneously pro-Parisian. What the Parisian Jacobin Club did was to harness these spontaneous tendencies and fashion them into a durable Paris-centered political machine. Although a huge volume of petitions and declarations converged on Paris from the provinces in response to the circulars sent out by the Parisian society, the provincial societies in fact had little influence on the positions taken in Paris. The Correspondence Committee, always the most important of the Parisian society's committees, would write circulars calculated to generate support for their chosen positions and then used the "fabricated" support of the affiliates to impose their views on the "sometimes reluctant" general assembly of the Parisian club (Gueniffey and Halévy 1989:465). It was largely by means of its assiduous cultivation of relations with the affiliate societies that the militant minority of the Paris club survived a walkout and the formation of a rival "Feuillant" society by the majority in 1791 and went on to orchestrate the insurrection that deposed the king and established a republic in the following year.

In 1792 and 1793, the Paris Jacobin Club became the node of an alliance between the Parisian sectional movement and the leftist Montagnard faction of the Convention. It was deeply involved in the insurrection of May 31–June 2 and instrumental in the establishment of the Terror. Robespierre dominated politics from the Jacobin Club as much as from the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety. The relationship between the Parisian society and the affiliates remained strong during this period, but it changed fundamentally in character. Increasingly, the provincial societies became instruments of the Paris-organized "emergency government." The emergency government, which was run by a dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety, dispatched trusted members of the Convention – the so-called "representatives on mission" – to the provinces and granted them extraordinary powers. These representatives on mission used the local Jacobin Clubs – appropriately purged,

if necessary – as their local cadres in carrying out the Committee's orders. This improvised dictatorship succeeded against extraordinary odds. The French government was involved in desperate warfare against the leagued monarchies, compounded by bloody civil war in the Vendée and massive popular revolts in Marseille, Lyon, and Bordeaux, the three largest cities outside Paris. And while the survival of the revolution owed a great deal to the cooperation of the local Jacobins, their claim to independence and their standing in their own communities was in fact fatally compromised in this period. The Jacobins' ability to dominate the political scene both in Paris and in the provinces could not survive the downfall of Robespierre, although the national scale of political action and debate that the Jacobins helped create remained a permanent feature of French political life.

The Terror broke the spell of Parisian domination of French politics in three distinct ways. First, the general revulsion against the indiscriminate slaughter caused by the Terror undermined the overall legitimacy of the Parisian popular movement, which had been the most ardent advocate of a policy of terror in 1792 and 1793. Second, the symbiotic relationship between the Jacobins and the sans-culottes soured in the course of 1794 – a victim of the inevitable relaxation that followed the revolution's decisive victories over its foreign and domestic enemies and, according to Soboul, of the suffocation of sectional autonomy and initiative that resulted from Jacobin centralization (Soboul 1964). And third, the clear subordination of the provincial Jacobin Clubs to the Robespierrist representatives on mission not only destroyed the clubs' popularity but also had the effect of making provincials far more wary than before of Parisian domination. Complaints about Parisian dictation to provincial centers were actually a central issue in the so-called "Federalist" urban rebellions in the late spring and summer of 1793 – in Caen, Marseille, Toulon, Lyon, and Bordeaux. Although the central authorities eventually put down all these uprisings, the very fact of widespread resentment of Parisian supremacy indicates that the spell created by the taking of the Bastille and reproduced by a string of insurrections had at last broken. From the Spring of 1793 on, Parisian dominance was more a matter of military coercion than of legitimacy, and once the coercive apparatus had been disassembled, automatic provincial deference to the capital disappeared.

Yet if the myth of the Parisian people's special mission was in eclipse after 1794, it had not altogether perished. There were two unsuccessful attempts at Parisian insurrections in the next few years – the Prairial rising in 1795 and Babeuf's "Conspiracy of the Equals" in 1796. The more effi-

cient and cold-blooded repressive apparatus assembled by Napoleon and copied by the Restoration rulers managed to hold off further insurrectionary attempts until the late 1820s, although such apostles of revolution as the Carbonari kept the tradition alive. Over the next few decades, attempted insurrections in the capital came thick and fast: 1827, 1830, 1832, 1834, 1839, three in 1848, and one each in 1849, 1851, 1870, and 1871 (Traugott 1995a). Only three of these – the insurrections of 1830, of February 1848, and of 1870 – actually toppled regimes and even in these cases the dominance of the national agenda by the Parisian popular movement was only fleeting. Yet the continuing series of attempts to recreate the heroic era of 1789 to 1794 indicates how deeply French political culture was imprinted by the spatial politics of the revolutionary era. For several decades – indeed, arguably as recently as the events of May and June of 1968 – the myth of Paris's sovereign destiny lingered on long after the specific spatial chemistry of the Revolutionary political conjuncture had disappeared. I would argue that that myth and the spatial imagination it embodies have been constitutive of the distinctive French sense of national identity.

This is only a rapid and incomplete sketch of what might be called the spatial dynamics of the French Revolution. But I think it is enough to suggest that questions of space – and spatial questions at many different levels – are crucial in making sense not only of relatively limited social movements but also of the vast social and political transformations we call revolutions. Indeed, the question of revolutionary spatial dynamics seems to me a major, fascinating, and virtually unexplored question for the comparative study of revolutions. That revolutions vary enormously in their spatial dynamics can be seen by even the most cursory glance at the Mexican Revolution, which seems in this respect to be the French Revolution's opposite. In Mexico the capital remained stolidly unrevolutionary, revolutionary dynamism was located mainly on the periphery, and the spatial politics of the revolution were based more on control of land by rival armies than on control of political institutions by rival ideological factions (Katz 1998; Knight 1986; Womack 1969). How such striking differences in spatial dynamics might be accounted for and what effects they had on revolutionary outcomes are questions that should interest all students of contentious politics.

Finally, I hope that the analyses of both my examples – the Bejing student's prodemocracy movement and the French Revolution – will indicate something of the value of a more systematic and theoretically

informed treatment of space in the study of contentious politics. Contentious politics is a complex phenomenon: at once an exercise of political strategy, a mobilization of resources, an overcoming of collective action problems, a seizing of political opportunities, and an enactment of collective action frames. But it is also an exercise of spatial agency, an ensemble of work within and upon spatial structures that produces new spatial structures, meanings, and routines. I believe that giving voice to this spatial dimension of contentious politics will significantly enrich our understanding.

microfoundations, but without necessarily privileging the rationalist presumption of interest as the basis for collective action.

6. Finally, if political contention is powerfully shaped by the interplay of history, culture and politics as realized in particular "moments of madness," it should be clear that we regard such episodes as indeterminant. That is, the trajectories of movements and revolutions cannot be read off the mix of history, culture, and politics that shape them, nor from the particular cultural moments and understandings that animate their birth. Rather they are ongoing accomplishments that embody the potential for human agency that inheres, but is rarely realized, in social life. As such, they demand much from those who would study them.

Let the conversation continue.

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