

The Social Construction of Space and Gender

Martina Löw

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY DARMSTADT

(Translated from German by Paul Knowlton)

ABSTRACT Over the past 10 years two concepts of central significance in the social sciences have come up for rediscussion: 'space' and 'gender'. Today the two concepts are seen as relational, as a production process based on relation and demarcation. Gender and space alike are a provisional result of an – invariably temporal – process of attribution and arrangement that both forms and reproduces structures. This article takes a microsociological look at the construction of the local, seeking to trace the genderization of spaces. For this purpose, it discusses the organization of perceptions, in particular of glances and corresponding body technologies. Referring to the example of beach life, the article shows that the genderization of perception (including a culture of the glance) leads, in the sense of an embodiment of social order, to a practice of localization that reproduces the structural principles of society (including gender). In other words, gender may be seen as inscribed, via body practices, in the production of spaces.

KEY WORDS beach ♦ body ♦ gaze ♦ perception ♦ perspective ♦ placings ♦ space ♦ territories

In her film *Office Killer*, the New York artist Cindy Sherman depicts a woman who kills her adversaries and then carefully arranges the various parts of their bodies in her apartment. In an interview for the German *Zeit-Magazin* (see Sager, 1997), Sherman says that what interests her is not the actual killing but what the woman does with the bodies. Sherman's themes are the practice of arrangement, homogeneity and its destruction.

The idea of a homogeneous whole is ever present in modern societies, invariably serving to keep the alien, the other, the diverse at 'arm's length'. Exclusion of the heterogeneous from everyday practice and thought is reflected in the construction of the modern nation-state, of the homogeneous society, the unbroken identity, of closed corporeality, etc. It is also firmly anchored in our thinking on space. Although Henri Lefèbvre

European Journal of Women's Studies Copyright © 2006 SAGE Publications
(London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), 1350-5068 Vol. 13(2): 119–133;
<http://ejw.sagepub.com> DOI: 10.1177/1350506806062751

(1991), for example, pointed out very early in the discussion that the notion of a homogeneous space serves to legitimize domination of this one space, the image of the one space in which one God created the world remains deeply rooted in the consciousness of western societies.

In recent years, numerous studies in the fields of social geography and the sociology of space have problematized the limits and contradictions of an ideology of space constructed on these lines. Spaces are conceived today as processual, relationally ordered systems. Accordingly, investigating the topological dimensions of one or more cultures no longer means, as our everyday notions might suggest (Löw, 2001: 17ff.), observing the way structures are ordered *in space* but looking into how these structures *form spaces*. Doreen Massey (e.g. Massey, 1999: 28) points out that the term space is better suited than any other term to express the spheres of juxtaposition and coexistence. As the form of organization of the juxtaposed, spaces epitomize simultaneities. In this sense spaces are, first, an expression of the possibility of pluralities; second, they point to the possibility of overlapping and reciprocal relations; and third, and for this very reason, they are always open and indefinite with respect to future formations. This applies no less to national territorial spaces than it does to the microspaces of everyday life. It is no accident that it is Israeli geographers who point out that any notion involving the assumption that there can be only one space on any one piece of land can have fatal consequences as far as political power is concerned (Yiftachel, 1998; Fenster, 2004).

In attempting to come up with a new definition of the concept of space, the social sciences, seeking to emphasize the multitude of possible ways of placement – even in one single place – find that they are able to comprehend spaces as relational arrangements of living beings and social goods (see Löw, 2001). This underlines, on the one hand, the simultaneous practice of placing (groups of) humans and things and, on the other hand, the need to link together objects perceived/seen to form spaces. The synthesizing activity required here points towards the possible existence of highly diverse culture-, gender- or class-specific exclusion, and thus at the same time to the possibility of spatial relevance systems. The practice of placing, in turn, itself opens our eyes to hierarchic orderings and social structurings.

But if it is true that spaces are based on the fact that objects placed (in the sense as well of something that has grown, that flows, etc.) are set in relation to one another, then the constitution of space cannot be conceived without bodies. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1966: 35ff.) impressively demonstrates, what we perceive through our bodies are not only things but also 'interspaces between things'. What this means is that in perceiving through our bodies, we form syntheses in our everyday activities as a means of linking together a great multiplicity of objects to form spaces. In so doing, the body leads a noteworthy double existence. It is not only the

medium of perception but is itself a placed object. As such it is staged, styled, genderized, permeated by ethnic constructions, thus becoming a highly precarious 'building-block' of spaces.

In this article, my main concern is to look more closely at the relation of mutual interdependence between spaces and bodies. I concentrate here on a significant aspect of modern corporeality and, as I hope to be able to demonstrate, of modern spatiality as well: genderization. I develop the thesis that the genderization of spaces is effected through the organization of perceptions, and in particular of gazes and the body techniques that go along with them.¹

In doing so, I look at a locally highly specific body practice, at 'topless' sunbathing on the beach. Although this is a practice that is highly culture-specific and restricted to special places, it nevertheless points to globally held images of gender and space as well as to more generalizable practices involved in the constitution of spaces.

ON THE BEACH

Over the last couple of centuries, beaches have come to symbolize nature in western societies. While one might seek in vain for a beach on the island state of Japan, finding for the most part only garbage dumps and concrete wastelands (with the exception of Europeanized Nagasaki), the West's associations were transformed from the notion of the cold sea and the hard beach to that of the seaside as a paradise (Corbin, 1990). A slow, barely discernible process involving altered body techniques, a new definition of public space (Hausen, 1976) and the 'discovery' of the sun gave rise to the image of an ideal place characterized by the concurrence of 'body, sea, sand, wind, sun, and emptiness' (Kaufmann, 1996: 38). It is hardly surprising, then, that Henri Lefèbvre (1991) dreams that on the beach the body might find the freedoms needed to break through policy which homogenizes space and, going a step further, dissects it into possessions. The beach therefore seems an ideal place to study the reciprocal constitution of body and space.

Jean-Claude Kaufmann (1996) looks into French beach life in an empirical study based on a series of guided interviews and participatory observation. The main focus of his study is the finely coordinated management of the way in which naked female breasts are displayed. 'The beach thinks it is a free place, but in fact the slightest gesture, the briefest glance is monitored' (Kaufmann, 1996: 172). Society's discovery of sunbathing brought with it a step-by-step process of baring the body. As far as women are concerned, this process is constantly recharged with erotic content, and even hair flowing loose after bathing or naked feet and ankles are sufficient cause for excitement.

A woman's day on the beach in our time, he writes, begins with an inspection of the locality. Who is sitting nearby? What are they doing? Are there going to be problems when she bares her breasts? The choice must be made rapidly. Local inspections must be made to appear cursory so as not to confuse the gazing culture on the beach. Once a place has been chosen, the production of an individual space begins. 'Immediately following arrival on the beach this area is marked out by a number of objects: towels, bags, sunshade, games . . . as well as by ways of working the sand (smoothed, stamped flat, made into mounds . . .)' (Kaufmann, 1996: 123). People use symbolic and material boundaries to mark off their own space, creating a privacy zone – a practice carried out to perfection by the Germans and their culture of colonizing the beach by building large sandcastles on it (Linke, 1999). In these self-designated spaces, and very rarely outside them, women begin to remove their tops. They look surreptitiously around once more, assuring themselves that other women are also topless and that there is no man in the vicinity who appears to be staring.

Later on, in the interviews, they will not recall this inspection ritual. It is not until they are assured by their partners that each time they undress they survey their surroundings first, sometimes even commenting on them, that these practices become part of their consciousness. It is, then, only after inspection that the top can come off. This, however, is followed immediately by one more body-space precaution: most women not wearing a bikini top lie down flat on the ground. Generally, the only exceptions to this rule are young women with small breasts. Their firm, more or less immobile breasts are considered acceptable, and they are allowed to cross the narrow confines of space boundaries and to be gazed at more or less persistently even in motion. As a general rule, though, both the articulated moral code and the mode of behaviour exposed to view demand that on a beach naked breasts may only be presented in a state of motionlessness. Any deviation is registered. A female holiday-maker on the beach commented as follows on a woman observed surfing topless, 'She kept falling off the board, they wobbled all over the place, I mean, you know, it's just not a pretty sight' (Kaufmann, 1996: 128ff.). Any uncontrolled movement is seen as unseemly and ugly. By running, walking or jumping across the beach or swimming in the sea with her breasts swaying around, a woman revokes the social convention of rigidity and for this reason no longer enjoys the protection of seeming non-observation. This is also true, though to a lesser degree, of individually created private spaces on the beach.

The crystal ball of one's own beach world is transparent. Gazes enter it, cross the boundaries, link the recumbent body with other objects. True, gazes can be attenuated by a defined and arranged space and its boundaries more successfully than they can in the 'public space' of a beach,

which has not been individually demarcated; but in the end there is no avoiding being gazed at. A gaze into this private space may never be fixed or expressive (of either admiration or disapproval). Those who gaze this way are immediately disqualified as voyeurs. And yet everyone looks, men and women alike. After all, how else would they be able to give the interviewer such telling accounts of what they had observed in adjacent areas? 'This is why', Kaufmann observes, 'eyes must remain neutral and may never come to rest on naked breasts' (Kaufmann, 1996: 164).

On the beach people practise a specific 'art of seeing without seeing' (Kaufmann, 1996: 163), an art based on control over the stare and the more fluid gaze:

It is not forbidden to stare, but the stare must be fixed on a point which all observers would unequivocally accept as neutral. On the beach the most obvious neutral point is the horizon, the open sea, possibly a seagull or a boat. These sequences of motionlessness are needed to recover from the movement of gazing; but they also allow the gazer to secretly pick out hazy images in the corner of his/her eye. But the best catches are made in the course of a gradual visual scanning – the usual dodge used to conceal the fact that the gazer is in fact observing. (Kaufmann, 1996: 163; see also Goffman, 1982)

Here, instead of staring, the gaze moves fleetingly along, sometime coming to rest on a neutral object, focusing on marginal phenomena. Both men and women gaze in this way, and yet this art of seeing without seeing is so embedded in our culture that we experience observing and being observed as something gender-specific. Women take notice of men's gazes – men talk about their gazes.

In his analysis, Kaufmann names various forms of the space–body relation. Women start out by using their bodies to (seemingly) intuitively sense spatial arrangements. In beach spaces (as often in everyday situations as well), we are under pressure to take our bearings swiftly, without making undue observations. The majority of the women interviewed on the beach state that they sense space-relevant decisions in their bodies (Kaufmann, 1996: e.g. 139). They appear to sense, and hence to know, whom they can sit down next to, when they can remove their top and how long they can remain in one position. The careful planning involved in these actions is experienced spontaneously, as a bodily process to which it is frequently impossible to gain verbal access, at least in the early stages of the interview situation.

In the next step observed, spaces are produced to mark off a secure intimate sphere. Our own bodies or the bodies of our reference group are safeguarded from others by the production of closed arrangements. Placings take the form of habitualized actions. Everyone knows these types of territorial demarcations: writing utensils and papers are spread

out on working surfaces, books are placed on bedside tables, and jackets and bags find their way on to park benches. But placings of this kind have one disadvantage: they can be observed. The arrangement practice involved in constructing these 'territories of the self' (Goffman, 1982: 54ff.) is institutionalized and thus relatively easily accessible.

It is above all the gaze that palpably overcomes boundaries, extending one's own space into someone else's. If we assume that the constitution of spaces is based equally on a placing practice and a synthesizing act that links together placed objects to form a whole, then the example can be seen to demonstrate competition between productions of space. Can I successfully protect my own space from others' gazes? Are people (men) able to extend their own space into the territories of others? When we construct our own spaces, we can either ignore foreign objects or make use of them to mark the boundaries of this space. As Kaufmann shows in great detail, this process is socially monitored through gazing techniques. Bodies are protected by spaces; at the same time, however, these spatial boundaries invite conquest.

GAZE REGIMES AND PERCEPTIONS

When Jean-Claude Kaufmann reports on his observations and interview analyses, depicting men's gazes and women's bodily sense of the situation at hand, he can be sure that his readers will not be at a loss to understand him. It is less his perspective as a man that renders this line of difference accessible than the experiences of people on the beach, their attribution to self and the way they act within them.

In recent years, much research has been done in art and cultural sciences on the space-constituting dimension of the gaze and its gender-specific component. The point of departure of this modern logic of visualization is – as repeatedly emphasized by Lefèbvre – the discovery of central perspective in the early modern age. Based on mathematics and geometry, central perspective serves equally as a means to 'authentically' replicate reality and as a key to 'correct' seeing (Mathes, 2001: 95ff.; see also Jay, 1993; Kemp, 1990). The gaze that has gone through the school of central perspective is based on looking with one eye, unmoved or detached, while the world becomes its object (see Panofsky, 1991). Consequently, scholars see in the rise and swift naturalization of central perspective a modern form of the struggle for world domination (e.g. Cray, 1992).

As Erwin Panofsky underlines, this view of the world goes hand in hand with an absolutist understanding of space. 'In order to guarantee a fully rational – that is, infinite, unchanging and homogeneous – space, this "central perspective" makes two tacit but essential assumptions: first,

that we see with a single and immobile eye, and second, that the planar cross section of the visual pyramid can pass for an adequate reproduction of our optical image' (Panofsky, 1991: 28ff.). According to Panofsky, the 15th and 16th centuries scientifically underpinned the naive notion, which goes back to antiquity, of space as a container, the idea of homogeneous space, which even today is still firmly anchored in our consciousness. Central perspective makes it possible at the same time to construct and to naturalize rigid, immobile and homogeneous space. With central perspective established as 'correct' seeing, a 'discovery' that makes it possible for painters to present a replica patterned on this seeing as a realistic depiction, absolutist space² came to appear both scientifically correct and natural. The difference between scientific ideal and empirical practice, which was general knowledge in antiquity, is largely forgotten in this era (Sturm, 2000: 88ff.). The prerequisite for this gaze is a specific body technique that presupposes motionlessness. This is what Norman Bryson means when he speaks of the perspective view as the 'gaze' (Bryson, 1983). The body of the gazer is reduced to a single point, one of his eyes. The field of vision, the corporeality of looking, vanishes, as he notes. What becomes established is a fluid gaze which, though it appears not to be staring, resolutely seeks to avoid losing sight of the focus of its observation.

GENDER ARRANGEMENTS

In her study on gender in the early modern age, Bettina Mathes stresses that 'it is in the gaze that gender is constituted' (Mathes, 2001: 105). Like other art and cultural scientists (see, for example, Hentschel, 2001; Mulvey, 1975; Williams, 1989), she refers here to studies on film theory and picture interpretation. Like a scientifically detached viewing of paintings, the gaze directed at the big screen of Hollywood-style storybook cinema both produces and reproduces the cultural construction of gender difference. The picture based on perspective creates the impression of depth and thus of spatiality before the eyes of the beholder, a spatiality that is further reinforced by the moving pictures served up in the cinema. 'The commercial film aims, by employing inconspicuous cutting and camera techniques, to create the impression of a continuous, homogeneous picture space and to place the observer in a panoramic position' (Hentschel, 2001: 153).

Traditionally, spaces are imagined as women('s bodies). In 1865, for example, the anthropologist Karl Schmidt wrote, 'The man appears as time incarnate, the incarnate process of becoming; woman as space, as being. Activity and passivity, mind and body, brain and heart, head and belly, individual and species, positive and negative pole: man and

woman' (Schmidt, 1865: 420). To depict man and woman as opposites and yet still reliant on one another, Schmidt opts for a dichotomous arrangement. On the one hand, we have the male: time, activity, mind/brain/head, and on the other we have the female: space and body/heart/belly. The male is body by virtue of his head alone. He is conceived as moving and active and thus as an expression of time. The female, on the other hand, symbolizes space. Like space, she is seen as passive and corporeal. It is this that gives rise to a cultural association between spaces viewed and female bodies, a process that finds its modern-day manifestation in the election of national beauty queens as representatives of national spaces (Banet-Weiser, 1999). As literary criticism has frequently noted, this overlapping of space fantasies and female bodies (see Kublitz-Kramer, 1995; Weigel, 1990) ties the perspective-minded voyeuristic gaze, which dissects without being seen, into a genderized and genderizing context. In the absolutist notion of space, the open picture space is experienced as something like the promise of a tendered and open female body and at the same time described as the womb with its promise of security (Colomina, 1997) and its promise of lust (Hentschel, 2001; Weigel, 1990). Against the background of a dual-gender, heterosexual matrix, two potentially contrary positions become manifest: that of the male gaze and that of the female as the object gazed upon.

These positions are not necessarily bound to the placings effected by men and women: 'It is precisely because the voyeuristic gaze is a construction that it can, potentially, be appropriated by any subject. That is to say that the voyeuristic gaze is open to women as well as to men, but also that it can cause men to find themselves in a "female" position' (Mathes, 2001: 107). The fact that a woman can adopt the male-connnotated voyeuristic gaze or, conversely, that a man can submit to being viewed in this way hinges on the culturally usual practices of doing gender – the production of gender in actions. If we can trust Erving Goffman's depiction of US society, it is not possible to embarrass a 'young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports' (Goffman, 1975: 158). It is considered scientific common sense (see Bourdieu, 1982: 307ff.; List, 1993; Longhurst, 1995; Sarasin, 2001) that only a middle-class, male, white, urban body is inconspicuous. Jewish men, for example, are considered soft, flowing, impotent in National Socialist ideology. As Susan Bordo (1993) points out, these stereotypes can still be found today in the image of the 'nice Jewish boy'. It seems that only the normed body is free of the inscriptions of class, gender or ethnicity. This freedom to be inconspicuous allows this body to gaze at the others, the conspicuous, the abnormal, who, embarrassed by the outward signs of their body (e.g. breasts in motion), seek to hide from these gazes.

It is in a culturally specific and hierarchic structure consisting of milieu, class, gender and ethnicity that gazes are bestowed and received. Heterosexual men gaze at women, women at the handicapped, heterosexual men at gay men, women at other women, etc. It is easy to imagine black or gay men employing the practices described by Kaufmann: an inspection of their surroundings as a means of protecting themselves from gazes. It is, however, the specific dynamic described by Kaufmann as the 'three bodies' of women that currently serves to shape gender in western society. This dynamic is based on the male-coded cultural position of the gazer and the female-connotated position of the observed. According to Kaufmann, women are in a permanent state of flux between the banal, the beautiful and the erotic body. 'If the one is in evidence, the others will never be far away' (Kaufmann, 1996: 223). The modern banalization of nakedness, he notes, creates the kind of normality that sustains the exchange between men and women on the beach. Beauty, he goes on, enters into competition with this banality: it dispels again and again the impression of banality, dragging the naked body out of its invisibility. When beauty appears, he writes, men react by showing desire, and the erotic body flashes. However, as soon as the erotic threatens to entail disorder, Kaufmann notes, the body is again banalized.

With his concept of beauty, Kaufmann describes the conspicuousness of the female body, a marker system for women that opens up or closes various options by constructing a highly differentiated field of ascriptions of beauty and ugliness. This marker system involves notions and practices of eroticism and sexualization. These are, however, linked with strategies geared to securing power and domination that give rise to 'beauty' as an aesthetic dimension in the first place and cannot, as Kaufmann suggests, be derived straight from beauty. As Michel Foucault showed in exemplary fashion, the constraining, almost compulsive gaze men cast at female bodies is always bound up in a complex of power and knowledge. The behaviour of women on the beach is a prime example of the fact that sexualization is an expression not merely of men's desire but also of their position of power. Or, to use the jargon of systems theory, the asymmetry that stabilizes the gender difference is generated by the fact that 'women are simply more perceptible, are always the object of a gaze that cannot be switched off' (Nassehi, 2003: 101).

Today, men's bodies are frequently proffered for view in women's magazines. Women today describe, evaluate, and analyse men's bodies in ways they never did before (see Mathes and Lów, 2002). Women discuss the looks of their male colleagues, friends and neighbours. All this can be interpreted as gender convergence and as a kind of practice with the male-connotated gaze. And yet the practices appear to differ. We seldom observe, in public spaces in particular, that women's glances at male

bodies evoke in these men the abashed covering-up/hiding/looking-the-other-way responses that reproduce power relations; indeed, for women 'the gaze' opens rituals of flirting in which the balance of power always remains open. Since, as Kaufmann's study shows, social knowledge and expectations are based on the assumption that men gaze and women are gazed at, and since it is always more difficult to attain a position of greater power than it is to fall into a position of less power, women's gazes at men rarely achieve the same results as men's gazes at women. However, women – and this is a point largely overlooked by Kaufmann – are not only the objects of gazing, indeed they actively use their placing practices to produce gender arrangements. Perception is not only a process of individual activity but also, as Georg Breidenstein explains, an anticipatory act. 'Participants gear their own positioning, their representations and activities, to the way in which they anticipate that others will perceive them – and . . . to the anticipated boundaries of other people's perception' (Breidenstein, 2004: 91).

In perceiving and placing, we create spaces. We produce spaces by drawing symbolic and/or material boundaries in the expectation that others will recognize them through a synthesizing cognitive act. People perceive the placing practices of others and at the same time orient their own placings to what they have perceived (see Featherstone, 1993: 176). What imparts dynamics to this process is the fact that while we place in anticipation of perceptions, we are not able to compel these perceptions. When boundaries are crossed by gazes, by touches, by invasion, by language, etc., or when different spaces do not coexist in harmony, it is social power and domination that take over.

On closer examination, the act of perceiving-while-linking can be shown to be pervaded by gender. In mixed-gender, heterosexual contexts at least (and these constitute the majority of social contexts) perception falls into two positionings: the male-coded gaze and the female-coded intuitive sense for placings. Regardless of the fact that women also look and men also respond by hearing, smelling or touching, what is perceived is filtered, and as Kaufmann, quoting from his interviews, notes, this is then experienced, in the women's case, as a bodily sensing and, in the men's case, as a gazing (and hence as a detached, scientific, controlled practice – which can therefore not be said to be part of perception). Furthermore, we anticipate our mutual actions and orient our own actions accordingly. These cultural constructions are not only illusions, they are bound up with a practice of space production that is based on a hierarchic field of gaze cultures. The sense of vision has become the reigning sense. The sense of touch provides a good example of this. Even though when we touch another person we are both involved in the process, laying a hand on another body is conceived as a one-sided tactile contact. The eye turns this into a monoperspective act (Mathes, 2003). As a rule, people

rely more on what they see than on what they taste, feel, smell. Consequently, the process of linking objects together to form spaces is based primarily on gazing.

CONCLUSION

My thesis is that the genderization of spaces is effected through the organization of perceptions, in particular of glances and the body techniques corresponding to them. This finds expression both in the predominance of the visual – and the implicit masculinization of a sense posited as the primary one – over other perceptions as well as in a hierarchically genderizing gaze regime that regulates the process in which objects are synthesized to form spaces and institutionalizes transgressions of boundaries. The genderization of perception (including the culture of the gaze) leads, in the sense of a somatization of social order, to a choice of place and a placing practice that reproduces structural principles of society (including gender). In other words, gender may be seen as inscribed, via body practices, in the production of spaces.

What this implies is that even though beach spaces may differ in the structure of their conditions of production from those of a parliament or of a private apartment, and even though spaces may differ from one country to another, power relations ensure that spaces remain bound within a permanent context of reference and relation. Power relations form a central component of the constitution of spaces. This is seen not only in the fact that places may be privileged or neglected but also in the reproduction of national and global structurings. Spaces must thus be seen as orderings/arrangements that are inherently dynamic but also contested.

There is much to indicate that institutionalized spatial orderings/arrangements in turn affect bodies and thus also contribute to their genderization. Renate Ruhne (2003) has already demonstrated how the construction of public space influences the production of the insecure woman or the self-assured man. More research has been done on this reciprocal effect in the process of ethnicization. Andreas Eckert (1996), for example, describes how colonial territorial policy in Africa served to ethnicize bodies. By isolating themselves from the native population and dividing the black majority population up into ethnically defined groups that in turn were assigned to 'tribal districts', the white colonial rulers created urban ethnic identities that remain in place to this day (see, for India, Randeria, 2004).

Space and gender traditionally share the same fate in that, in the context of occidental philosophy, both are conceived as material substances and accordingly naturalized and posited as immutable. Any research that sets

out to analyse the relation between space and gender is faced with a strategic and practical challenge: not to posit the one dimension (space or gender) as the secure, quasi-naturalized basis from which the other social phenomenon can be nailed down conceptually as a relational one. Instead, it is essential to view both constructions in their processuality and relationality. For the sake of consistency, it must be argued that the city cannot be assumed to be an entity on whose stage men and women enact themselves as the correct gender. Nor is it possible for studies on the production of space to operate with men and women, boys and girls, as unquestioned entities. Indeed, space and gender must be grasped as 'an effective, reciprocally constructing and constructed structure' (Ruhne, 2003: 139). The body provides a key to understanding their reciprocal constitutional dynamic. Lefèbvre's suggestion that the body be understood as the staging ground of resistance to a capitalist order of space appears unconvincing here. It is the disillusioning recognition of the 'consonance between the constitution of being and the forms of cognition' (Bourdieu, 1997: 159) that destroys any hope of recapturing a precapitalist body experience. Body and fantasies are both cultural products: change results much more frequently from day-to-day shifts, from new knowledge won from contradictions, from ambivalent body socialization, or from frictions between spatial practice and representation. However, only when resistance embraces not only spatial practice but also its representations is change possible. Naked breasts, to get back to the beach, may have altered beach life, but they have had very little impact on gender or space arrangements.

To start out with, it is an act of emancipation for a woman to bare her breasts. At the beginning of the second women's movement in the 1970s, many women discarded their bras. Following the example of the novel *Egalia's Daughters*, they no longer see why breasts should never wobble in public, while men's primary sex organs are not forced into the penis holders suggested by the (female) author Gerd Brantenberg. Why, it is often asked, are men allowed to show their nipples in public while women are not. It is not long after this that women embark on topless sunbathing and swimming.

However, it is precisely this exposure of their bodies that, as Kaufmann shows, now drives women into passivity. Lying flat on the ground, they become the objects of the male gaze. The price paid for the naked bosom in our cultural context is the body's immobility. Without the stabilizing effect of a bra the entire body is brought into a state of rigidity. Women lie flat on their backs – a position long considered the suitable one for women during sexual intercourse – and their breasts take on the form otherwise suggested when they are wearing a bikini top. The body becomes what space no longer wishes to be: rigid and immobile.

NOTES

1. According to Marcel Mauss (1978), body techniques are historically and culturally specific modes of use of the body and thus of body behaviour/activity as well. In an intercultural comparison, Mauss uses swimming, walking, or running as examples to show that there is nothing in bodily movement that is 'natural'. On the contrary, there are culturally determined techniques that so permeate the body as nearly to elude reflection.
2. Following Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, I distinguish between 'absolutist concepts of space' in the sense of container-space notions, and relativist concepts that derive space in relational terms. The approach used here, however, is a relational one that focuses analytically on both the object and the relation (see von Weizsäcker, 1986: 256ff.; Löv, 2001: 24ff.).

REFERENCES

- Banet-Weiser, Sarah (1999) *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bordo, Susan (1993) 'Reading the Male Body', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 4: 696–737.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1982) *Die feinen Unterschiede*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Engl. edn: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.)
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1997) 'Die männliche Herrschaft', pp. 153–217 in Irene Dölling and Beate Kraus (eds) *Ein alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechterkonstruktion in der sozialen Praxis*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Breidenstein, Georg (2004) 'KlassenRäume – eine Analyse räumlicher Bedingungen und Effekte des Schülerhandelns', *Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung* 5(1): 87–107.
- Bryson, Norman (1983) *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*. London: Yale University Press.
- Colomina, Beatriz (1997) 'Die gespaltene Wand: häuslicher Voyeurismus', pp. 201–22 in Christian Kravagna (ed.) *Privileg Blick. Kritik der visuellen Kultur*. Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv.
- Corbin, Alain (1990) *Meereslust. Das Abendland und die Entdeckung der Küste 1750–1840*. Berlin: Wagenbach. (Engl. edn: *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.)
- Crary, Jonathan (1992) *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Eckert, Andreas (1996) "'Unordnung" in den Städten. Stadtplanung, Urbanisierung und koloniale Politik in Afrika', pp. 1–20 in Dietmar Rothmund (ed.) *Periplus 1996. Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte*. Münster: Lit.
- Featherstone, Mike (1993) 'Global and Local Cultures', pp. 169–87 in Jon Bird et al. (eds) *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*. New York: Routledge.
- Fenster, Tovi (2004) *The Global City and the Holy City: Narratives on Planning, Knowledge and Diversity*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Goffman, Erving (1975) *Stigma. Über Techniken der Bewältigung beschädigter*

- Identität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Engl. edn: *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York: Aronson, 1974.)
- Goffman, Erving (1982) *Das Individuum im öffentlichen Austausch. Mikrostudien zur öffentlichen Ordnung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. (Engl. edn: *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972.)
- Hausen, Karin (1976) 'Die Polarisierung der "Geschlechtscharaktere". Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben', pp. 363–93 in Werner Conze (ed.) *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Hentschel, Linda (2001) 'Die Ordnung von Raum und Geschlecht in der visuellen Kultur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts', pp. 150–65 in Marlis Krüger and Bärbel Wallisch-Prinz (eds) *Erkenntnisprojekt Feminismus*. Bremen: Donat.
- Jay, Martin (1993) *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kaufmann, Jean-Claude (1996) *Frauenkörper-Männerblicke*. Konstanz: UVK. (Orig. pub. 1995.)
- Kemp, Martin (1990) *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kublitz-Kramer, Maria (1995) *Frauen auf Straßen. Topographien des Begehrens in Erzähltexten von Gegenwartsautorinnen*. Munich: Fink.
- Lefèbvre, Henri (1991) *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Orig. pub. 1974.)
- Linke, Uli (1999) *German Bodies: Race and Representation after Hitler*. New York: Routledge.
- List, Elisabeth (1993) *Die Präsenz des Anderen. Theorie und Geschlechterpolitik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Longhurst, Robyn (1995) 'The Body and Geography', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 2(1): 97–106.
- Löw, Martina (2001) *Raumsoziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Massey, Doreen (1999) *Power-Geometries and the Politics of Space-Time. Hettner-Lecture 1998*. Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg Press.
- Mathes, Bettina (2001) *Verhandlungen mit Faust. Geschlechterverhältnisse in der Kultur der Frühen Neuzeit*. Königstein: Ulrike Helmer Verlag.
- Mathes, Bettina (2003) 'As Long as a Swan's Neck?: The Significance of the "Enlarged" Clitoris for Early Modern Anatomy', pp. 101–24 in Elizabeth D. Harvey (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mathes, Bettina and Martina Löw (2002) 'Blaues Wunder: Viagra und Männlichkeit', *Freitag. Die Ost-West-Wochenzeitung* 16 (August): 17.
- Mauss, Marcel (1978) 'Die Techniken des Körpers', pp. 197–220 in *Soziologie und Anthropologie*, Bd. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Orig. pub. 1935.)
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1966) *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. (Orig. pub. 1945; Engl. edn: *Phenomenology of Perception*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002.)
- Mulvey, Laura (1975) 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16(3): 6–18.
- Nassehi, Armin (2003) 'Geschlecht im System. Die Ontologisierung des Körpers und die Asymmetrie der Geschlechter', pp. 80–104 in Ursula Pasero and Christine Weinbach (eds) *Frauen, Männer, Gender Trouble. Systemtheoretische Essays*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Panofsky, Erwin (1991) *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. New York: Zone Books.
- Randeria, Shalini (2004) 'Kastensolidarität als Modus zivilgesellschaftlicher Bindungen? Gemeinschaftliche Selbstorganisation und Rechtspluralismus

- im (post)kolonialen Indien', pp. 223–43 in Dieter Gosewinkel et al. (eds) 2004: *Zivilgesellschaft – national und transnational*. WZB-Jahrbuch 2003. Berlin: Edition Sigma.
- Ruhne, Renate (2003) *Raum Macht Geschlecht. Zur Soziologie eines Wirkungsgefuges am Beispiel von (Un)Sicherheiten im  ffentlichen Raum*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Sager, Peter (1997) 'Der ganz normale Horror', *Die Zeit. Magazin* 47: 30–9.
- Sarasin, Philipp (2001) *Reizbare Maschinen. Eine Geschichte des K rpers 1765–1914*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Schmidt, Karl (1865) *Die Anthropologie. Zweiter Theil. Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen in seinem Leben und in seinen Thaten mit besonderer Bercksichtigung der Menschenerziehung*. Dresden: Verlag von Louis Ehlermann.
- Sturm, Gabriele (2000) *Wege zum Raum: methodologische Annherungen an ein Basiskonzept raumbezogener Wissenschaften*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Von Weizscker, Carl Friedrich (1986) *Aufbau der Physik*. Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag.
- Weigel, Sigrid (1990) *Topographien der Geschlechter. Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Literatur*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Williams, Linda (1989) *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yiftachel, Oren (1998) 'Planning and Social Control: Exploring the "Dark Side"', *Journal of Planning Literature* 12(2): 395–406.

Martina L w is full professor of Sociology with the Technical University Darmstadt. She is experienced in interdisciplinary work and research. She has been visiting professor at TU Berlin and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. She has held a visiting fellowship at the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies (IFK) in Vienna and was head of the German Sociological Association/ Gender Studies. In 2000, she received the Christian-Wolff-Prize for her past work, especially for the book *Sociology of Space*. Her areas of interest are gender studies, sociology of space and cities, sociological theory, and sociology of education. Address: TU Darmstadt, Institut fr Soziologie, Residenzschloss, 64283 Darmstadt, Germany. [email: loew@ifs.tu-darmstadt.de]

