Chapter 1

Societies

> At the present moment of history the network of social relations spreads over the whole world, without any absolute solution of continuity. This gives rise to the difficulty ... of defining what is meant by the term 'society' ... If we say that our subject is the study and comparison of human societies we ought to be able to say what are the unit entities with which we are concerned.
>
> (A.R. Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 193)

Introduction

In this book I seek to develop the categories that will be relevant for sociology as a 'discipline' as we enter the next century. I seek to present a manifesto for a sociology that examines the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes; and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities. Hence the subtitle of this book – the investigation of mobilities into, and for, the next century.

I show how such mobilities transform the historic subject-matter of sociology within the 'west' which focused upon individual societies and upon the generic characteristics of such societies. I consider how the development of various global 'networks and flows' undermines endogenous social structures which have generally been taken within sociological discourse to possess the powers to reproduce themselves. I interrogate the concept of the social as society and show that, whatever its value in the past, it will not in the future be especially relevant as the organising concept of sociological analysis. I try to develop a new agenda for sociology and make set out a manifesto for its reformulation in its 'post-societal' phase.

The concept of society will in the future be one particularly deployed by especially powerful 'national' forces seeking to moderate, control and regulate these variously powerful networks and flows criss-crossing their porous borders. New rules of sociological method are necessitated by the

apparently declining powers of national societies (whether or not we do in fact live in a global society), since it was those societies that had provided the social context for sociological study until the present. If there are no longer powerful societies then I try to establish what new rules of sociological method and theory are appropriate. In particular I elaborate some of the material transformations that are remaking the 'social', especially those diverse mobilities that, through multiple senses, imaginative travel, movements of images and information, virtuality and physical movement, are materially reconstructing the 'social as society' into the 'social as mobility'.

Three arguments might be made against these claims. In the first, it is said that society has never been the key concept in sociology; that has been provided by other notions, such as meaningful action, agency, interaction or world-system. In the second, it is claimed that societies are still powerful entities and that nation-states are able to undertake important actions, both externally and internally, in order to sustain existing patterns of power. In the third, it is argued that since 'globalisation' undermines the very basis of sociology as a separate discipline that loses its central concept of society, so sociology with nothing to put in its place should wither on the vine.

Against these points it is shown that sociology in north Atlantic rim societies has been historically organised around the discourse of 'society' and hence of the conditions which sustain their characteristic structuring (such as functional integration, or social conflict, or base and superstructure). This societal structuring has been bound up with notions of what it is to be a member or citizen of a given national society and of the particular societally guaranteed rights and duties of citizenship.

Second, mobilities on an enormous scale involving diverse technologies and objects do problematise the powers of society. I consider how and to what degree 'social governmentality' is put into question by mobilities organised through complexly organised times and spaces. Analysis is provided of whether such mobilities undermine societal borders and of the degrees and forms of their permeability. Comprehending such mobilities is not straightforward and in part requires the employment of various kinds of metaphor of movement, especially of networks and flows.

Third, these mobilities criss-crossing societal borders in strikingly new temporal–spatial patterns hold out the possibility of a major new agenda for sociology. This is an agenda of mobility. And there is here an irony. Much twentieth-century sociology has been based upon the study of occupational, income, educational and social *mobility*. In some sense British sociology has presumed that the differential rates of upward and downward mobility, within generations and across generations, is the defining question of the sociological enterprise. So to stretch a point – one might say that sociology has always regarded mobility as its 'core business' but in the formulation I develop there are various breaks with this twentieth-century vision of a sociology that is organised around social/societal mobility.

Most obviously, mobility is taken to be a geographical as well as a social phenomenon. Much of the social mobility literature regarded society as a uniform surface and failed to register the geographical intersections of region, city and place, with the social categories of class, gender and ethnicity. The existing sociology of migration is incidentally far too limited in its concerns to be very useful here. Further, I am concerned with the flows of people within, but especially beyond, the territory of each society, and how these flows may relate to many different desires, for work, housing, leisure, religion, family relationships, criminal gain, asylum seeking and so on. Moreover, not only people are mobile but so too are many 'objects'. I show that sociology's recent development of a 'sociology of objects' needs to be taken further and that the diverse flows of objects across societal borders and their intersections with the multiple flows of people are hugely significant. Finally, mobility is predominantly understood in a horizontal rather than the vertical sense common within the social mobility literature. I explore further the fruitfulness of horizontal metaphors as the basis of a reconfigured sociology.

Why, it might be asked, should sociology be the discipline principally concerned with the study of these horizontal mobilities? Does not such a focus imply a post-disciplinary social/cultural/political science with no particular space or role for any individual discipline? Indeed maybe the very industries responsible for these global flows will not need the academy anyway since they can reflexively know (or think they know) what is involved in their particular domain and can themselves interrogate the main processes (albeit researched in-house or in private think-tanks). So why can and should sociology analyse these intersecting horizontal mobilities?

First, most other social science disciplines are subject to much more extensive forms of discursive normalisation, monitoring and policing which make them poor candidates for such post-disciplinary reconfiguration. Indeed theories, methods and data may be literally expelled from such disciplines since they are too 'social' and outside the concerns of that particular policed discipline (see Urry 1995: chap. 2). Second, sociology's discursive formation has often demonstrated a relative lack of hierarchy, a somewhat unpoliced character, an inability to resist intellectual invasions, an awareness that all human practice is socially organised, a potential to identify the social powers of objects and nature, and an increasing awareness of spatial and temporal processes. While all these wreak havoc with any remaining notion of society *tout court*, sociology may be able to develop a new agenda, an agenda for a discipline that is losing its central concept of human 'society'. It is a discipline organised around networks, mobility and horizontal fluidities.

In the rest of this chapter various notions of *society* and their constitutive role in the historical development of sociological discourse are examined. Such notions of society are linked to an examination of borders, mobilities and governance. I discuss a range of ways in which a 'sociology of mobilities' disrupts a 'sociology of the social as society'.

In Chapter 2 I show the importance of different *metaphors* of the social, particularly considering those appropriate for examining various mobilities. I interrogate the metaphors of net/network and of flows/fluids, and contrasts will be drawn with the metaphors of region and structure that have been central to the society concept. Also some consideration is paid to the spatial and temporal organisation of networks/flows and to their complex consequences for what have been historically viewed as societal processes.

In Chapter 3 I consider diverse socio-spatial practices of *mobility*. I consider corporeal mobility and especially walking, travelling by train, car-driving and air travel; object mobility as objects are constituted through mobilities and are themselves mobile; imaginative travel through radio and television and its effects in reconstituting the public sphere; and virtual travel and its connections with communities and corporeal mobility. In each of these mobilities it is demonstrated that there are complex mobile hybrids constituted through assemblages of humans, machines and technologies.

This last point is further developed in Chapter 4 where it is shown that in order to investigate these relationships of humans and things we need to consider the role of the various *senses*, something neglected in most sociology. It is the analysis of the senses that embodies sociological analysis but it is necessary to do this in a way that connects such embodiments to larger-scale cultural processes. Particular 'actants', it is shown, depend upon particular senses, and that mobilities to, and from places, rest upon specific 'ways of sensing'. The changing relationships between the different senses are elaborated.

Chapter 5 is concerned with *time* and especially with outlining and critiquing the distinction between so-called social and natural time. It is shown that apparently 'natural' clock-time is in fact socially produced and yet has exerted a powerful role in the subduing of nature. Examination is then provided of instantaneous time that is implicit within, and in turn transforms, various mobilities that are concerned with the saving of brief moments of time. The social consequences of such instantaneous time are shown to be profound and underexplored within mainstream sociological debate.

In Chapter 6 attention is paid to the nature of *dwelling*. It is considered just what is involved when we say that people dwell within communities, whether given or constructed, and how most forms of dwelling depend upon various modes of real or imagined mobility. Particular attention is focused upon local communities, *bunds*, collective enthusiasms, virtual communities, nations and diasporas. It is argued that the sociological concept of community should be replaced by that of dwelling and dwellingness, many forms of which presuppose diverse mobilities.

In Chapter 7 a critique is provided of existing notions of *citizenship* based upon the national society and the limited rights and duties that that entails. It is increasingly hard to sustain a societal model of citizenship with the development of diverse forms of mobility rights and duties, including those of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. Such a citizenship is analysed in terms of new practices, risks, rights and duties; these transcend individual national borders. A central role in this citizenship is played by shame as the public sphere is transformed into a 'mediatised' and partially globalised public stage.

In the final chapter an agenda for a *sociology beyond societies* is developed, organised around the distinction between gardening and gamekeeping metaphors. The emergence of gamekeeping involves reconsidering the nature of a civil society of mobilities; seeing how states increasingly function as 'regulators' of such mobilities; dissolving the 'gardening' distinction between nature and society; and examining the emergent global level that is comprised of roaming, intersecting, complex hybrids.

'There is no such thing as society'

I begin with the concept of the social as 'society'. When former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously declared that 'there is no such thing as society', sociologists led the charge to critique her claim. They declared that there is obviously such a thing as society and that Thatcher's claim indicated the inappropriateness of her policies based upon trying to reduce the societal to the interests of what she termed 'individual men and women and their families'.

In this book I shall not install Thatcher as a major figure of individualist social theory (her views were loosely derived from Hayek). But the smug riposte to Thatcher from the British sociological community was not justified. It is actually unclear just what is meant by the term 'society'. Although there is something 'more' in social life than 'individual men and women and their families', exactly what this surplus amounts to is not obvious. Most sociologists would not agree on the nature of this surplus. Yet this is particularly ironic since if sociology does possess a central concept, it is surely that of society (even when alternative terms are used, such as country, social structure, nation or social formation).

First then, I argue that the concept of society has been central to sociological discourse. I then argue that if there is any agreement on the concept of society this is embedded within notions of nation-state, citizenship and

national society, working through a 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995). But then I show that it is this sense of 'nation-state-society' that contemporary mobilities call into question and which suggest that maybe Thatcher was oddly right when she said there is no such thing as society. But she was at the same time quite wrong in that she ignores many 'post-societal' processes that lie beyond individual men and women, including especially those of the global marketplace. She also omits to consider the enduring ideological power of the nation presumably because she would regard this as 'natural' and not 'societal'. I will now expand on these points.

Sociological discourse has indeed been premised upon 'society' as its object of study (Billig 1995: 52–3; Hewitt 1997: chap. 1). This was especially so from the 1920s onwards as sociology was institutionalised especially within the American academy. MacIver and Page's standard *Society: An Introductory Analysis* argues that sociology is '"about" social relationships, the network of relationships we call society' (1950: v). The radical Gouldner in *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* talks of 'Academic Sociology's emphasis on the potency of society and the subordination of men [sic] to it' (1972: 52). In the definitive *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, Shils talks of sociology's knowledge being 'gained through the study of the whole and parts of society' (1985: 799), while Kornblum defines sociology as the 'scientific study of human societies and human behaviour in the many groups that make up a society' (1988: 4). The world system theorist Wallerstein summarises the overall situation: 'no concept is more pervasive in modern social science than society' (1987: 315).

This construction of the discourse of sociology around the concept of society in part stemmed from the relative autonomy of American society throughout the twentieth century. It thus represents a universalisation of the American societal experience. The theorist of the US as the prototypical modern society, Talcott Parsons, defined 'society as the type of social system characterised by the highest level of self-sufficiency relative to its environment, including other social systems' (1971: 8). Such self-sufficient societies are of course empirically rare and generally rely upon their domination of their physical and social environments and on securing that their 'members' performances ... "contribute" adequately to societal functioning' (Parsons 1971: 9).

Wallerstein also argues that no concept is used more unreflectively than that of society (1987: 315). This can be seen by considering the main 'theoretical perspectives' within sociology and by reconstructing the sense of society that they each presume. The perspectives, which are not necessarily similar in organisation, structure, or intellectual coherence, are those of critical theory, ethnomethodology, feminism, functionalism, interactionism, Marxism, structurationism, systems theory and Weberianism (see Urry 1995: 41; Hewitt 1997: chaps 1 and 2). The following sets out the notion of society specific to each perspective:

critical theory	society as forms of alienated consciousness reproduced by the institutions of mass society
ethnomethodology	society as the fragile order displayed by the common sense methods used by members in practical reasoning
feminism	society as the bounded system of social relations within which the interests of men dominate those of women
functionalism	society as the social system in which its various parts are functionally integrated with each other
interactionism	society as the precarious social order negotiated and renegotiated between actors
Marxism	society as the structure of relations between the economic base and the political and ideological superstructures
structurationism	society as the clustering of institutions across time and space which results from drawing on and in turn reproducing certain structural principles
systems theory	society as an autopoietic network of self-regulating and recursive communications organisationally distinguished from its environment
Weberianism	society as the relations between specific social orders and of the unequally distributed social groupings present within each order

Thus there are various senses of the term 'society', each presuming a somewhat different emergent quality at the level of society which is over and above 'individual men and women and their families'. Giddens concludes that society is a largely unexamined term in sociological discourse (1987: 25), while Mann argues that we should abolish the term because of this extensive disagreement and incoherence (1986: 2).

What most of these formulations neglect to consider is how the notion of society connects to the system of nations and nation-states. Billig argues that: 'the "society" which lies at the heart of sociology's self-definition is created in the image of the nation-state' (1995: 53, 10). Interestingly American-based theories of society have frequently ignored the 'nationalist' basis of American and indeed of all western societies. They have typically viewed nationalism as a surplus to society that only needs to be deployed in situations of 'hot' extremism (which supposedly does not describe the 'west'). However, Elias clearly points out that: 'Many twentieth century sociologists, when speaking of "society", no longer have in mind ... a "bourgeois society" or a "human society" beyond the state, but

increasingly the somewhat diluted ideal image of a nation-state' (1978: 241; and see Billig 1995: 52–4).

Thus in the following theorisation of society, sovereignty, national citizenship and social governmentality lie at its core. Each 'society' is a sovereign social entity with a nation-state that organises the rights and duties of each societal member or citizen. Most major sets of social relationships are seen as flowing within the territorial boundaries of the society. The state is thought to possess a monopoly of jurisdiction or governmentality over members living within the territory or region of the society. Economy, politics, culture, classes, gender and so on, are societally structured. In combination they constitute a clustering, or what is normally conceptualised as a 'social structure'. Such a structure organises and regulates the life-chances of each member of the society in question.

This societal structure is not only material but cultural, so that its members believe they share some common identity which in part is bound up with the territory that the society occupies or lays claim to. And *contra* the argument of much sociology, central to most such societies is a vernacular nationalism that is part of how people think and experience themselves as humans. There are many features of the banal nationalism that articulates the identities of each society through its mundane differences from the other. These include the waving of celebratory flags, singing national anthems, flying flags on public buildings, identifying with one's own sports-heroes, being addressed in the media as a member of a given society, celebrating independence day and so on (Billig 1995). One might metaphorically characterise this vernacular nationalism as being something like a fractal, the irregular but strangely similar shapes which are found in fragmented phenomena at very different scales of the body social. We could see this self-similarity in the way from each local level right up to the centre of the state, members of a society do similar kinds of things as each other, share similar beliefs, think of themselves as characteristically 'French' or 'American'.

However, it is doubtful if societies could ever be conceived of as entirely self-reproducing entities (see Luhmann 1995, for an autopoietic formulation of society). Sociology has a tendency to treat what is 'outside' the society as an unexamined environment. But no society, even in the heyday of the nation-state earlier this century, has been separate from the very system of such states and from the notion of national identity that mobilises sovereign societies. As Calhoun points out: 'No nation-state ever existed entirely unto itself' (1997: 118). It is through this interdependence that societies are constituted as partially self-regulating entities significantly defined by their banal or vernacular differences from each other. As Wallerstein argues: 'it is futile to analyze the processes of the *societal development* of our multiple (national) 'societies' as if they were autonomous, internally evolving structures, when they are and have been in fact primarily structures created by, and taking form in response to, world-scale processes' (1991: 77). The north Atlantic rim has been constituted as a system of such national societies, with clear boundaries and multiple banal nationalisms that mark each society from the other (Billig 1995; Held 1995; Calhoun 1997). Societies have varied in their degree of boundedness, and especially, as Touraine argues, in the degree to which society has been organised through, and integrated with, a mobilising 'culture'; but without such a societal culture it is hard to determine what are a society's boundaries (1998).

Over the past two centuries this conception of society has been central to north American and west European notions of what it is to be a human being, someone possessing the rights and duties of social citizenship. To be human meant that one is a member or citizen of a particular society. Historically and conceptually there has been a strong connection between the idea of humanness and of membership of a society. Society here means that ordered through a nation-state, with clear territorial and citizenship boundaries and a system of governance over its particular citizens. Conceptually and historically there has been an indivisible duality, of citizens and societies. Rose characterises this model as government from 'the social point of view' (1996: 328). Such societal governmentality has been effected through new forms of expertise, partly based upon sociology as the science of such societies and of the appropriate forms of social citizenship (see Chapter 7 below).

In this account 'society', and its characteristic social divisions of, especially, social class, are strongly intertwined with the 'nation-state'. Mann shows in his massive dissection of the 'rise of classes and nation-states' in the 'west' between 1760 and 1914, that societies, nation and states have been enormously intertwined in their historical development (1993: 737). They developed together and should not be conceptualised as colliding billiard balls existing only in external relations with each another. Mann evocatively talks of the sheer patterned messiness of the social world and of the mutually reinforcing intersections of class and nation, as societies developed their 'collective powers' (as opposed to the distributive powers of person-over-person; see Parsons 1960). He persuasively argues for the concept of collective powers, showing how:

> Western collective power had been revolutionized ... Societies were qualitatively better organized to mobilize human capacities and to exploit nature, as well as to exploit less developed societies. Their extraordinary social density enabled rulers and people actually to participate in the same 'society'.
>
> (1993: 14)

Such collective powers implied a very strong distinction between social

governmentality, on the one hand, and what lies beyond society as nature, on the other. This is so whether that pre-social nature is viewed as Hobbesian or Lockean, as brutish or benign (Macnaghten and Urry 1998: chap. 1). The intense conflict between nature and society reached its high point during the later nineteenth-century in western Europe and north America. Nature was viewed as, and degraded into, a realm of unfreedom and hostility to be subdued and controlled. Modernity involved the belief that human progress should be measured and evaluated in terms of the domination of nature, rather than through transforming the very relationship between 'humans' and 'nature'. The realisation of the collective powers of such societies resulted in remarkable increases in the rates of extraction and exploitation of energy.

Sociology as a specific academic practice was the product of this particular historical moment, of an emergent industrial capitalism in western Europe and north America. It took for granted the success of modern societies in their spectacular overcoming of nature. Sociology specialised in describing and explaining the character of these modern societies that were based upon industries that enabled and utilised dramatic new forms of energy and resulting patterns of social life. As such sociology adopted one or other versions of a tradition-modernity divide that implied that a revolutionary change had occurred in north Atlantic rim societies between 1700–1900. These modern societies were presumed to be qualitatively different from the past. This dichotomy of tradition and modernity has been variously formulated: Maine's status to contract, Marx's feudalism to capitalism, Tönnies' *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, Spencer's militant to industrial society, Foucault's classical to bourgeois ages and Durkheim's mechanical to organic forms of the division of labour.

Sociology was thus based upon the acceptance and enhancement of the presumed division of academic labour stemming from the Durkheimian identification of the region of the social to be investigated and explained autonomously (Durkheim 1952). In a way sociology employed the strategy of modelling itself on biology and arguing for its specific and autonomous realm of facts, in this case pertaining to the social or societal. Until recently this academic division between a world of natural facts and one of social facts was uncontentious. It made good sense as a strategy of professionalisation for sociology since this division provided a clear and bounded sphere of investigation. This sphere was parallel to, but did not challenge or confront, those physical sciences that dealt with an apparently distinct and analysable nature, and which had an enormous head-start in the race for academic respectability and funding (see Macnaghten and Urry 1998: chaps 1, 4 and 6).

There was presumed to be a chasm between nature and society (sometimes conceived of as methodological, sometimes ontological). It was assumed that the natural sciences were just that – 'natural' – and their

scientific method had been largely resolved. I am not suggesting of course that all sociologies have been Durkheimian. Other sociologies have on occasions transcended these formulations, arguing that agency, interaction, members' concepts, world system, culture should instead be the key concept. But these have been relatively marginal discourses within the general sociological concern to establish the character of the societal order that is crucially separate from the natural order.

It was also presumed within organised capitalism (1900s–70s Europe and north America) that most economic and social problems and risks were produced by, and soluble at, the level of the individual society. Each society was sovereign, based upon a social governmentality and was separate from nature. The concerns of each society were to be dealt with through national policies, especially from the 1930s onwards through a Keynesian welfare state that could identify and respond to the risks of organised capitalism (Lash and Urry 1987, 1994). These risks were seen as principally located *within* the geographical borders and temporal frames of each society. And solutions were devised and implemented within such societal frontiers. National societies were based upon a concept of the citizen who owed duties to, and received rights from, their society through the core institutions of the nation-state.

Of course this 'societal' model at best only applied to the dozen or so societies of the north Atlantic rim (as well as Japan). And even here the Vatican in Rome partially dominated the domestic policies of a number of 'southern' European countries (see Walby 1996). Most of the rest of the world was subject to domination. It was the societies of the north Atlantic rim which were the colonial powers, having hugely significant economic, military, social and cultural relationships beyond their borders. By 1913, for example, European and north American societies accounted for 90 per cent of world industrial production (Mann 1993: 14). Also one particular national society, Germany, was nearly able to subject most of Europe to its military hegemony. And for much of the twentieth century the most powerful society, the US, has principally functioned as a superpower locked into an escalating diplomatic, political, military, economic and cultural struggle with another massively powerful imperial society, the USSR. I have already noted the paradox that it was within the US that theories of society as bounded, relatively autonomous 'functional' entities were particularly developed.

I have thus shown in this section that the concept of society (whatever the actual term used) has been central to sociological discourse, especially within the US, but that the concept is used in contradictory ways within different sociological perspectives. I argued that if the concept of society does make sense then such societies have to be embedded within the analysis of the *system* of nation-states-societies.

In the next section I consider further this system which contemporary

changes have put into question and which suggest that maybe Thatcher was oddly right when she said there is no such thing as society. But that there may not be such a thing as society is not because of the power of individual human subjects, but because of their weakness in the face of 'inhuman' processes of globalisation. Wallerstein points out that: 'What is fundamentally wrong with the concept of society is that it reifies and therefore crystallizes social phenomena whose real significance lies not in their solidity but precisely in their fluidity and malleability' (Wallerstein 1991: 71). I now detail some recent debates about supposed globalisation that demonstrate such a fluidity and malleability of social phenomena.

Inhuman globalisation

In various chapters below I examine the extraordinary array of 'global' processes which appear to be redrawing the contours of contemporary social experience. As a starting point into this literature Table 1.1 sets out some of the main types of globalisation argument.

I shall at times in this book consider all these uses. In the next chapter I develop the last of these as the most fruitful way of comprehending what

Table 1.1 Main forms of globalisation

Strategy	As developed by transnational corporations which operate on a worldwide basis and involving a lack of commitment to the needs of particular places, labour forces or governments
Image	Images of the 'earth' or 'globe' which are used in the advertising of products (airlines for example) and for recruiting people to join groups protesting about threats to the 'global environment'
Ideology	Those with economic interests in promoting capitalism throughout the world argue that globalisation is inevitable and that national governments should not intervene to regulate the global market-place
Basis of political mobilisation	The characterisation of issues as 'global' facilitates the mobilisation of a wide range of individuals and organisations for or against the phenomena in question
Scapes and flows	People, money, capital, information, ideas and images are seen to 'flow' along various 'scapes' which are organised through complex interlocking networks located both within and across different societies (such as the monetary scapes and flows between London, New York and Tokyo)

might be involved in the supposed globalisation of contemporary capitalism. It should also be noted that the term 'globalisation' is particularly confusing since it refers both to certain global processes (from the verb, to globalise) and to certain global outcomes (from the noun, the globe). In this book I use globalisation in the first sense since it will be seen that many of the processes discussed are incomplete and there is nothing approaching a single global economy or society. I ask: are there certain global processes and the partial development of an emergent level of the global; if so how are they to be examined; and what are their implications for the analysis of 'societies'?

A useful starting point is Mann's description of the contemporary world: 'Today, we live in a global society. It is not a unitary society, nor is it an ideological community or a state, but it is a single power network. Shock waves reverberate around it, casting down empires, transporting massive quantities of people, materials and messages, and finally, threatening the ecosystem and atmosphere of the planet' (1993: 11). A number of points are being made here: there is not a unified global society; there are exceptional levels of global interdependence; unpredictable shock waves spill out 'chaotically' from one part to the system as a whole; there are not just 'societies' but massively powerful 'empires' roaming the globe; and there is mass mobility of peoples, objects and dangerous human wastes. In this book I develop the sociological implications of this sketch.

Two very different responses to such a globalisation-thesis can be noted. There are global enthusiasts who see these processes as producing a new epoch, a golden age of cosmopolitan 'borderlessness'. This epoch offers huge new opportunities, especially to overcome the limitations and restrictions that societies and especially national states have exercised on the freedom of corporations and individuals to treat the world as 'their oyster' (Ohmae 1990).

Others describe globalisation not as a borderless utopia but as a new dystopia. The global world is seen as a new medievalism, as the 'west' returns to the pre-modern era (Cerny 1997). The medieval world was characterised by a lack of clear territorial boundaries and 'societies'; there were empires with centres and peripheries with many criss-crossing networks and contested jurisdictions; and there were multiple linguistic communities (see Mann 1986; Billig 1995: 20–1; for a critique of neo-medievalism, Hirst and Thompson 1996: 184). The new medieval global world seems likewise to consist of competing institutions with overlapping jurisdictions and identities. States are being reconstituted as competition-states; and there is an absence of external military threat for many such states and hence a difficulty of the nation imagining itself as one. Various powerful empires such as Microsoft and Coca-Cola are roaming the earth and reconfiguring economies and cultures in their global interests. And

there is the growth of competing city-states, such as New York, Singapore, London, Hong Kong, Sydney, Tokyo and so on.

In both the optimistic and the pessimistic analyses, it is *inhuman* objects that reconstitute social relations. Such relations are made and remade through machines, technologies, objects, texts, images, physical environments and so on. Human powers increasingly derive from the complex *interconnections* of humans with material objects, including signs, machines, technologies, texts, physical environments, animals, plants, and waste products. People possess few powers which are uniquely human, while most can only be realised because of their connections with these inhuman components. The following inhuman developments are novel in their ontological depth and transformative powers: the miniaturisation of electronic technologies into which humans are in various ways 'plugged in' and which will inhabit most work and domestic environments; the transformation of biology into genetically coded information; the increasing scale and range of intensely mobile waste products and viruses; the hugely enhanced capacities to simulate nature and culture; changing technologies which facilitate instantaneously rapid corporeal mobility; and informational and communicational flows which dramatically compress distances of time and space between people, corporations and states.

Because of the significance of these inhuman hybrids I do not deploy conceptions of agency that specifically focus upon the capacities of humans to attribute meaning or sense or to follow a social rule. This is not to suggest that humans do not do such things, not to suggest that humans do not exert agency. But they only do so in circumstances which are not of their own making; and it is those circumstances – the enduring and increasingly intimate relations of subjects *and* objects – that are of paramount significance. This means that the human and physical worlds are elaborately intertwined and cannot be analysed separate from each other, as society and as nature, or humans and objects. In various chapters complex mobile hybrids are shown to be of utmost sociological importance.

Also agency is not a question of humans acting independently of objects in terms of their unique capacities to attribute meaning or to follow rules. Rather what are crucial are the ways in which the physical world and artefacts are sensuously experienced by humans. The concept of agency needs to be embodied and I develop this through an analysis of the senses and of the inter-relationships between them. Such senses are not only crucial, as Simmel suggested in terms of the relations of person to person, but also in terms of the relations of people to 'nature' and to technologies, objects, texts and images (see Chapter 4).

If then there is not autonomous realm of human agency, so there should not be thought of as a distinct level of *social* reality that is the unique outcome of humans acting in and through their specific powers. Various writers have tried to develop the thesis of the dialectic of individuals making society and society making individuals (Berger and Luckmann 1967). But such a dialectic would only be only plausible if we mean by society something trivial, that is pure social interactions abstracted from the networks of intricate relationships with the inhuman. Since almost all social entities do involve networks of connections between humans and these other components, so there are no uniquely *human* societies as such. Societies are necessarily hybrids.

Furthermore, we will subsequently see how various transformations of the inhuman weaken the power of societies to draw together their citizens as one, to endow all with national identity and to speak with a single voice. Rose argues:

> While our political, professional, moral and cultural authorities still speak happily of 'society', the very meaning and ethical salience of this term is under question as 'society' is perceived as dissociated into a variety of ethical and cultural communities with incompatible allegiances and incommensurable obligations.
>
> (1996: 353)

More generally, Laclau and Mouffe show the impossibility of society as a valid object of discourse (1985; and see Barrett 1991). This results from the necessarily incomplete character of every totality. In particular there is no underlying principle which fixes and hence constitutes the relevant field of differences that marks off one society from the other. Employing a Lacanian metaphor, they suggest that social relations are continuously being opened up, the skin is broken and there is an enduring need for a hegemonic filling in or suturing the society together again (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 88). Such a closure or stitching back of the social is thought an impossibility. It will simply break open somewhere else, the wound will bleed, the tissue will be scarred since the past will remain marking the surface of the 'body social' (in the next chapter I consider some other metaphors of the social).

Laclau and Mouffe thus ask what does stitch together a 'society' when inhuman networks criss-cross it in strikingly new ways at ever-faster speeds? In this book I presume that the classic philosophical–sociological debates as to the respective virtues of methodological individualism versus holism, or in their later manifestations, structurationism versus the dualism of structure, are unhelpful. These debates do not deal with the complex consequences of diverse mobilities; the intersecting sensuous relations of humans with diverse objects; the timed and spaced quality of relations stretching across societal borders; and the complex and unpredictable intersections of many 'regions, networks and flows'. To describe these as either 'structure' or as 'agency' does injustice to the temporal and

spatial complexity of such relations. In this book then the ordering of social life is presumed to be contingent, unpredictable, patterned and irreducible to human subjects. Luhmann summarises: 'There can be no "intersubjectivity" on the basis of the subject' (1995: xli).

These points can be illuminated by briefly considering Archer's morphogenetic social theory designed to deal with the 'vexatious' nature of society (1995). She places 'time' at the centre of her 'non-conflationary' social theory based on two main claims. First, the social world is ontologically stratified so that the emergent properties of structures and agents are irreducible to each other and are in principle analytically distinct. And second, structures and agents are temporally distinguishable so that it is possible to talk of the respective emergence of either structure or agency (1995: 66). It is the combination of analytical separability and temporality rather than simultaneity, which are her key realist moves. They provide the basis for examining *morphogenesis*, the radical and unpredictable re-shaping of society that results from the historically emergent interplay between structure and agency. This interplay over time generates an open society which is like itself and nothing else (see Archer 1995: 157, for a diagrammatic representation of the morphogenetic cycle).

However, her examination of the key concept of time is problematic. First, time is analysed separate from space and in that sense goes against the entire thrust of twentieth century science, as well as extensive argumentation within the social sciences. It is a Newtonian conception of time. There is no discussion of the extensive debates in the sociology of time that have revealed the multiple 'times' that constitute social life. Time is seen by Archer as linear, as the fourth dimension, as merely 'before-and-after' (see Chapter 5 below). She treats structures and agents as being in time, as strung out like beads along the fourth dimension. In that sense she does not examine the possibility that time (and space) are themselves powerful 'entities' or that there is an arrow of time, all of which are unconfined within societies. Nor does she consider the position that, although time in itself does not possess powers, there are particular times that do exert such powers. In particular the hybrid of 'clock-time' has been powerfully instrumental (uniquely with other causal processes) in the subjection of the natural world throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Similarly the putative 'end of society' would appear to be on the agenda because of the extraordinary warping of time–space that contemporary global changes are ushering in, changes in which time as instantaneous is a particularly powerful hybrid.

Such a putative 'end of society' would appear to mean the end of sociology. This has been the discipline which, according to Rose: 'ratified the existence of this [social] territory'; as that territory is transformed through the emerging power of these new temporal and spatial topologies, so sociology is 'undergoing a crisis of identity' (Rose 1996: 328; Mol and Law

1994). Likewise Touraine argues that the framework of classical sociology is collapsing because society itself is decomposing; he describes a process of 'demodernisation' and a 'loss of unity of what we still sometimes call societies' (1998).

In particular, if there is not a bounded society then how is it possible to establish the functional requirements that have to be met, in order that each 'society' continues? Without being able to provide those requirements, then a sociological functionalist will be unable to explain either the effects of particular organisations or processes upon the society, or more interestingly, the emergence or the persistence of any such organisation in terms of their functional consequences (Isajiw 1968; Elster 1978). But even if we are no longer 'functionalists', it is hard to see how we can conceptualise certain entities except in terms of their 'functions' in some sense for society. Subsequently I show that contemporary states are to be principally characterised in terms of 'regulation'. But what entity is being regulated and how can that function be specified if there are no longer discrete boundaries to what we call society? I try to establish that new global flows and networks have generated a new functional requirement, for states to regulate their immense consequences. I show that this globally generated functional requirement is transforming states, which move from what I will term an endogenist regulator of peoples *à la* Foucault, to an exogenist state facilitating, regulating and responding to the consequences of diverse mobilities.

Sociology thus appears to be cast adrift once we leave the relatively safe boundaries of a functionally integrated and bounded society, or of an autopoietic societal system *à la* Luhmann (1995). There is a theoretical and empirical whirlpool where most of the tentative certainties that sociology had endeavoured to erect are being washed away. This book is about mobilities and this involves the rapid dissolving of the few fixed points that sociology had precariously established over the past few decades. In such a maelstrom of social and intellectual mobility I ask whether any fixed points can remain.

I suggested earlier some factors that might enable sociology to recover from the potential loss of its key concept of society. Such a recovery would stem from certain disciplinary characteristics that might make it particularly suited to the relatively fluid world and horizontal mobilities of the 'global age', characteristics stemming from sociology's rather fluid, amorphous and networked character (Albrow 1996). But there is another issue here. Sociology has always skirted close to the edge of the academy (some would say over the edge) because of its proximity to various social movements. These include the working class and trade union movement, the movement of the professional–managerial class, urban movements, movements of the poor, the women's movement, gay and lesbian movements, environmentalist movements and so on. Each of

these has significantly inflected sociology's development within the academy. It is unlikely that 'sociology' will survive if it does not again embody the ambitions of one or more such social movements. This issue is returned to in the last chapter when I consider whether movements for global citizenship might provide the social base for such a revived sociology.

More new rules of sociological method

To conclude this chapter, I set out what sociology's 'rules of sociological method' ought to be for the next few decades (with apologies to Durkheim 1964 and Giddens 1976). I have already shown that 'societies' can only be understood through their relations with other 'societies' – they have over the past two centuries constituted each other. Societies moreover are not necessarily organised around an originating centre, they are partially constituted through objects as well as through subjects, and since their borders are porous it is difficult to specify just what constitutes the edge of any such a society (see Mingers 1995, on such autopoietic systems). Moreover, societies are only one of various emergent levels of social life. They are not the only entities that in some sense or other are self-reproducing in relationship to their environment. More generally, the following sets out the desirable characteristics of what Diken calls the 'more "mobile" theorizing' that will be necessary to deal with the variety of emerging hybrid entities, as well as with so-called societies (1998: 248). In the following I indicate in which chapter(s) I develop each of these rules:

- to develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order (Chapter 2)
- to examine the extent, range and diverse effects of the corporeal, imagined and virtual mobilities of people, for work, for pleasure, to escape torture, to sustain diasporas and so on (Chapters 3 and 6)
- to consider things as social facts – and to see agency as stemming from the mutual intersections of objects and peoples (Chapter 4)
- to embody one's analysis through investigating the sensuous constitution of humans and objects (Chapter 4)
- to investigate the respective and uneven reach of diverse networks and flows as they move within and across societal borders and of how they spatially and temporally interconnect (Chapters 2, 3 and 5)
- to examine how class, gender, ethnicity and nationhood are constituted through powerful and intersecting temporal regimes and modes of dwelling and travelling (Chapters 5, 6 and 8)

- to describe the different bases of people's sense of dwelling, including their dependence upon various mobilities of people, presents, photographs, images, information, risks and so on (Chapter 6)
- to comprehend the changing character of citizenship as rights and duties are increasingly owed to, and derive from, entities whose topologies criss-cross those of society (Chapter 7)
- to illuminate the increased mediatisation of social life as images circulate increasingly fast and with added reach so as to form and reform various imagined communities (Chapter 7)
- to appreciate the increasing interdependencies of 'domestic' and 'foreign' issues and the reduced significance of the means of physical coercion to the determination of the powers of states (Chapter 8)
- to explain changes within states towards an emphasis upon 'regulating' mobilities and their often unpredictable and chaotic consequences (Chapter 8)
- to interpret how chaotic, unintended and non-linear social consequences can be generated which are distant in time and/or space from where they originate and which are of a quite different and unpredictable scale (Chapters 5 and 8)
- to consider whether an emergent level of the 'global' is developing which can be viewed as recursively self-producing, that is, its outputs constitute inputs into an autopoietic circular system of 'global' objects, identities, institutions and social practices (Chapter 8)

This is I hope a brave manifesto for a discipline that is apparently losing its central concept. But maybe some of this is already old hat. The great urban sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, wrote a quarter of a century ago about the importance of new spatial networks and mobilities moving both within and across societal borders. He said that commodities:

> constitute relatively determinate *networks* or chains of exchange within a space. The world of commodities would have no 'reality' without such *moorings* or *points of insertion*, or without their existing as an ensemble ... of stores, warehouses, ships, trains and trucks and the *routes* used ... The initial basis or foundation of social space is nature ... Upon this basis are superimposed – in ways that transform, supplant or even threaten to destroy it – successive *stratified and tangled networks* which, though material in form, nevertheless have an existence beyond their materiality: paths, roads, railways, telephone links, and so on.
>
> (Lefebvre 1991: 402–3; emphasis added)

In the following I examine such stratified and tangled networks of paths, roads, railways and so on. Lefebvre also points out that when we

see the dwelling of a house, this can be approached in one of two ways. Either a house can be viewed as stable and immovable with stark, cold and rigid outlines. Or we can see any such house as 'permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route'. As a consequence the image of immovability is 'replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits' (Levebvre 1991: 93).

In the various chapters that follow it is these conduits and the resulting mobilities that are described and analysed. It is argued that the material reconstitution of the social presumes a sociology of diverse mobilities. This book can be seen as a manifesto of such a revived sociological project.

Chapter 2

Metaphors

> The feudal ownership of land did bring dignity, whereas the modern ownership of movables is reducing us again to a nomadic horde.
>
> (E.M. Forster [1910] 1941: 141)

Introduction

Much of our understanding of society and social life is based upon, and reflected through, various metaphors. In this chapter the nature of such metaphorical thinking is examined. I suggest that sociological thinking, like any other form of thought, cannot be achieved non-metaphorically. As Sontag argues in *Aids and its Metaphors*, 'one cannot think without metaphors' (1991: 91). And although elsewhere Sontag seems to claim that science can be undertaken without metaphor, much of the history and philosophy of science has shown both the exegetical and the constitutive role that metaphors have played in the development of science.

Metaphor is used here in an inclusive figurative sense, to refer to the wide variety of modes of substitution of one figure into another; such a process suffuses language and meaning. This notion of metaphor contrasts with the original Aristotelian sense where metaphor, as giving a name to a thing that belongs to something else, is specifically distinguished from simile, analogy, synecdoche and metonymy. In contemporary linguistic and post-structuralist formulations metaphor is taken as generally integral to language and constitutive of human subjects. Hawkes summarises: '*All* language ... is fundamentally metaphorical ... Metaphor is a function of *language* ... it is the "omnipresent principle" of all language' (1972: 60).

Lakoff and Johnson further claim that metaphor, the understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another, is not only a matter of language. Rather human thought processes much more generally are largely metaphorical (1980: 5–6). They argue that it is impossible to develop thought and existence outside of the many *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The human conceptual system is