

David Morley  
*Home Territories. Media, Mobility and Identity*  
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David Morley is Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where he directs the PhD programme in the Department of Media and Communications. He is the editor of the Comedia book series for Routledge where this book has also appeared.

His work has includes: *Family television* (1988, with Stuart Hall), *The Nationwide Audience* (1998, with Charlotte Brunsdon), *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (1996, with Kevin Robins); *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (1996, co-edited with Kuan Hsing Chen); and *Media, Modernity and Technology: The Geography of the New* (2006).

In *Home territories. Media, mobility and identity*, Morley sets out to investigate the ways in which traditional ideas about the notion of 'home', whether at the micro level of the domestic household, or at the macro level of the community and the nation, have been modified by the technological developments in the field of communications and transport, or, to put it the other way around, the way in which technological developments starting with the latter half of the twentieth century have contributed to the creation of new forms of 'home territories'. The premise of the study is that the new communication technologies routinely transgress the traditional boundaries that are supposed to separate the outside from the inside in the case of both the domestic household and the nation state. Thus the book is concerned with tracing connections between the rapidly changing notions of identity and belonging and the media that frame the creation of these notions and make them circulate. Morley, however, does not rely exclusively on theoretical contributions to the definition of concepts such as home, belonging, displacement and identity, but draws heavily on a vast corpus of empirical studies to illustrate and support his arguments.

Morley sets out to answer one overarching question that is echoed throughout the book, namely what it could possibly mean to be at home, to belong in our world that is so often characterized by words such as globalization, hyper-mobility and the like. Such a question is acutely in need of an answer, in the author's opinion, since contemporary theory seems to go on and on about exile, diaspora, time-space compression, migrancy and nomadology, while „the concept of home often remains as the uninterrogated anchor or alter ego of all this hyper-mobility”(p. 3).

While it is generally acknowledged that traditional ideas about home, homeland and nation have been greatly destabilized by the new patterns of mobility and migration and by the new communication technologies, Morley proposes in his study an analysis of the immense variety of exile, diaspora, connectedness, belonging, and mobility as experienced by various members of groups in a wide range social and geographical positions, and of the implications of such experiences in the process of identity construction. His analysis of the strategies of national or cultural identity construction is based on an understanding of the „micro-processes through which the smaller units which make up the larger community are themselves constituted”(p. 3).

He calls his approach a „grounded theory” approach, placing particular emphasis on the integration of micro and macro levels of analysis, as well as a „transdisciplinary” one, drawing on information provided by a wide array of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, geography, technology, literature, visual arts and many others, in a professed attempt to „construct a viable cartography of the world in which we now live” (p. 4). The

ambition is to „articulate a variety of disciplinary perspectives”, to make the necessary connections between them in order to trace the links between „different cultural processes occurring simultaneously at different scales”. Thus in taking one single concept, that of home, he tries to „identify and articulate the different discourses that pass through that conceptual space” (p. 7).

Morley then sets out, in the body of his study, to alternate explorations of these micro and macro levels of home. He starts with the house as the first and foremost physical embodiment of the theoretical notion, but also addresses the home as not necessarily a physical place, but possibly also a virtual, discursive space (language as home). The issue of the meaning of home and of belonging or not belonging to it are then explored at the macro level of the nation. Theoretical considerations on the construction of borders and the status of being on one side or the other of them, an insider or an outsider, or somewhere in between, are coupled by a series of highly illustrating case studies such as: Italian immigrants to Australia, Yugo-zombies, Indian immigrants in Great Britain. One interesting point that he makes in relation to issues of home and exile in the context of modernity, is that modernity can be seen as encouraging, to a large extent, a „metaphysics of sedentarism” where belonging is valued positively, while exile, being away from some form of home, is negatively valued; this can be seen in the terminology used by various theorists, such as geographical „monogamy” and „geographical promiscuity” (p. 39).

Having outlined the traditional notions of home and nation and the strategies that contribute to their constitution as sites of belonging, Morley subsequently outlines some of the disruptive elements in the home brought about by recent technological advances in communications and the media. The author argues in this respect that communities and their boundaries come to be mediated at different geographical scales by the new mass media.

To conclude a thorough and challenging analysis of the significance of home and belonging, Morley addresses the issue of the nature of borders in the contemporary world, an issue that is brought to the fore by the fact that the very mobility or hyper-mobility that characterizes our age forces people to constantly engage in the crossing of borders of one kind or another. Morley’s main point is that, although borders in our age are constantly shifting, this does by no means signify their disappearance. Instead, we need to develop a new way of defining borders, of acknowledging their fluctuating nature. In Morley’s view, it would be much more appropriate to renounce the rigid connotations of the term „boundary” in favour of the recognition of the fact that the limits that frame the home in its various embodiments are permeable and liable to change. Thus the home itself, whether in the shape of the family, the community, or the nation should be understood not so much as a „homogenous cultural entity, clearly defined against all outsiders, but as a nodal point on a cultural continuum of belonging – on which scale a person’s place will vary, depending on the context and function of the questions posed as to their identity, in that particular instance” (p. 244).

Instead of a conclusion to his exploration of the concept of home, Morley chooses to end his study with an exploration of the issue of who does and who does not belong in Europe, outlining the way in which the basic strategies that lie at the basis of the construction of the various notions of home as outlined in his study, from the domestic household to the nation state, are currently being replicated in the construction of the European Union, a process that is meant to make boundaries disappear between the member states, but which also necessarily entails the consolidation of external boundaries, thus being uncannily parallel to the process of construction of the nation state.

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