



Wageningen School
of Social Sciences

Spatial thinking in the social sciences: on the local, the rural and nature

Coordination
Joost Jongerden

In collaboration with
Bram Büscher
Dirk Roep
Ina Horlings
Ash Amin

April 22-April 29 , 2016
(May 4 optional feedback session)

**Course organised by the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS),
Wageningen University**

Introduction & objectives of the course

Today, the concept of socially produced or constructed space appears in publications with little apparent need for justification or explanation. Yet it was not so long ago that “space” was generally ignored in social theory. It was generally accepted that sociology had a historical rationality. The “sociological imagination” of C. Wright Mills was speaking was a time-centered imagination. “Space”, Doreen Massey argued, had been “marshalled under the sign of time”. In a Cartesian logic of thinking in dualities, time was equated with becoming and space with being; time was equated with change, space with stasis; time was considered active, space reactive; time was equated with the subject, space with the object. Thus, time was considered qualitatively and thought in terms of concepts like development, change, and growth, while space was looked upon as quantitative and isotropic, the blank canvas on which development, change or growth would happen.

During most of the 19th and 20th centuries, sociology was concerned with explaining (and forecasting) the making of the world, applying a preconceived picture of what modernity was supposed to be. Conceptualizations like “stages of development”, “phases”, and “backwardness” were expressions of the social as intervals on a time-scale. Difference was explained from a perspective of stage or phase difference, thus time. Eventually, the obsession with time and history in modern thought came together with a loss of a “spatial consciousness.” In this course, we critically engage with the spatial turn in social sciences developing since the 1970s. Building upon a brief introduction into the return of spatial thinking in the social sciences, we will discuss three themes: *the construction of the rural* (in relation to the urban), *our understanding of local* (in relation to the global), and *constructions of nature* (in relation to culture, or society).

Rural and urban

The classic nineteenth century thinkers devoted comparatively little attention to the rural, concentrating their work on the coincidence of the urban-industrial as the modern spatial and socio-economic “setting” of modern life. While the urban-industrial was considered contemporary and developed, dynamic and active, modern and progressive, the rural was regarded as archaic and backward, static and passive, traditional and conservative. The rural emerged as a residual category in our thinking of modern society. Over time, rural sociology has been plagued by the question of what the rural is. Some have argued that the rural (like the urban) is a socio-spatial category, namely, the space of agriculture. However such definitions are intrinsically instable, as shown by the occupational basis of rural populations, which has become only loosely connected with agriculture. Attempts to differentiate the rural and the urban on the basis of other social characteristics, such as population size and density, have also proved untenable. Others have argued that the urban ‘exploded’ into the countryside and the world we live in has become one of planetary urbanization, leaving us behind with the question, Where the rural has gone?

Local and global

Following the work of relational thinkers, this course will delve into the claim that the local and the global are mutually constituted. This implies that there is nothing that prioritizes the local over the global, or vice versa, as if the two were separate entities, and as if it were possible to develop an “outside.” The task of place theorization, then, is not one of achieving knowledge of the way to define the dualism of local and global (or space and place), or to bridge it, but theorize how local and global (and place and space), are different aspects of a unity. Just as the wave and particle aspects of matter are both assumed in quantum physics,

we need to think of the local and the global, just as place and space, as two different moments or forms that are intimately related to each other.

Nature

A rich body of literature investigates the many ways in which nature is impacted upon and transformed by capital. In this course, we will look at how nature and biodiversity in specific places (*in situ*) are increasingly turned into commodities that can be traded in international financial markets. This process of leaving material nature untouched while at the same time having it circulate in commodity markets is accomplished by monetising and calculating its so-called “environmental and ecosystem services.” In this course, we will critically discuss the spatial and material implications of this move and the subsequent challenges and prospects it holds for conservation.

Special session by prof. Ash Amin

The course will conclude with a special session by Prof. Ash Amin of Cambridge University on the spatial dimensions of democratic renewal.

For whom?

The course “*Spatial thinking in the social sciences*” is intended for PhD students in the social, environmental, and political sciences. In this course, we will move between close reading of texts, workshops, and discussion. Students following this course will not only learn to think about place as an analytical category, but also learn to “work with place,” by applying various perspectives to concrete cases.

Students participating in this course are expected to write a short statement (max. 1 page A4) to: i) introduce who they are in terms of disciplinary background and education ii) outline how they engage with issues of urban, rural, and/or natural place/space or spatial thinking, iii) questions or issues on place/space with which they would like to engage, and iv) expectations from the course.

Target group and learning outcomes

The course is primarily developed for PhD candidates in the social, environmental and political sciences and geography with an interest in development studies, urban and rural studies, and land use (planning).

After successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Understand the relational approach to the study of place and space (the urban and the rural, city and village)
- Critically reflect on the relational approach and evaluate its value for social science research
- Apply a spatial-relational approach to her/his own field of research
- Compare and critically assess different approaches to study the character of place and space in a globalizing and urbanizing society
- Engage in active learning and critical thinking.

Assumed prior knowledge

MSc in geography, planning, landscape architecture, social sciences, political sciences or environmental sciences

Course fees

For PhDs of WASS there is a fee of 300 euros. For all other participants and for staff members (fellows/post docs), there is a fee of 600 euros for the whole course (including drinks, lunches, course materials and a course dinner).

Session Times/ Outline of the Course in Hours

The first week of this course is self-study (April 20-24, 2015) . The students are expected to read the course-material. In the second week we will have lectures, group-work and discussion. (April 22-April 29, 2016)

Program

Friday, April 22: Local-Global
 Monday, April 25: Rural-Urban
 Tuesday, April 26: Nature
 Wednesday, April 27: -
 Thursday, April 28: Special session with Ash Amin
 Friday, April 29: Special session with Ash Amin

(A detailed program including reading will be communicated later)

Teaching methods

The course offers combination of different educational activities:

- i) *Lectures* to introduce and explain theoretical approaches on place/space as well as contextualize these theoretical approaches.
- ii) *Self-study* to further develop the understanding of the theoretical approaches discussed.
- iii) *Assignments* in which to apply a relational approach to the student's own field of work
- iv) *Workshops* to plenary discuss literature and assignments.
- v) *Presentations* by participants

Requirements and ECTS

4 credits (according to European Credit Transfer System)

Location

The sessions will be held in building "De Leeuwenborch", Hollandseweg 1 in Wageningen, The Netherlands. The exact rooms will be announced later.

Registration

Registration is possible electronically via the WASS courses page:

<http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Graduate-Schools/Wageningen-School-of-Social-Sciences/Courses/Registration.htm>

The maximum number of participants is set at 20, the minimum at 10.

Please make sure that you provide the most recent contact details so that in case of any changes you will be notified promptly. After your internet registration you will receive a short notification that your name has been registered. At least two weeks before the course

you will receive a confirmation about the location and the schedule. WASS will also send an invoice to the address indicated in the registration form.

Please e-mail to Marcella.Haan@wur.nl in case you have not received the second confirmation two weeks before the course.

Cancellations

Cancellations may be made free of charge until 1 month before the start of the course. Cancellation fee of 100 % applies if participants cancel the course less than 1 month prior to the course. The organisers have a right to cancel the course not later than 1 month before the course starts. The participants will be notified of any changes at their e-mail addresses.

Further information

On course content please contact the course organiser, Joost Jongerden (RSO). He can be reached through mail at joost.jongerden@wur.nl

On WASS: www.wageningenur.nl/wass

For details about the logistics, accommodation, registration, fees, study materials, etc. please contact

Marcella Haan

Tel +31 317 484126

Marcella.haan@wur.nl

Contact addresses:

Wageningen School of Social Sciences

Wageningen University

Hollandseweg 1

6706 KN WAGENINGEN

The Netherlands

Useful information on accommodation for participants from outside Wageningen

Wageningen International Centre,
Hof van Wageningen: 75 euro for 1
person room, 98.50 euros for 2 persons
room (including breakfast)

<http://www.hofvanwageningen.nl/>

Hotel de Wageningseberg: 62.50 euro 1
person room, 97.50 euro for 2 persons
room (including breakfast)

www.wageningseberg.com

Hotel Nol in 't Bosch: 83,50 euro for 1
person room, 110 euro for 2 persons
room, also including breakfast;

<http://www.nolintbosch.nl/>

Hotel de Nieuwe Wereld (Hotel School):
50-60 euro for a 1 person room.

<http://www.denieuwewereld.nl> (only in
Dutch)

Bed&Breakfast De Heksenspeeltuin:

25 euro for a 1 person room

Eindhovenstraat 15, 6706JA Wageningen

Phone: +31 317-418161

E-mail: callyd@zonnet.nl

www.heksenspeeltuin.nl

Villaria Bed en Breakfast:

32-38 euro for a 1 person room

Nassauweg 21, 6703CG Wageningen

Phone: +31 317-419636

Emai: villaria@hari.demon.nl

Ons Bakhuus Bed & Breakfast:
 25 euro for a 1 person room
 Dolderstraat 64, 6706 JG Wageningen
 Phone.:+31 317-411994
 E-mail: janny.wijbo@chello.nl

45 euro for a 1 person room
 Generaal Foulkesweg 8, 6703 BR
 Wageningen
 Phone: +31 317-410747
 E-mail: glindenbergh@wanadoo.nl

Knollywood Bed & Breakfast:
 35 euro for a 1 person room
 L. Roggeveenstraat 39, 6708 SL
 Wageningen
 Phone: +31 317-420970
 E-mail: Knollywood@hetnet.nl

Het Torentje Bed & Breakfast:
 60 euro for a 1 person room
 Nassauweg 19, 6703 CG Wageningen
 Phone: +31 (0)6 55 802 865
 e-mail: info@het-torentje.nl
 website: <http://www.het-torentje.nl>

De Herbergh Bed & Breakfast:

From Schiphol Amsterdam Airport to Wageningen

At the Airport you can buy a train ticket in the 'arrivals' area by the baggage claims. You will see the sign "Train tickets" near the exit. Then follow the signs 'Nederlandse Spoorwegen' (NS) or 'Trains and busses' to the railway station.

Purchase a one-way ticket to the Ede-Wageningen train station, this will cost € 14,10 (plus a service charge if you buy the ticket at the ticket counter). It is also possible to buy the ticket from the ticket vending machines in the station.

There are direct connections from Schiphol Amsterdam Airport to Ede-Wageningen every 30 minutes. Additionally, twice an hour there is a connecting service from Schiphol to Ede-Wageningen where you have to change trains in Utrecht. The destination boards on the platform will indicate the different stations where the train will stop. Check for the names Ede-Wageningen or Utrecht and board the train and when necessary change in Utrecht. The trip from Schiphol to Ede-Wageningen takes you a bit more than one hour.

For Dutch train connections use www.ns.nl, www.thalys.com, www.db.de



The train station is not located directly in Wageningen. This lack is fully compensated by fair means of transportation by buses and taxis. From railway station Ede-Wageningen you can take a taxi (approx.15 min.). Taxis leave at the north side of the station. You can also come by bus: line 52 (direction Wageningen/ Arnhem) departs from the north side of the station or bus line 88 (Valleilijn, direction Wageningen) leaves from the south side of the station. You have to purchase a ticket from the driver in the bus, which will cost about 2 euros.