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...y provides an accessible yet critical introduction to one of the key ideas in
man geography. Always at the heart of discussions in social theory, the
definition and specification of the city nonetheless remains elusive. In this
volume, Phil Hubbard locates the concept of the city within current traditions
of social thought, providing a basis for understanding its varying usages and
meanings through a critical discussion of the contribution of major theories
of thinkers. This book thus offers a distinctive and timely intervention in
debates in urban theory by suggesting new ways that students and scholars
in sociology, geography, urban studies, planning and politics can make sense
of the city.

Written in a lively and accessible style, the individual chapters of *City* offer a
systematic overview of some important ways of approaching cities, whether as
imagined realms, lived-in places, networks of association or spaces of flow.
Locating these traditions within the rich heritage of urban studies and urban
sociology, the book develops the argument that none of these approaches,
when taken alone, helps us grasp the specificity of the urban, but that each is
essential for grasping the materiality of cities. The book thus spells out the case for
a renewed urban geography, suggesting that it is only by combining these
different ways of approaching the city that we can begin to understand the
cultural materiality of urban life.

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Geography / Urban Studies

Cover image: Getty Images

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
www.routledge.com
Printed in Great Britain

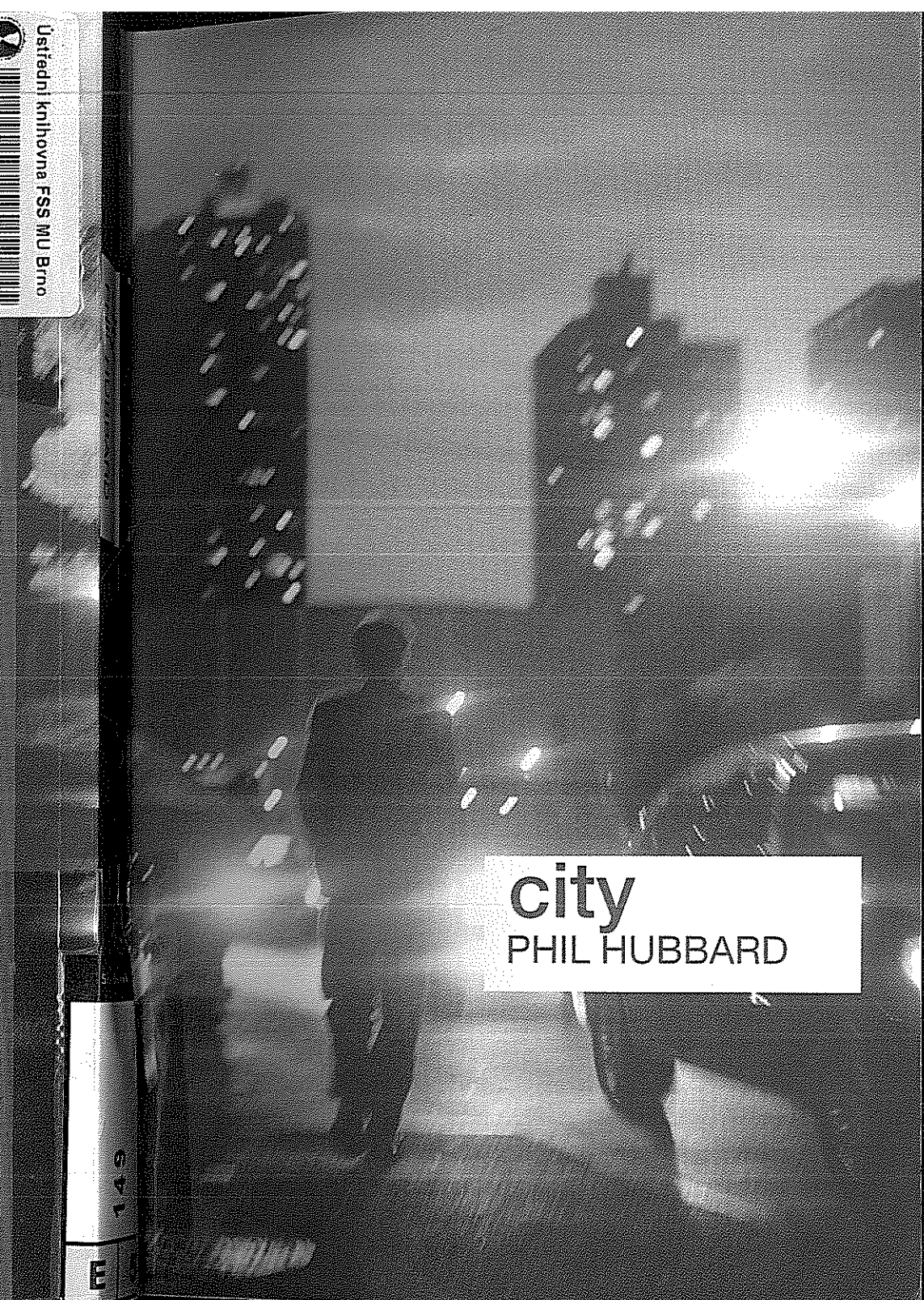
ISBN 978-0-415-33100-5
9 780415 331005

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KEY IDEAS IN GEOGRAPHY
EDITED BY SARAH HOLLOWAY
AND GILL VALENTINE

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PHIL HUBBARD



and professional throughout while Christine Firth provided the wonderfully thorough copy-editing the text desperately needed. Finally, Cath, Lucy and Oliver have put up with my constant moans, and their support and love matter more than anything else.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite its title, this is not a book about cities. Rather, it is a book about urban theory, exploring the way that sociologists, planners, architects, economists, urbanists and (particularly) geographers have sought to make sense of the urban condition. As such, the primary aim of this book is to locate the concept of 'the city' within traditions of geographic and social thought, providing a basis for understanding its varying usages and meanings. This is by no means a straightforward task, as the city is many things: a spatial location, a political entity, an administrative unit, a place of work and play, a collection of dreams and nightmares, a mesh of social relations, an agglomeration of economic activity, and so forth. To isolate some characteristic of the city that might distinguish it from its nominal counterpart, the rural, is extremely difficult given this multiplicity of meaning.

To illustrate this, we might briefly consider some definitions of what differentiates urban and rural. For some, what distinguishes cities from the countryside is their size and population density. For example, R. Davis (1973: 1) describes cities as 'concentrations of many people located close together for residential and productive purposes' while Saunders (1986: 7), in addressing this question, points out 'cities are places where large numbers of people live and work'. Yet definitions based on size are problematic given that settlements of the same size may be designated as small towns in some nations, but large villages in others. And it is certainly the

case that some settlements feel like cities, while other – more populous – settlements do not. Hence, some propose that questions of population density or heterogeneity may be more crucial in definitions of the city. Others argue that it is the ways of life (or cultures) characteristic of cities that distinguish them from rural spaces, or that it is the way nature is excluded from cities that marks them off as being different from the countryside (for an overview of such debates, see Pile 1999).

It is thus possible to make distinctions between the urban and the rural on a number of different criteria (and one should not forget that the country and the city are also morphologically different, in the sense they are characterised by different built forms and layouts). However, there are many commentators who suggest the distinction between rural and urban spaces is becoming irrelevant – or at least less relevant – to the extent that concepts such as ‘the urban’ and ‘the rural’ are no longer useful for making sense of societies characterised by high levels of geographic and social mobility. Successive transport and communications innovation have, they would argue, loosened the ties that bind people to place, to the extent that it no longer makes sense to talk of rural or urban dwellers (indeed, many people cannot even be tied down as citizens of one nation, exhibiting transnational lifestyles and affinities). A related tendency is therefore to emphasise the footloose nature of contemporary life, and to emphasise the stretching of relations of all kinds across both time and space.

An unfortunate by-product of this mode of thinking is that much contemporary writing reduces the city (and, likewise, the countryside) to the status of a container or backdrop for human activities, downplaying (and, at worst, ignoring) its profligate role in shaping economic and social relations. This failure to take the city seriously means that much contemporary urban commentary actually says very little about what Soja (2000) terms the *generative* aspects of urban life. For example, much contemporary writing on cities aims to speak to the problems experienced by those living in cities, identifying ways in which urban processes can be modified, disturbed or corrected to reduce the high levels of crime, disease, fear and poverty that are characteristically associated with cities. However, whether these are problems of the city, or merely social problems that happen to be located in cities is rarely addressed. For instance, at the time of writing, riots rage in the *banlieu* of Paris and other major French cities, yet the academic commentators routinely assembled to pass judgement on these disturbances have tended to fixate on questions of cultural integration,

social stigmatisation and racism. In contrast, little, if anything, has been said about the spatial specificity of the urban spaces where these riots are unfolding – notable exceptions being those newspaper articles where spurious correlations have been made between the unrest and the forms of public housing characteristic of the *banlieu*. While the look and feel of urban spaces do have important effects on behaviour, such design-centred theories offer an impoverished take on the distinctive sociality of cities (Amin et al. 2000): what is needed is urban scholarship that takes the city seriously as an object of study without lapsing into environmental determinism. Without such explorations, it is less than clear as to how we might suggest ways in which the trajectory of urban life might be changed through new ways of living, occupying or imagining cities.

The deficiencies of contemporary urban theory are sharply etched in other ways. For instance, there is an emerging literature on the creativity that is associated with cities, exploring why particular cities are at the ‘cutting edge’ of cultural or economic innovation. The association between particular cities and specific cultures of artistic innovation is widely noted: for example, cubism and impressionism can be traced back to *fin-de-siècle* Paris, jazz to New Orleans in the 1920s and beat poetry to San Francisco in the 1950s (P. Hall 1998). Likewise, certain cities are acknowledged to have acted as centres of economic, industrial or technical innovation (e.g. Manchester was dubbed Cottonopolis because of its centrality in nineteenth-century cotton and textiles industry, while Seattle is world renowned as a centre of high-tech and software design). Common sense thus dictates that cities foster creativity and vitality, and that cutting-edge art, fashion, music, cooking, technology, knowledge, politics and ideas tend to emanate from urban, not rural, locales. But why should this be the case? Is it simply that large cities are more likely than rural areas to be home to creative individuals? Is it that creative individuals are drawn towards big cities? Is there something about particular cities that fosters creativity? As we shall discover in Chapter 6, there is perhaps something in all of these explanations, yet all too often the materiality of the city is overlooked in accounts that emphasise individual genius, collective endeavour or historical happenstance. In essence, the urbanity of urban life is effaced: cities are written of as spaces where innovation happens, for sure, but the city becomes backdrop rather than an active participant in the making of new cultures and economies. Again, to suggest the city plays an active role in innovation is not to imply it has a deterministic influence on the trajectory of economy

or society, but to argue we need to take the city more seriously if we are to articulate the importance of space in social, economic and political life.

The fact that urban theory currently appears unable to provide a useful framework for making sense of cities has been widely noted across a variety of disciplines. For example, Manuel Castells (2000) has publicly mourned the passing of urban sociology, suggesting that the theoretical imagination and vibrancy that once characterised urban studies in the 1960s and 1970s have been lost. In his opinion, there is a need for sociologists to retool with new concepts and ideas, before embarking on the hard work required to understand the changing relationship between the city and society. Simply put, he feels that contemporary sociology is content to say plenty of things about what happens in cities, yet has said little about the specificity of urban process. Mirroring this, May and Perry (2005) suggest this 'crisis' in urban sociology reflects the fragmentation of urban sociology, an

inward collapse and retreat into a series of separate studies that draw on urban sociology but frequently without explicit credit to the discipline . . . for example, in the areas of housing, education, policy and cultural studies, gender and sexuality, crime and ethnicity.

(May and Perry 2005: 343)

Writing as a geographer, Nigel Thrift (1993) likewise proclaimed an urban *impasse*, manifest in the loss of the urban as both a subject and object of study. In his summation, while geographers have developed a varied and rich lexicon for describing urban phenomena, this cannot overshadow the fact urban geography had, by the 1990s, been 'treading water' in theoretical terms, recycling old ideas for over two decades. Thrift's *impasse* is arguably still evident in the twenty-first century, and it is no doubt significant that many urban geographers now prefer to identify themselves as cultural geographers, feminist geographers, population geographers, economic geographers, social scientists and so on. Although urban geography remains one of the largest specialty research groups in both the Institute of British Geographers and the Association of American Geographers, it is also one of the most diffuse. As a result, the intellectual developments that have swept over and transformed the discipline since the mid-1990s are usually associated with cultural, economic or feminist geography, even if many of them have been urban in text and context. Contemporary geographic writing on

'fashionable' topics such as spaces of consumption, leisure, music, technology and travel is rarely associated with urban geography, despite the fact that the city is central to so many of them. Sexual geographies, for example, are not thought of as situated centrally within urban geography. Hence, as Johnston (2000: 877) suggests, 'many of the concerns formerly encapsulated within urban geography are now studied under different banners'.

It is thus possible to note a worrying trend for urban studies in general, and urban geography in particular, to be sidelined in intellectual and theoretical discussions about the relation of society and space. Simply put, urban geography is not seen to be at the forefront of innovative theoretical work in the discipline any more (Lees 2001; P. Jackson 2005). Yet at the same time, it is possible to discern a popular resurgence of interest in urbanity and urbanism. For example, there is much contemporary media discussion about the major reinvestment in the heart of cities long regarded as 'no-go' areas. Throughout the urban West, under the aegis of urban policies promoting urban 'renaissance', former manufacturing districts are being repackaged and resold; derelict waterfronts have become a locus for gentrified living and working; mega-malls, multiplexes and mega-casinos seek to capture the dollars of the new urban elite. Western cities, it seems, have gone from strength to strength: hence, there is talk of a 'new' urbanism (Katz 1994; McCann 1995), the new city (Sorkin 1992) and the new urban frontier (N. Smith 1996). The young, trendy and wealthy again clamour to invest in urban property hotspots, reversing a trend of depopulation and out-migration that had persisted for decades. Cities are deemed to be hip and happening again: some may be 'hot', others 'cool', but there is little doubt that cities are currently the 'place to be'. Of course, city living comes replete with dangers as well as pleasures, and this is perhaps part of the appeal of cities for a new generation of gentrifiers and trend-setting urbanites. Indeed, such groups often emphasise the authentic and spontaneous nature of city living, suggesting this is infinitely preferable to the predictable nature of country life. It is surely no coincidence that many of the most popular computer games of our times are urban (such as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Warriors*, *Driver* and *Sim City's* suburban sequel, *The Sims*).

Within the popular and policy-oriented literature on cities, there are undoubtedly many clues to be gleaned about the nature of contemporary urban life. However, rather than providing an overview of these voluminous

literatures, in this book I seek to provide a more parsimonious summary of key ideas in *urban theory*, based chiefly on the work of academic writers in geography, sociology, planning and cultural studies. In broad terms, urban theory constitutes a series of ideas (sometimes presented as laws) about what cities are, what they do and how they work. Commonly, such ideas exist at a high level of abstraction, so that they do not pertain to individual towns or cities, but offer a more general explanation of the role that cities play in shaping socio-spatial process. Nonetheless, such theories typically emerge from particular cities at particular times, to the extent that certain cities become exemplary of particular types of urban theory, and become regarded as laboratories in which theories can be refined or 'tested'. By way of example, some of the most influential urban theories of the twentieth century sought to make generalisations about contemporary urban processes by referring to Chicago, which became both model and mould for theories of urbanism in the 'modern' industrial era. Likewise, much postmodern urban theory took shape in the Los Angeles of the late twentieth century, a city whose landscapes were taken as symptomatic of not only North American urbanisation, but also the wider restructuring of social-spatial relations in postmodern times (see Chapter 2).

Obviously, even in a book focusing on the urban as a concept or idea, there is much ground that could be covered. As such, I do not pretend that the following chapters do anything but offer a very partial overview of the huge body of work that constitutes 'urban theory'. Indeed, I deliberately skim over much of the literature on cities to focus on the ideas which I regard as most useful and making sense of the city. Perhaps inevitably, I tend to focus upon ideas which have emerged in the relatively short time I have been lecturing in higher education (since 1994), including writings by many who might broadly be described as my contemporaries. While I make no apologies for highlighting the distinctive and important contribution of a relatively select band of Anglo-American geographers, it is important that readers are aware of the inevitably partial nature of this text. Like the other books in the series, it cannot be read as the definitive guide to a particular concept; rather, it is a selective, simplified and Anglo-centric review. Notably, it rarely addresses non-Western literatures or theories developed beyond the metropolitan centres of the global north. While this occlusion is problematic – the disjuncture between Western and non-Western urban studies being a major impediment to the development

of a progressive urban theory – my belief is that this overview nonetheless speaks to a general debate about cityness, albeit that this debate needs to be played out differently in particular contexts.

Consequently, I hope that – in spite of its silences and blind spots – this book serves as an informative and interesting overview of the way geographers have thought about the urban. Moreover, I hope that readers will come away appreciating why the city remains such an important concept in the production of geographical theories and knowledges, one that is pivotal in progressing our understanding of the relationship of society and space. Although my own work varies considerably in its approach and empirical specificity, this is an argument I believe in passionately, and I have often been dismayed by the inability of geographers to take the city seriously, both as an object of study and as a theoretical concept. While some might argue that we live in an ubiquitously urban world, and hence that it is time to 'do away with the urban' (cf. Hoggart 1991), this book is unequivocally an argument for the *reassertion* of the urban. In essence, this book seeks to demonstrate that the 'city' – though a disputed and often chaotic concept – is as central and important to geographical inquiry as concepts such as 'place', 'space', 'region', 'nature' or 'landscape'. In part, it also suggests that the concept of urbanity can be understood only with reference to the concept of 'rurality'.

In this book, I thus seek to offer a distinctive and timely intervention in debates in human geography by exploring the ways that scholars in sociology, geography, urban studies, planning and politics might make better sense of 'the city' by taking its spatiality seriously. Though written from a geographical perspective (and with geography students in mind), I hope that it speaks to an interdisciplinary audience. Throughout, some important concepts associated with urban theory have been highlighted in *italics*: these concepts are explained in boxes, each of which is intended as a free-standing elucidation of an important idea which may be familiar to some readers, but less so to others. Each of these boxes also includes recommendations for further reading, intended to steer readers towards fuller and more detailed explications of the material summarised in these boxes. Additionally, each chapter ends with some recommendations for those wishing to read more widely around the themes and ideas considered. As far as is possible, readers are guided towards widely available and accessible English-language texts (which, in some cases, means works that are extracted or translated in part). Together, these features are intended to

help the reader navigate the text, as well as encourage a broader engagement with work in urban theory.

Though some readers will discern a chronological element, this volume is organised thematically: the intention is not to present a 'history' of urban geography or urban theory. Accordingly, the book unfolds by considering distinctive approaches to understanding the city, placing considerable emphasis on those ideas which I regard as particularly useful for making sense of the city. The book begins in Chapter 1 by delineating some key traditions in urban theory, identifying many of the key ideas that have emerged to explain the role of cities in modern and postmodern times. Detailing theories that stress the economic, social, political or cultural dimensions of city life (as well as some that consider all of these), the chapter concludes by identifying the apparent limitations of such theories in developing a truly urban theory. Chapters 2 to 5 then overview some alternative ways of thinking about cities and theorising their distinctive spatiality. In turn, these deal with ideas concerning the representation of space; the negotiation of the everyday; the blurring of nature and culture and the stretching of social relations. As will be seen, many of the ideas considered in these chapters have not explicitly been developed with the goal of progressing urban theory. Nor can any of them be said to offer a 'grand theory' of how the city works. Hence, in Chapter 6, I consider how these ideas can be worked with to produce new knowledges and understandings of the city by considering one specific issue: the association between cities and creativity. While the book concludes by recognising the impossibility of developing an all-encompassing theory of the city, it ends by restating the case for taking cities seriously in human geography. As I argue in the conclusion – and throughout this book – geographers' persistent failure to clarify what is 'urban' about urban geography seriously impoverishes the discipline's comprehension of the relationship between society and space. As well as shedding light on different strands of urban theory, it is thus hoped that this book inspires geographers to consider new ways of thinking about cities and their endlessly fascinating spaces.

1

URBAN THEORY, MODERN AND POSTMODERN

Virtually all theories of the city are true, especially contradictory ones.

(Jencks 1996: 26)

In the introduction, I suggested that cities have frequently been identified by geographers as distinctive spaces. In turn, the distinctive nature of cities is deemed to require the development of specific ideas to describe and explain them. These ideas are collectively termed *urban theory*. However, the notion of theory is a complex one, and much misunderstood. Commonly, it is assumed that theory constitutes a series of big, abstract and grand ideas which help us make sense of the detailed complexity of everyday life. Conventional scientific methodology dictates that such theories can be constructed only on the basis of repeated and verifiable observation of what exists in the world. If these observations and measurements tally with the scientists' ideas of what is going on in the world, then these theories can be framed as 'laws' about how the world works. Urban theory might therefore be characterised as a set of explanations and laws which explain how cities are formed, how they function and how they change. Rather than being concerned with empirical nuance of city life (the daily nitty-gritty of urban existence), we might logically conclude that urban theory is preoccupied with grand themes – and is inevitably more airy-fairy in nature.

While this is a fair description of many urban theories, it is incorrect to suggest that all theories are of this type. In simple terms, a theory can be defined as an idea about what is going on in the world, and although many theories seek to connect a variety of empirical evidence to construct an explanation, theories need not be 'big'. Nor should we expect that all theories are empirically verifiable (i.e. can be shown to be true or false by reference to what we see happening in the world). As we shall see throughout this book, some theories are highly conjectural, and hypothesise the existence of things that cannot be shown to exist at the level of observable reality. Others are highly contingent and localised. Yet what all urban theories have in common is that they seek to make the city legible to us in some way or another. This might be through the publication of a book or academic paper outlining ideas about how the city works, a model of urban structure or the development of a computer programme that maps urban flow. It might even be through the production of a poem, a piece of art or a song designed to stimulate new understandings of the city.

Hence, although many important geographical texts on theory suggest that theories are connected statements which seek to explain geographical phenomena rather than merely describe them (see Johnston 1991), I want to start with a somewhat looser definition: a geographic theory is an attempt to think space in a new manner (see also Hubbard et al. 2002). Trevor Barnes (2001) offers a similar definition, suggesting that geographic theory need not provide logical relations, rules of causation or empirically verifiable statements. For him, what is crucial is that a theory expresses a phenomenon through a new vocabulary and syntax which changes the way people interact with it (in terms of how they view it, or study it, or practise it). Commonly, this involves taking ideas and concepts developed in one discipline to illuminate phenomena that lie outside their disciplinary remit. In human geography, for example, theoretical development has principally occurred through the deployment of languages and ideas developed in other disciplines, such as mathematics, physics, cultural studies, psychology, biology, politics, ergonomics, economics, sociology, literary studies, criminology and history. The fact that these disciplines cover the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences might be taken to indicate geography is a uniquely integrative discipline: in fact, all disciplines develop and evolve by drawing on other areas of knowledge as they search for new ways of thinking about their subjects and objects of study.

Given this definition of theory, my objective in this chapter – to consider the evolution of theories of the city – is potentially massive. It is rendered particularly problematic given the city has constituted an object of study for disciplines beyond geography (notably sociology, where urban sociology has become a recognised subdiscipline, albeit one whose identity has changed markedly over the years). Given this complexity, in this chapter I simply wish to review some of the best known and most influential theoretical frameworks which have been employed for making sense of cities. Here, I particularly focus on those theories that produced new languages and vocabularies that are now part of the established lexicon of urban geography. Even so, there are some notable absences and silences in this story, with many key thinkers and key ideas in the history of urban studies neglected. Some of these silences are redressed in later chapters, where some less celebrated urban theories are considered. Others are a consequence of the fact that this book is written for geography students in the English-speaking world, and thus makes scant reference to any writers whose work has not been made available in translation. In any case, readers are recommended to hunt down other, more fulsome, accounts of the development of urban theory, and to consider how urban geography fits within wider histories of the discipline (some suggestions for further reading are given at the end of the chapter).

MODERNITY AND URBANISATION

The idea that cities require particular diagnostic tools and conceptual languages can be understood only in relation to the emergence of cities themselves as distinct and recognisable phenomena. That said, there is little consensus as to when or where the first cities emerged: candidates include a number of regions in South West Asia, from the highlands of Mesopotamia through to the fertile valleys of Sumeria. Moreover, there is no clear agreement as to why cities first formed. Perhaps it was for defensive reasons; maybe it was a response to the emergence of a political or military elite, or a function of economic imperatives that required the creation of trading and commercial markets the type of which simply could not be accommodated in a village. Yet others believe that the search for a single explanation is futile, with several factors combining differently to encourage urban growth in different regions (see Pirenne 1925).

We return to some of these debates in later chapters. At this point, however, it will suffice to say that cities have been in existence for a long time. In this light, it is surprising that it took so long for a distinctive body of urban theory to emerge. Indeed, it was not until the nineteenth century that the city began to be taken seriously as a distinctive and important object of study. Perhaps the main reason for this is that until that time the share of the global population living in cities was relatively small. The rapid urbanisation of the nineteenth century (sometimes termed the second 'urban revolution') changed this, first taking root in the economically dominant states of the European heartland. For instance, through the 1800s, the United Kingdom experienced the most rapid and thorough urbanisation the world had ever witnessed. The 1851 Census of the Population of England and Wales revealed a watershed event: for the first time, more people lived in towns than in the countryside. Furthermore, 38 per cent of Britain's population lived in cities of 20,000 or more, and by 1881, this figure topped 50 per cent. From 1801 to 1911, the urban population increased nearly by a factor of ten, from 3.5 million to 32 million. Nowhere was this more evident than in the capital, London, which surpassed Beijing to become the world's largest city in 1825, and by 1900 had 6,480,000 occupants (2 million more than its nearest rival, New York).

It is quite conventional to suggest that the major transformation that triggered this rapid shift in settlement from the country to the city was the 'industrial revolution', which ushered in a world where manufacturing production was the driving force of societies. In industrial societies, the power of merchants, craftsmen and guilds was supplanted by the power of industrial capitalists making the commodities of an industrial age. These industrialists imposed their identity on the city in the form of a new landscape of industrial factories, workshops and machinery, around which were spun new webs of transportation and power. Both industrial employers and employees alike thus found themselves in an environment that was far removed from the rural settlements that predominated in feudal times: it was a city of social mobility, offering contrasts of wealth and deprivation from the spectacular residences of the *nouveaux riches* bourgeois to those street dwellers who relied on their wits to make a living among the detritus of urban life. It was also a city characterised by perpetual transformation, with new ideas, technologies and practices constantly transforming people's relation to one another as well as their place within a rapidly changing urban environment (see Plate 1.1). In short, it was a modern city:



Plate 1.1 Different social types share the newly constructed spaces of the modernising city – *A Spring Morning, Haverstock Hill* (George Clausen, 1881) (courtesy of Bury Art Gallery and Museum Archives)

There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity'. To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air'.

(Berman 1983: 1)

The ambivalent experience of space and time associated with the modern city was frequently juxtaposed with traditional ways of life regarded as socially more secure and predictable. However, such traditional ways of life seemed to persist in the rural, where the ties that bound family, land and labour remained strong.

Geography had yet to emerge as an institutional and academic discipline in the nineteenth century, save for the work of those explorers, cartographers and expeditionists who sought to chart the ways of life characteristic of distant lands. As such, the new urban forms characteristic of the nineteenth-century city were of little interest to geographers. In contrast, the discipline of sociology coalesced in the nineteenth century around questions concerning the differences between urban modernity and rural tradition. According to Savage et al. (2003), nineteenth-century sociologists began to be concerned with, inter alia, the following 'urban' questions:

- 1 Whether it was possible to talk about a distinctive urban way of life, and, moreover, to identify whether this was a way of life common to all cities.
- 2 Whether this urban way of life encouraged the formation of new social collectivities and identities (such as the formation of neighbourhoods).
- 3 Examining how urban life was affecting traditional social relations of deference, such as those in which someone's class position, gender, caste or race was seen as central.
- 4 Identifying how the city encouraged or discouraged the development of social bonds between citizens of different backgrounds, residence and occupation.
- 5 Documenting the history of urbanisation and explaining why populations were concentrating in towns, cities and conurbations.
- 6 Identifying the basic features of the spatial structure of cities and establishing whether different spatial arrangements generated distinctive modes of interaction.
- 7 Diagnosing 'urban' ills such as congestion, pollution, poverty, vagrancy, delinquency and thuggery.
- 8 Specifying how urban politics was emerging as a distinctive form of governance with specific and uneven impacts for different citizens.

Although some sociologists addressed these issues tangentially, and were more concerned with exploring the nature of modern life rather than urban

life *per se*, the inevitable conflation of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation served to establish some important ideas about urbanism as a way of life. Foremost here was the idea that cities were larger, more crowded and socially mixed than rural settlements, bequeathing them a social character which was less coherent and more individualised than that evident in the rural.

This idea of the city as representing the antithesis of traditional ruralism is perhaps most associated with the work of the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1887). In essence, Tönnies described two basic organising principles of human association. The first was the *gemeinschaft* community, characterised by people working together for the common good, united by ties of family (kinship) and neighbourhood and bound by a common language and folklore traditions. At the other end of the spectrum, Tönnies posited the existence of *gesellschaft* societies, characterised by rampant individualism and a concomitant lack of community cohesion. Though Tönnies couched the distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* in terms of a pre-industrial/industrial divide rather than a rural/urban one, his description of *gesellschaft* societies was deemed apposite for industrial cities where the extended family unit was supplanted by 'nuclear' households in which individuals were first and foremost a unit of economic and social reproduction, fundamentally concerned with their own problems, and not those of others – even those in their immediate neighbourhood.

Of course, the idea that cities are bereft of community is a caricature, and it is worth underlining that Tönnies was describing two ends of a social continuum, not positing a binary distinction. Nonetheless, the idea that social cohesion and sense of community would be less evident in a city than the country was a persuasive one, and one which was to guide sociologists as they further explored the nature of modern urban living. Like Tönnies, many were clearly nostalgic for a rural way of life that seemed to be fast disappearing (this pro-rural sentiment is a recurring feature in much urban writing, and we will encounter examples later in the book). However, there were dissenters. For instance, one of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, Emile Durkheim developed a model of contrasting social order somewhat at odds with that of Tönnies. For Durkheim (1893), traditional, rural life offered a form of *mechanical solidarity* with social bonds based on common beliefs, custom, ritual, routines, and symbols. Social cohesion was thus based upon the likeness and similarities among individuals in a society. Durkheim argued that the emergence of city-state signalled a shift from

mechanical to *organic solidarity*, with social bonds becoming based on specialisation and interdependence. Durkheim consequently suggested that although individuals may perform different tasks and often have different values and interests, the very survival of urban societies depends on the reliance of people on one another to perform specific tasks. Hence, in contrast to feudal and rural social orders, urban society was one which allowed for the coexistence of social differences, with a complex division of labour (where many different people specialise in many different occupations) creating greater freedom and choice for individuals. Optimistically, Durkheim's work therefore pointed to a new kind of solidarity, with people brought together by a new form of social cohesion based on mutual interdependence.

Irrespective of the emphasis that some sociologists put on the idea that modern cities were socially emancipatory, a more common prognosis was that cities were essentially cold, calculating and anonymous. Friedrich Engels' (1844) work is of particular note in this respect, given that it documented the inhuman living conditions experienced by workers in the industrialising metropolis (relating this to capitalist imperatives, as we will see in the next section). In a more general sense, the work of Georg Simmel (1858–1918) described the impacts of the city on social psychology, suggesting that the city required a series of human adaptations to cope with its size and complexity. In his much-cited essay 'The metropolis and mental life', for example, Simmel (1950) argued that the unique trait of the modern city was the 'intensification of nervous stimuli with which city dweller must cope'. Describing the contrast between the rural – where the rhythm of life and sensory imagery was slow – and the city – with its 'swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli' – Simmel (1950) thus detailed how individuals psychologically adapted to urban life. Most famously, he spoke of the development of a blasé attitude, which can perhaps be best described as the attitude of indifference which (most) urban dwellers adapt as they go about their day-to-day business. Simply put, to cope with the constant cacophony of noise, sights and smells that present themselves to us as we move through the city, Simmel suggested that we learn to cut out all stimuli which are not important to the business in hand.

Perhaps the most vivid illustration of the adoption of a blasé attitude is bystander indifference. This is the phenomenon whereby citizens will ignore an incident because it is none of 'their business'. The psychologist

Stanley Milgram ran a series of infamous experiments to illustrate this. These included asking his students to stage fights in urban public spaces, then measuring public responses. Remarkably, but perhaps not unexpectedly, the majority of local bystanders did not intervene, perhaps considering that there were plenty of other onlookers who could intervene and, in any case, they would rather not get involved (Milgram 1970). This abdication of responsibility was, however, not evident when these experiments were repeated in rural settings, where bystanders seemed to have much more of a sense of collective responsibility (and perhaps more of desire to maintain the 'order' of their rural locale). In other experiments, rural dwellers seemed much more willing to help when strangers in their midst requested help; again, in cities, it seemed urban dwellers felt that this was simply not their job. As such, the adoption of a blasé outlook and an indifference to one's urban surroundings may be a factor in the contrast between urban and rural crime rates: shockingly, there have been high-profile rape and assault cases in cities where bystanders have failed to intervene. Against this, villages are traditionally understood to be characterised by a higher level of natural surveillance and intervention.

The failure to challenge antisocial behaviour or to 'care' for our fellow citizens is just one symptom of the indifference which urban dwellers cultivate to cope with the complex demands of urban living. Another commonplace strategy of 'distancing' is to avoid encounters with strangers when we walk around our towns and cities, keeping contacts with other pedestrians brief and superficial. Given that most of the people we encounter in the city are strangers known to us only in categorical terms (e.g. fat, white, old, male), we make judgements about them simply by looking. This is so rapid it is subliminal (and seldom something we are conscious of): a quick flick of the eyes as people glance at each other, scan their appearance and then look away, having established that neither is dangerous. The streets of our cities are therefore a realm of what Lofland (1998) calls *civil inattention*, where people rapidly scan each other to gain some categorical knowledge about them, before turning their glance away for fear of invading their privacy. This etiquette maintains civil order (if you stare, this constitutes uncivil attention) and helps the citizen cope with the sheer number of strangers that are routinely encountered on the city's streets. In contrast, in less densely occupied villages, the fewer number of encounters means that the villager can expend more time and energy ascertaining the identity of a stranger to their village.

Of course, by the same token that glancing at others enables us to efficiently read their character and intention, we too are under surveillance. Merging into the urban scene is itself an acquired skill, as Erving Goffman (1959) famously detailed in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This volume provided a detailed 'theatrical' description and analysis of process and meaning in street interactions, suggesting we are on a 'stage' when we are on the streets, constantly aware that we are presenting ourselves to an audience (of strangers). The process of establishing we are not a threat, then, becomes closely allied to the concept of the 'front', which may be different from the way we act and dress 'offstage' (e.g. in private space). This typically involves managing our bodies so they do not attract undue attention: in effect, we dress and act to send out a message – 'I'm normal, I'm not a threat!' Conforming to fashion thus becomes a way of preserving a sense of self, the equivalent of donning a social mask which identifies us as part of the (anonymous) crowd (Allen 2000a). Conforming to this prescribed notion of what is normal, rather than constantly seeking to express ourselves through our dress and actions, consequently becomes another way that we negotiate the everyday city and avoid social conflicts.

The idea that the urban experience is essentially 'managed' through a transformation of individual consciousness that involves a filtering out of the detail and minutiae of city existence is thus an important foundational story of modern urbanism. So too is the idea that city life debases human relations, and renders contact between urban dwellers essentially superficial, self-centred and shallow. For Simmel, the impersonality and lack of depth in urban life was fundamentally related to the fact that the industrial city was brought into being to serve the calculative imperatives of money. Simmel essentially suggested that the dominance of the money economy created interactions based purely on exchange value and productivity (and thus dissolved bonds constructed on the basis of blood, kinship or loyalty). This, he argued, encouraged a purely logical way of thinking which values punctuality, calculability and exactness (see Hubbard et al. 2002). Hence, while money fulfilled a multitude of tasks in the city by providing a medium of equivalence, the come-uppance was to reduce quality to quantity and to effectively destroy the essential 'form' and 'use' of any object encountered in the city: all was calculable. Simmel contended that this notion of calculation extended to other facets of urban life. One example was his suggestion that urbanites became highly attuned to clock time, contrasting this with the casual and vague sense of time predominant among rural

dwellers who moved to the diurnal and seasonal rhythms of nature (see also Chapter 5 on the invention of modern time). For instance, Simmel hypothesised that if all the watches in Berlin suddenly went wrong, the city's entire economic and commercial life would be derailed. This underlines that the life of cities had become inconceivable without all of its relationships being organised and calculated within a firmly fixed framework of time (and space) which was designed to undermine individuality and spontaneity.

The idea that money undermined and 'hollowed out' individuality was something that Simmel's pupil Siegfried Kracauer was to elaborate in his writing on Weimar Berlin, a city that appeared relentlessly modern. As he put it, 'it appears as if the city had control of the magic means of eradicating memories . . . it is present day and makes a point of honour of being absolutely present day' (Kracauer 1927: 75). Suggesting that the aesthetic forms and spectacles of the modern city were a product of urbanisation and the modes of vital experience associated with urbanism, Kracauer thus explored the development of distinctly urban visual cultures. One example he cited was the development of shop window culture, with an excess of commodities leading to the phenomena of goods needing to have an 'enticing exterior' to distinguish them from other goods with equivalent or similar 'use value'. Shop goods thus needed to be fashioned, packaged and displayed in an aesthetic manner to increase their appeal, and shops too began to transform to allow for window-shopping. Yet Kracauer noted that the rise of 'surface culture' extended to all facets of the city: the design of housing, the aesthetics of the street, even the bodies of urban dwellers themselves. Noting the ludic pleasures of visually consuming the streets of modern cities, his work also emphasised the sheer duplicity of this process – which he suggested was deeply embedded in the emergent structures of the industrial capitalist system. For Kracauer, as for Simmel before him, reading the visual forms and commodities on display in the modern city thus revealed the paradoxes and possibilities of a distinctly modern – and inevitably urban – way of life. Summarising, his essay on the 'mass ornament' suggested that 'the position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgements about itself' (Kracauer 1927: 78).

URBAN PATHOLOGIES AND THE INHUMAN METROPOLIS

Although sociologists specified a number of facets of urban life which demanded human adaptation – not least the development of a blasé attitude – above all else it was the anonymity of the city which was to be posited as its defining characteristic. Indeed, Max Weber's celebrated essay 'The city' eschewed any attempt to determine a minimum population size for an urban settlement, arguing that the city needed to be defined as 'a settlement of closely spaced dwellings which form a colony so extensive that the reciprocal personal acquaintance of the inhabitants, elsewhere characteristic of the neighbourhood, is lacking' (Weber 1922: 1212). The lack of identity was seen to have profoundly ambivalent consequences for urban dwellers. In the first instance, it was suggested the city offered a space of liberty and autonomy precisely because it allowed individuals to escape from the bonds of kinship and community that often condemned them to particular social roles or identities. The notion that cities could be emancipatory for women, for example, was often noted in literatures on urban sociology (though, conversely, this was also a source of anxiety for some male writers, as we shall see in Chapter 2). The idea that the individual could melt into the crowd, yet conversely use this sense of anonymity to develop a new sense of freedom, was a powerful motif in formative urban theorising, and was often used to explain why the city was go-ahead, innovative and civilised (while the rural remained, in the words of Karl Marx (1867), constrained by the 'idiocy' of isolation). In short, anonymity promoted individualism, free-thinking and civility, with the city creating the possibilities for meetings and mismetings that would spark creativity. In some accounts, cities have therefore been deemed to be the cradle of civilisation because they provide democratic spaces (like the Roman fora or Greek agora) in which individuals could debate political matters (see Habermas 1989).

The idea that the anonymity of the city allows us to forge new identities unburdened by our histories and biographies thus emphasises the liberatory potential of the city. Yet, as Tonnies' work signalled, the flipside of this anonymity and freedom can be rampant insecurity and a profound sense of being alone even though we are surrounded by people. The term *anomie* is widely used to describe this form of alienation (Walmsley 1988). Originating in the work of Durkheim, *anomie* is an idea which expresses the dissolution of the moral and social certainties that were (allegedly)

widespread in rural or *gemeinschaft* societies. In common manifestation, *anomie* describes a person's inability to either care for or identify with any of the number of people who surround them in the city. An extreme form of indifference, Durkheim (1893) suggested that *anomie* was expressed in the explosion of antisocial and criminal behaviour evident in cities. Simply put, *anomie* suggested that criminals were not merely unwilling, but unable to empathise with their victims.

Louis Wirth (1938) developed these ideas when he talked of the declining importance of primary social relations in urban centres, suggesting that anonymous and fleeting social relations become the norm. For Wirth, the importance of indirect and impersonal social relations increased in direct proportion to the urbanity of a settlement, which he described as a function of a settlement's population size, density and diversity. In his oft-cited words, a city may be conceived as 'a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals' (Wirth 1938: 7). As he detailed, increasing any one of these, in isolation or combination, has important effects for the social life of a given settlement. For instance, he argued that increasing the number of inhabitants in a settlement beyond a certain limit affects the relationships between them and the character of the city:

Large numbers involve . . . a greater range of individual variation. Furthermore, the greater the number of individuals participating in a process of interaction, the greater is the potential differentiation between them. The personal traits, the occupations, the cultural life, and the ideas of the members of an urban community may, therefore, be expected to range between more widely separated poles than those of rural inhabitants . . . The bonds of kinship, of neighbourliness, and the sentiments arising out of living together for generations under a common folk tradition are likely to be absent or, at best, relatively weak in an aggregate the members of which have such diverse origins and backgrounds.

(Wirth 1938: 22)

Wirth did not imply that urban inhabitants have fewer acquaintances than rural inhabitants (indeed, the opposite is often true). Rather he inferred that city-dwellers meet one another in highly segmental roles, meaning that impersonal, superficial and transitory relations are the norm. His examples

were diverse, but by way of one illustration he argued that although a city-dweller might go to a supermarket on a regular basis, it is rare to be served by the same cashier. As such, while we may exchange pleasantries with those who serve us, it is unlikely they are known to us, and the relationship is one structured entirely around a functional economic exchange.

Wirth's thesis – namely, that we are surrounded in cities by people whom we will only ever have impersonal relations with – implies cities are places where we rarely feel a sense of belonging and identity. In many ways, this is related to another manifestation of anomie as an urban condition: the rise of mental illnesses and neuroses. While the history of mental illness is a complex one (see especially Foucault 1967), the connection between the rise of cities and cases of mental illness has often been read as evidence of people's failure to adapt to city life. For instance, agoraphobia was first diagnosed among urban dwellers, not as a fear of open spaces, but a pathological fear of spaces where encounters with others could not be avoided (for example, standing in a crowd or standing in a line, being on a bridge, and travelling in a bus, train or automobile) (Vidler 1994). Likewise, neurasthenia, hysteria and claustrophobia were all imaginatively located by psychiatrists within a city which offered untold strains and stresses (Callard 1998). The cumulative impacts of noise, visual pollution and sensory bombardment have also been implicated in the demonstrated association between schizophrenia and inner city living (Walmsley 1988), while crowding and high-density urban living is widely understood to create a number of psychological reactions, including introversion and withdrawal. Phobias and anxiety accordingly came to be seen as characteristic of urban life (Vidler 1994), giving rise to the dictum that cities may be made by humans, but humans are not made for cities.

Unfortunately, the seminal work of early sociologists on the psychosocial economies of urban space was later to inspire some relatively unsophisticated theories of the impacts of environment on behaviour. In extreme cases, statistical associations were made between, for example, particular forms of housing and specific criminal behaviours (see, for example, Coleman 1985 on the design deficiencies of British council housing estates). Oddly, some of this echoed nineteenth-century theories of environmental determinism in which the physical environment was thought to shape the health and virtue of urban dwellers. As Driver (1988) outlines, in the same way that putrid water and dirt was said to issue unhealthy contagion in the form of invisible 'miasmas', squalid and crowded living

quarters were said to be infected by moral miasmas. A plethora of pseudo-sociologists and social reformers thus began collecting statistics on the social conditions of different urban locales, most famously in the case of Charles Booth (1889), whose fastidious mapping of nineteenth-century London popularised the notion of a dangerous urban underclass in which 'there was greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature of man'. Though Booth developed an understanding of urban malaise in which poverty and inequality were emphasised, others collected evidence which pointed more straightforwardly to the urban conditions that produced immorality and vice. For example, Cherry (1988) outlines the influence of the American economist Henry George on Victorian city-fathers. His view – 'that the life of great cities is not the natural life of man . . . he must, under such conditions, deteriorate physically, mentally, morally' (George 1884: 203) – was to find much popularity among those who felt the close confinement and foul air of big cities was inimical to mental and spiritual fitness. In France, meanwhile, the obsessive social hygienist Parent-Duchatelet made constant allusions to the proximity of spaces of sex work and poor sewerage, forging a connection between physical and moral impurity that justified both the repression of prostitution and the creation of more commodious cities. Others argued that the immorality of the city was by no means restricted to the lower classes, with the decadent and moneyed urban elite being tempted into this world of vice and 'sexual disarray' (Cook 2003). For instance, the celebrated sexologist Krafft-Ebing postulated that large cities were the breeding ground of degenerate sensuality. His thesis was that the constant activity of urban life led to a nervous collapse and 'a giving into' the confusion of the city. As contemporaries of Krafft-Ebing contended, 'the problem lay with the city itself, whose anonymity, artificiality and rampant commercialism overstimulated the libido and distorted the balance of nature within and between the sexes' (Forel and Fetscher 1931: 91)

Hence, while the work of nascent urban sociologists including Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Wirth and others sought to develop nuanced accounts of the psychosocial life of cities, it was the identification of particular pathological conditions of the city that was to have most contemporary influence. Indeed, the ideas developed by sociologists about urbanism came to legitimise a series of interventions in the urban environment, not least in the form of town planning movements that drew intellectual sustenance from social science. Simply put, the majority of

twentieth-century plans for urban redevelopment grew out of a desire to counteract what were seen as the inhuman dimensions of the late-nineteenth-century city: lack of light and air, unsanitary and overcrowded conditions, congested circulation that demanded the opening up of narrow streets and the reinvention of 'community' in the form of planned neighbourhood units and collective facilities. Some, like Le Corbusier, reimagined the city in glass and concrete, its transparent towers majestically spaced in a vast urban park (Fishman 1977). Others, like Frank Lloyd Wright, envisioned it dispersed in 'broadacres' spread across the fertile prairie, each citizen given a plot of land in a garden city. What all shared was an awareness of the ills of urban living and a desire to develop a form of urban living more suited to human needs and desires.

COMPETING FOR SPACE: URBAN ECOLOGIES AND LAND USE

The rapid urbanisation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries clearly led to some important theories about the nature of modern urban living. It is difficult to argue that these ideas amounted to a coherent or overarching theory of the city; further, the city as an object of study remained tangential to most academic disciplines. However, the establishment of the first US Department of Sociology at Chicago in 1913 effectively established urban studies as a legitimate and important field of study. Its co-founders, Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess, regarded Chicago as an 'urban laboratory' in which they could explore how humans adapt to the city. Crucial to the work of the so-called *Chicago School* (Box 1.1) was the idea that people – like other species – need to compete to survive. Robert Park (once a pupil of Georg Simmel) thus proposed the concept of *human ecology* as a perspective applying biological processes to the social world. This perspective advances the idea that 'cities are the outward manifestation of processes of spatial competition and adaptation by social groups which correspond to the ecological struggle for environmental adaptation found in nature' (Cooke 1983: 133). Although now largely discredited (Gottdiener and Budd 2005), the idea that there is a similarity between the organic and social worlds provided an important underpinning for the Chicago School's fastidious explorations of the urban scene, not least the many descriptions they completed of life in different communities and neighbourhoods.

Box 1.1 THE CHICAGO SCHOOL

Generally regarded as the first sociology department to be established anywhere in the world, the University of Chicago Department of Anthropology and Sociology became synonymous with urban sociology during the first half of the twentieth century. Although probably best known to geographers as the source of innumerable models of urban social structure (including Burgess's infamous and often-criticised concentric zones model), the work of the Chicago School was more diffuse and complex than is often acknowledged nowadays. For example, although the writings of its most famous members, W.I. Thomas (1863–1947), Robert E. Park (1864–1944), Ernest Burgess (1886–1966) and Louis Wirth (1897–1952), drew in an often spurious manner on concepts derived from eugenics and social Darwinism, they were based on fastidious empirical research involving intensive qualitative fieldwork and observation. For instance, Park et al. (1925: 37) wrote of the need to observe and document the characteristic types of social organisation and individual behaviours evident 'in Bohemia, the halfworld, the red-light district and other moral regions less pronounced in character', positing the marginal spaces of the city as 'laboratories' in which 'human nature and social processes may be conveniently and profitably studied'. Following Park's suggestion, members of the Chicago School were subsequently responsible for some remarkable *micro-sociological* descriptions of the customs and social practices of those found in marginal spaces, from Wirth's (1928) studies of the African American inhabitants of the 'ghetto' to Walker C. Reckless's (1926) descriptions of street prostitution. The Chicago School's advocacy of participant observation and *ethnographic* technique (literally, 'writing about a way of life') has remained extremely influential in urban sociology, particularly among those researchers who seek to shed light on the different social groups – or *subcultures* – existing on the margins of society (Gelder and Thornton 1997).

Further reading: Yeates (2001)

The influence of Darwinian evolutionary ideas was very evident in the work of the Chicago School. The suggestion that people may be defined as individual biological units involved in struggle for scarce resources provided a (then) unique take on city life, postulating that cities are driven by competition, the structure of the city being an outcome of this natural competition (or symbiosis). In particular, it suggested that the most successful urban dwellers would take over the 'best' areas of the city to guarantee their 'survival', while the least successful would end up in less salubrious areas. This process of social competition thus bequeathed a spatial sorting, typically peripheralising the least successful and wealthy urban dwellers. Yet the Chicago School also focused on the 'biotic' ways in which citizens cooperated to survive in the city, with successive waves (or *invasions*) of in-migrants clustering together for mutual support and defence. Taken together, these ideas of 'natural' competition and cooperation suggested that the city could be described as a complex 'super-organism' containing 'natural' areas of many types: ethnic enclaves, activity-related areas (business, shopping, manufacturing etc.), differently classed housing areas (upper-class suburbs and working-class tenements) as well as spaces of sexual and social immorality (the city's 'twilight' zone).

Hence, while some of the pioneering writers in urban sociology sought to isolate particular characteristics of the urban condition – often diagnosing the specific *pathologies* of urban living – in the 1920s, Chicago became the centre of an alternative tradition of urban analysis which focused on city *ecologies*. Nonetheless, the vocabulary adopted by the Chicago School was incredibly broad, taking in market economics as well as Darwinian theories of competitiveness. Likewise, the Chicago School based their ideas on a range of research methods, which included ethnographic methods of participant observation alongside more established 'scientific' methods. The Chicago School were all, to a lesser or greater extent, academic mavericks, and the willingness of Park, Burgess, Reckless, Shaw, MacKay and others to immerse themselves in the lives of those who might otherwise have remained a mere footnote in urban studies (the prostitute, the 'hobo', gang members and so on) attracted much comment. In many ways, this form of *ethnographic* engagement with the life-worlds of urban dwellers was a key influence on the social geographers who later sought to develop a people-centred humanistic geography (P. Jackson 1985; Herbert 2000). In a similar sense, these studies also represented the first tentative steps towards a sociology of subcultures: for instance, their focus

on the city as a sexual laboratory pre-empted more contemporary ethnographies of sexual culture and identity (Heap 2003).

Latterly, however, the fecundity of the Chicago School has often been reduced to a rather banal regurgitation of their ideas, and a brief dismissal of the biological concepts which underpinned their explorations. Often, it seems that the chief legacy of the Chicago School was the *urban model* – a simplified representation of the city which identified key social divides in the city in diagrammatic form. Most famous here, perhaps, is Robert Burgess's concentric zone model, a neat recapitulation of his theory that as cities grew spatially, patterns of land use would reflect the successive phases of invasion and occupation. The resulting pattern was one of a centralised business core surrounded by four principal zones (a zone in transition where newly arrived migrants would seek lodging, a zone of working-class housing, a settled residential zone and a ring of commuter suburbs). Although a description of the social segregation of Chicago, this diagram was often taken to be indicative of the type of social patterns expected in all industrial cities. The fact that it offered only a broad approximation led others (including Burgess's colleagues) to offer their own refinements. Most notable were Homer Hoyt's sector model of the city (which implied that transport corridors would produce patterns of intense competition for land and real estate in a way that Burgess's model did not predict) and Chauncy Harris and Edward Ullman's multiple nuclei model (which suggested there would be numerous foci for business investment rather than intense competition for the central business district (CBD)).

Urban models of this type were later criticised for attempting to shoe-horn a complex social reality into a grossly simplified model which drew lines that didn't really exist around areas that didn't really matter. Perhaps these criticisms are misplaced if we view models (like any theory of the city) as an attempt to think about the city in a different way, employing a different (and in this case, pictorial) language. Further, these models have clearly had much use as pedagogical devices, and have acted as the springboard for hundreds – possibly thousands – of student studies, dissertations and theses. As such, these models have become totemic in urban studies, and stand as an important reference point in urban geography (so much so that it is nearly impossible to imagine an urban geography text that does not at least acknowledge their existence). What is particularly significant about these models is that they also represent one of the first

attempts to draw general conclusions about the segregation and inter-urban differentiation of the urban landscape.

In the post-war period, as geographers began to draw inspiration from locational theory in economics, this preoccupation with mapping and modelling patterns of urban land use became an important tradition, and one of the clearest manifestations of geographers' desire to restyle their discipline as a *spatial science*. Herein, the language of biology was supplanted by new languages and concepts – not least the formal language of mathematics and statistics – which held out the promise of more precise and accurate models of urban process. The potential of new technologies (e.g. calculators, computers) to identify statistical regularities and patterns in quantitative data also provided the promise of producing models which were the summation of tested and verifiable hypotheses. Underpinned by positivist principles (see Hubbard et al. 2002), spatial science was an attempt to distance urban studies from the arts and humanities, and ally it with the 'hard' sciences by adopting the principles and practices of scientific method.

The promise of spatial science was to suggest that both human and physical geographers alike could enact a rigorous exploration of spatial structure – an argument developed in David Harvey's (1969) *Explanation in Geography*, which was perhaps the most complete theoretical statement of geography's quantitative ambition. By adapting and rewriting classical locational theory (especially the models of land use proposed by Von Thünen, Christaller, Weber and Lösch), Harvey and others proposed that there could be an integrative and comprehensive foundation for modelling geographical pattern and process. This suggested that the place of things could be mapped, explained and predicted through the identification of underlying laws – often mathematically derived – of interaction and movement, with friction of distance regarded as a key factor explaining patterns of human behaviour. For such reasons, many spatial interaction models were referred to as gravity models because they utilised Newtonian theories (of gravitational attraction) to model flows between (nodal) points. Thus, where a 'natural' science like physics tried to create general laws and rules about things like molecular structure, geography sought to create models of spatial structure which could, for example, generalise settlement patterns, urban growth or agricultural land use (e.g. Berry 1967). The analogous use of scientific theory even led some to propose that human geography could be described as spatial physics (Hill 1981), bequeathing

it the status of a 'hard' scientific discipline rather than a 'soft' artistic pursuit. This seductive type of argument was typical of the case made for scientific human geography, with the standards of precision, rigour and accuracy evident in mainstream science proposed as the only genuinely explanatory framework available for the generation of valid and reliable knowledge (A. Wilson 1972). This was also a key factor encouraging the adoption of the ideas and language (if not always the method) of science among those preoccupied with the status of the discipline and the links between physical and human geography. Additionally, for those believing that geography should be engaging with policy debates, scientific geography appeared to have considerable potential to become 'applied' geography, offering an objective and value-free perspective on the success of, for example, urban planning policies (Pacione 1999).

The new concepts and methods of spatial science thus allowed for the refinement of ecological modelling, with data relating to land use, migration and rental values used to approximate more and more complex models of urban land use and social organisation. For instance, statistical methods of exploratory data analysis could be used to simplify vast amounts of data relating to different census tracts and neighbourhoods to identify related areas (Berry and Rees 1969). Factorial analysis in particular became a widely adopted method for crunching census data and identifying the social, economic and demographic variables most important in differentiating neighbourhoods (following the methods spelt out by Shevky and Bell 1955). Though later critiqued for being socially acquiescent and irrelevant to the problems of the modern city (Harvey 1973), such statistical procedures shed light on the spatial imprints of racism (particularly in the United States, where the ghettoisation of non-white urban residents was regarded as a consequence of 'white flight').

Typically, the city mapped and modelled via such methods was a modern industrial one, where residential segregation largely reflected the socio-economic status of residents, and where factors of family status and ethnicity remained subordinate to that of class. Likewise, it was also assumed to be a monocentric city where land values declined away from the central business district where competition for land remained highest. For instance, Alonso's (1964) much-cited model of urban land use effectively refined Von Thünen's model of agricultural land use to provide a theory of how the urban land market organised around the city's CBD. His theory aimed to describe and explain the residential location behaviour

of individual households and the resulting spatial structure of an urban area. The central concept of this theory was *bid-rent*, defined as the maximum rent that can be paid for a unit of land (e.g. per hectare) some distance from the city centre if the household is to maintain a given level of utility. Assuming jobs and retailing were concentrated in the city centre, the model implies that the price of both housing and of commuting depends on distance from the city centre, with a *distance decay* relationship between land rent and distance from the CBD. This suggests that the further a household lives from the city centre, the more it will have to spend on commuting and the less it will be able to spend on housing. The bid-rent curve of the actual land rents in the city is accordingly interpreted as reflecting the outcome of a bidding process by which land is allocated to competing uses (e.g. residential versus commercial uses). However, as in von Thünen's original model of agricultural land use, a monocentric, flat, continuous and uniform urban area was assumed. Based on these assumptions, bid-rent curves were assumed to be downward sloping (i.e. rent decreases with distance from the city centre to compensate for commuting costs) and single valued (so that for a given distance from the CBD only one rent bid is associated with a given level of utility).

Retrospectively, it has been suggested that the assumptions underpinning bid-rent models limit their usefulness in approximating observed land-use patterns or analysing land-use change. Likewise, while statistical analysis of objective social facts (e.g. the proportion of non-white residents in an area, the number of crimes, the percentage of homeowners) allowed for the construction of elegant descriptions of social segregation, some commentators suggested these could never approximate reality until they accounted for the variability and irrationality of human behaviour. Essentially, spatial science assumed that human actors were rational men (*sic*), fully aware of variations in land markets and able to judge the optimum location in the city they could afford. In practice, however, people often live in suboptimal locations because they lack perfect knowledge or ability to act on that knowledge. This means that the logic of the market does not hold, and that the patterns of residential segregation and land use hypothesised by abstract urban models are often only weakly predictive.

Acknowledging these weaknesses, one outgrowth of positivist urban studies was a 'behavioural turn' which sought to explore how people act on the basis of distorted, simplified and biased knowledge of their

surroundings. Hugely influential here was the work of Kevin Lynch (1960) on *The Image of the City* – a book which introduced the notion of the mental map. This is the cognitive or mental picture of a city we carry in our heads and refer to when we make decisions about how to get from one area of the city to another, for example, or decide where we want to rent a house. Far from being an accurate and scale map of the city, this is a map full of contradictions and inconsistencies, in which 'real' distances are distorted and routes misplaced. Although Lynch's initial project was an attempt to show planners and architects how to design legible cities, it was to inspire a legion of studies which attempted to see how people thought about and acted in their cities, particularly in relation to topics such as spatial way-finding, navigation and cognitive distance estimation (see Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Yet it also suggested there might be possibilities for strengthening urban models by including variables that accounted for the variability and irrationality of much human behaviour. For instance, models such as Alonso's were based on ideas that householders possessed perfect knowledge of the actual land rent structure in a city, choosing a location that maximises their utility subject to their budgetary constraints; behavioural studies suggested this perfect knowledge was simply not present, and that suboptimal location decisions were the norm.

A strand of empirical work thus emerged which eschewed analysis of objective indicators in favour of exploration of people's subjective understanding of the city and its land markets. In many cases, this involved an attempt to incorporate people's decision-making processes into urban models, rejecting utility theory in favour of a more nuanced account of people's preferences as revealed through questionnaires. Such studies demonstrated that housing choice could not be regarded as rational, and the process of searching for and evaluating housing is unsystematic and normally based on imperfect information. In other studies, housing preferences were merely inferred from actual behaviour, with data on tenure choices and commuting patterns used to construct models based on random utility theory or entropy maximisation (Thrift 1980). Work on people's urban activity spaces and travel behaviour also encouraged experimentation with computer simulation, gaming approaches and fuzzy set theory, each of which provided the promise of recognising the contradictory and ambiguous nature of urban decision-making. Although such models still aimed to simplify the messiness of urban life through quantification and data reduction, their focus on the

spatial preferences and behaviours of individuals provided an important rejoinder to those who suggested that urban modelling abstracted individuals 'out of existence'.

In these different ways, urban geographers began to flesh out the internal dynamics of the city and consider the impacts of human spatial behaviour on the urban landscape. Yet at the same time, geographers were also interested in the external relations of cities, borrowing from the central place theories emerging in economic geography (via Walter Christaller). Generalisations of these studies linked with formal models to suggest that intercity relations were organised as national urban systems forming urban hierarchies in which smaller cities had lower-level urban functions. The two sides of this urbanism were famously brought together by Berry (1964) in his account of 'cities as systems within systems of cities'. But no sooner had this neat arrangement been codified and widely disseminated through urban geography textbooks than both urban patterns began to alter: processes of deindustrialisation recast the relationship between the city and its suburbs, while processes of economic globalisation meant that intercity relations fundamentally changed. Further, by the 1970s there were other currents in human geography that were leading some to question the relevance of abstract empiricism; namely, the sustained challenge of Marxist and radical ideas.

MARXISM: A RADICAL INTERVENTION

Although it would be wrong to suggest that the 'ecological model' was atheoretical (Knox and Pinch 2001: 216), its brand of abstracted empiricism came under sustained critique in the 1970s as theories which emphasised social conflict in the city came to the fore. Crucial here were new forms of urban analysis which, conversely, borrowed from the long-standing sociological perspectives of Weberian and Marxist theory (Castells 1977; Harloe 1977; Pahl 1977; Saunders 1981). In relation to the former, Weber's ideas about key individuals influencing the distribution of social goods were to prove significant in the development of *urban managerialism*, a perspective which explored how key social actors controlled urban assets and land markets. Such actors included housing managers, planners, estate agents, mortgage lenders, financiers, police, councillors and architects. Collectively and individually, it was argued these actors could deny certain social groups access to particular property

markets (and hence, particular parts of the city). Famously, Rex and Moore (1974) demonstrated that these actors often sustained racial divides in the city by steering non-white groups to particular areas (so that, for example, estate agents could encourage certain social groups to locate in some areas, while council workers might 'dump' ethnic minorities in certain hard-to-let housing estates). These descriptions of institutionalised racism and discrimination highlighted the forms of social inequality that were writ large in the urban landscape, and dispelled any notion that housing and land markets were in any way open to free competition (contradicting many positivist urban models).

This focus on the role of managers in influencing the distribution of urban resources was to prove pivotal in the emergence of a 'new urban sociology'. In the first edition of the acclaimed *Whose City?*, Pahl (1970) concluded

a truly urban sociology should be concerned with the social and spatial constraints on access to scarce urban resources and facilities as dependent variables and managers or controllers of the urban system, which I take as the independent variable.

(Pahl 1970: 221)

The new urban sociology was thus concerned with questions of conflict and injustice, poverty and racism, issues that appeared to have been neglected in previous studies. Here, it is important to acknowledge the political and social changes that were occurring at this time: 1968 had witnessed student riots in Paris, there was a growing awareness of sexism throughout the West, and homophobia and incidences of racial intimidation and violence were widespread. Against this backdrop, many commentators began to question the relevance of spatial science to urban social problems (e.g. Harvey 1973; D.M. Smith 1975). For these writers, urban studies at the time appeared to be populated by practitioners who were constructing models and theories in splendid ignorance of the problems of those living in the world beyond the 'ivory towers' of academia. Ironically, it was one of the most forthright proponents of quantitative geography – David Harvey – who now sought to propose a radical Marxist geography. In his oft-cited words:

There is a clear disparity between the sophisticated theoretical and methodological frameworks which we have developed and our ability

to say anything really meaningful about events as they unfold around us . . . There is an ecological problem, an urban problem, a debt problem, yet we seem incapable of saying anything in depth or profundity about any of them.

(Harvey 1973: 129)

In this regard, the change in the theoretical orientation of urban studies stemmed from the general disillusion among urban scholars concerning the inability of dominant approaches to give a satisfactory explanation for the forms of inequality occurring in cities.

The urban sociology that emerged in this period accordingly made great play of its social commitment. Accordingly, Milicevic (2001) describes the characteristics of the new urban sociology as being its criticism of existing urban sociology and reinterpretation of concepts like urban, urbanism and urbanisation; its emphasis on relationships of production, consumption, distribution, exchange and power; its designation of social conflict and change as issues of special importance; and its concern with patterns of exclusion and inequality. While some of those working in the positivist tradition shared some of these concerns, there were sharp differences in terms of the relationships that 'new' urban sociologists forged with urban policy-makers. Previously, it had often been imagined that the role of researchers was to provide policy-makers with useful information – a position regarded with suspicion by those who now regarded institutions such as planning authorities and housing agencies as major factors in the production and reproduction of social problems. As such, the new urban sociology adopted a more confrontational stance to those in authority (and many of its practitioners were active in organising grassroots activity and protest).

In sum, urban managerialism dismissed positivist urban scholarship as theoretically barren and politically acquiescent. By exploring the role of key gatekeepers in allocating resources, managerialism highlighted some of the distinctive forms of social conflict played out in the urban realm. Yet managerialism was shortly to be overshadowed by a more fundamental form of critique – that of *Marxist urbanism* (see Box 1.2). At the heart of Marxist theory is the idea that society is structured by transformations in the political economy, and is organised so as to reproduce specific modes of production (such as feudalism, capitalism or socialism). Most significant in the context of urban writing is the capitalist mode of

Box 1.2 MARXIST URBANISM

Karl Marx remains one of the most widely discussed and written-about figures in academia over 150 years since his major works – the unfinished volumes of *Das Kapital*, *The Communist Manifesto* and *Grundrisse* ('Outline of a Critique of Political Economy') – were published. For some urbanists, his ideas remain inspirational, offering both an accurate description of the processes that drive capitalist cities and a set of prescriptions for the injustices and inequalities associated with that city. For others, he serves as a 'straw man' whose thinking on political change failed to predict the injustices that could be served in the name of socialist progress and class revolution (as witnessed, for example, in Stalinist Russia) and whose major legacy is to have perpetuated a dogmatic and inflexible way of thinking about social life. It is difficult to reject either set of arguments; Marx's ideas were a product of their times and his emphasis on class relations was an obvious response to the changes occurring in industrialised capitalist cities (particularly Britain) in the nineteenth century. Yet the idea that the organisation of space is fundamental in the reproduction of labour power (and hence capitalism) provided a distinctive take on the city – one developed by subsequent generations of urban researchers (notably Lefebvre, Berman, Castells, Harvey and Debord – see Merrifield 2002). What is perhaps most interesting about Marx's ideas is that, over 150 years after first being formulated, they still provide a framework for analysing social process. Above all else, it is the failure of Marx's classless 'self-determined' society to have materialised that actually inspires many social scientists to continue to explore his ideas. In relation to urban studies, this is evident in the work of those who have explored the role of the city in reconciling and diffusing the contradictions of capitalism: to paraphrase Lefebvre (1991), we do not know why capitalism continues to survive, but we know how – by *occupying place* and *producing space*. Marx's legacy for urban studies is his insistence on a structural reading of society and his careful articulation of capitalist process; even in the present, when the reductionism

continued

of his ideas is derided by many, questions of capital and class remain prominent in radical and critical geographical writing on the city.

Further reading: Harvey (1982); Castree (1999); Blunt and Wills (2000)

production, which, according to Karl Marx, first developed when labour itself became a commodity (i.e. when peasants became free to sell their capacity to work). In return for selling their labour power, such labourers received money which allowed them to survive. Marx described those who sell their labour power to live as *proletarians*. Conversely, the person who buys labour power (and typically owns the land and technology required to produce goods) was described as a member of the *bourgeois*. Marx's ideas – primarily developed in the context of nineteenth-century industrialisation – suggested that the bourgeois class took advantage of the difference between the price of the labour required to produce commodities and the value they could obtain in the marketplace. Here, Marx observed that in practically every successful industry the price for labour was lower than the price of the manufactured good (its 'exchange value'). Marx termed this difference 'surplus value' and argued that this surplus acted as the source of a capitalist's profit. One important side-effect is that social relationships between people are reconstituted as relationships between things, with people obliged to become consumers and purchase products they and others have made in the workplace. Given that exchange values have supplanted 'use' values over time, he argued it would be inevitable that workers become alienated or estranged from the products of their labour, with spatial and social division between production and consumption resulting.

In Marx's account, the capitalist mode of production is capable of tremendous growth because the bourgeoisie can reinvest profits in new technologies and produce new commodities. But Marx believed that capitalism was prone to periodic crises, such as technological obsolescence, over-production and falling demand for commodities. Consequently, he suggested that over time, capitalists would invest more and more in new technologies, and less in labour. Since Marx believed that surplus value appropriated from labour is the source of profits, he concluded that the rate

of profit would fall even as the economy grew. When the rate of profit falls below a certain point, the result would be a recession in which the economy would collapse. Marx believed that this cycle of growth, collapse and growth would be punctuated by increasingly severe crises (ultimately fuelling class revolt).

Although Marx said little explicitly about cities, he did acknowledge the importance of space in overcoming these periodic crises and averting economic meltdown. Famously, he recognised that the 'annihilation of space by time' was fundamental in allowing capitalists to exploit new markets and populations. One facet of this was the growth of cities themselves, with Marx referring to towns both as concentrations of population and 'instruments of production'. Bringing workers together into pliant pools of exploitable labour, cities also provided a ready market for new commodities. But while increasing city size had advantages for the capitalist classes, Marx alleged that it resulted in the increased impoverishment of the proletariat:

The more rapidly capital accumulates in an industrial town . . . the more miserable and impoverished are the dwellings of the workers . . . improvements of towns, such as the demolition of badly built districts, the widening of city streets, the erections of palaces to house banks or warehouses obviously drive the poor into even worse and more crowded corners.

(Marx 1867: 65)

Yet it was Marx's colleague, Friedrich Engels (1844), who provided a clearer statement of the connections between city life and capitalism in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*. This offered a damning indictment of the industrial capitalist city, based on his experiences in Manchester:

If any one wishes to see in how little space a human being can move, how little air – and *such* air! – he can breathe, how little of civilisation he may share and yet live, it is only necessary to travel hither. True, this is the *Old Town*, and the people of Manchester emphasise the fact whenever any one mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth; but what does that prove? Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*.

(Engels 1844: 67)

Elaborating on the dialectic of industrialisation and urbanisation, Engels suggested that industry needed pools of dispensable labour to call on or cast off, and that the dense concentration of the working classes in areas of abject housing was the corollary of capitalist endeavour. He was also fiercely critical of urban renewal programmes where capitalists sought to improve working-class housing – dismissing these as attempts to keep housing problems in check, but not solving the housing problem. As such, Engels did not see a ‘housing solution’, and argued that only the end of capitalism would improve the condition of the working class.

In the work of Marx and Engels, dialectical thinking was therefore used to identify the forms of contradiction and tension in capitalist societies that needed to be resolved by transformations and adjustments to the mode of production. For instance, coming to recognise the fact that exploitation of labour power by the capitalist classes threatened to instigate class revolt, Marx wrote of the perpetual modernisation and agitation employed by the bourgeoisie to ensure that the relations of production were maintained. In modern, capitalist societies where ‘all that is solid melts into air’, Marx thus argued that new forms of socio-spatial relation were being constantly brought into being, reproducing capitalism (see also Berman 1983). Yet despite providing an intuitively attractive framework for exploring urban transformation, Marxist ideas remained largely unexplored by geographers and urbanists until the 1970s, when the search for more socially relevant knowledge and approaches alighted on Marxist theories. In effect, Marxism provided a revolutionary urban theory for revolutionary times, shifting the focus of urban studies from quasi-biological metaphors and mathematical models of urban process to analysis of the political and economic underpinnings of the urban system.

Inspired by Marx, Engels and others in the ‘Marxist’ canon (notably Althusser), urban scholars thus embarked on a new era of urban exploration in which the city was deemed to be a vital ingredient in a wider story of class conflict and ideological control. In the writing of those geographers and urban theorists who most directly engaged with Marxist theory – notably, David Harvey and Manuel Castells – this type of reasoning was transformed into explications of the role of space in this process of legitimisation and crisis avoidance. Simply put, these writers emphasised the importance of capitalism’s *spatial fix* – the way that spatial differentiation and de-differentiation were implicated in capitalist relations. Allied with this focus was a renewed interest in the role of social agency. Initially, this

was apparent in a number of studies of urban class consciousness, but latterly this bequeathed explorations of the role of the urban landscape in ideologically legitimising and celebrating the capitalist system (Debord 1967) (see also Chapter 2 on the ‘duplicity’ of landscape).

Perhaps the most significant proponent of Marxism in the new urban sociology was Manuel Castells. In *The Urban Question*, Castells (1977) extended Marxist perspectives on the city by exploring the dual role of the city both as a unit of production and a locus of social reproduction. The means whereby such reproduction was realised, he proposed, was consumption – the individual private consumption of food, clothing, as well as the collective consumption of such items as housing and hospitals, social services, schools, leisure facilities and so on. The implication here was that cities were organised so that the state (allied with capitalists) could provide the collective facilities needed to reproduce and maintain a flexible, educated and healthy workforce at least cost. This included the provision of state-subsidised housing (council housing), often organised in neighbourhood units centred on shops, community centres, doctors’ surgeries and other communal facilities. This perspective stressed that the spatial form of the city was implicated in a number of significant ways in the reproduction of capitalism. For Castells, this reinforced the idea that ‘spatial transformation must be understood in the broader context of social transformation: space does not reflect society, it expresses it, it is a fundamental dimension of society’ (Castells 2000: 393). Castells was thus scathing of those commentators who seemingly ‘fetichised’ the urban, bequeathing it a distinct ecology that was somehow independent of capitalist structures. Developing this point, he outlined the need for a structural reading of the city:

It is a question of going beyond the description of mechanisms of interactions between activities and locations, in order to discover the structural laws of the production and functioning of the spatial forms studied . . . There is no specific theory of space, but quite simply a deployment and specification of the theory of social structure, in order to account for the characteristics of the particular social form, space, and its articulation with other historically given, forms and processes.

(Castells 1977: 124)

This structural solution to the ‘urban question’ thus offered a valuable corrective to the notions of human agency widely evident in urban studies

at this time, whereby urban spaces were seen to be shaped by the knowledge and action of those who inhabited them. Yet, in offering this corrective, Castells seemingly went to the other extreme: space simply became a reflection of social process (hence, his surprising claim that 'space, like time, is a physical quantity that tells us nothing about social relations' – Castells 1977: 442). This is mirrored in Castells' definition of the city as 'a residential unit of labour power, a unit of collective consumption corresponding "more or less" to the daily organization of a section of labour power' (Castells 1977: 148). In this sense, the city was interpreted as the outcome of the state's provision of collective means of consuming commodities, something Castells felt could not be assured by capital but was nonetheless essential to the reproduction of capital.

In effect, Castells' radical take on the urban question shook up urban studies through its insistence that the social processes resulting in the production of the city were not distinctly urban, but endemic to capitalist society. This perspective was to be elaborated and extended by subsequent commentators, including David Harvey, whose various works provided a sustained and critical engagement with Marx's oeuvre. Identifying urban space as an *active moment* – a unit of capital accumulation as well as a site of class struggle – Harvey (1982) focused on the idea that surplus profit can be used to make more goods for short-term gain (primary circuit) or invested in property (secondary circuit) for longer-term gain, suggesting that in times of economic slump, profits could be most usefully ploughed into property – often triggering major urban renewal. This provided a different take on the urbanisation of capital, stressing the role of the built environment as a source of profit and loss:

Under capitalism there is a perpetual struggle in which capital builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it, usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent point in time. The temporal and geographical ebb and flow of investment in the built environment can be understood only in the terms of such a process. The effects of the internal contradictions of capitalism, when projected into the specific context of fixed and immobile investment in the built environment, are thus writ large in the historical geography of the landscape that results.

(Harvey 1973: 124)

Harvey thus characterised the urban landscape as subject to contradictory impulses of investment and disinvestment, noting there is also an imperative to segregate upper-class and working-class residential areas to suppress working-class agitation. This segregation simultaneously created an urban landscape characterised by high and low land values. In particular, the association of specific areas with the 'underclass' drove down land prices in those locales, meaning that subsequent development could realise the difference between actual ground rent and the potential rent offered by that site (the so-called 'rent gap' – N. Smith 1979). Uneven development was accordingly theorised by Harvey as a crucial means by which capitalism could create for itself new opportunities for capitalist accumulation.

Harvey worked these ideas through in a series of celebrated accounts of nineteenth-century Parisian modernisation (summarised in Harvey 2003). Others focused on more contemporary processes of suburbanisation and urban restructuring. For instance, Allen Scott (1980) explored the *urban land nexus* in southern California, noting the differential locational advantages associated with different sites. In Scott's account, urban processes were conceived (*à la* Harvey) as involving the resolution of conflicts between capital and labour. Here, the local state was identified as significant, assisting capital accumulation through the provision of welfare and subsidies to business. Emphasising the importance of capitalist enterprises, Scott argued that urban development was a function of changing 'capital to labour' ratios among firms as they modified their production methods to maximise profits. One dominant trend (in southern California, at least) was the increased decentralisation of firms from the urban core – a movement enabled by technological and communication innovations. These changes in location of production space encouraged suburbanisation as households sought suburban locations closer to employment centres. It was here that the role of the state in assuaging the contradictions of capitalism was deemed crucial. In effect, the state became involved in 'unravelling the spatial knots' which this process of suburbanisation created, especially in relation to the provision of housing and transport infrastructure. As part of the state apparatus, urban planners were regarded as 'bees in the capitalist hive', working ceaselessly to create cities that functioned as spaces of capital accumulation. Cooke (1983: 145) hence concluded that 'planning performs its main functions by solving land use dilemmas . . . and smoothing the dynamics of land development'. The work of Scott (Scott 1988; Scott and Storper 1992) thus opened up

another avenue of Marxist urbanism – one attempting to integrate planning and urban theory to analyse the role of planners in resolving conflicts between capital and labour by intervening in land markets (see P. Clarke 1989).

Marxist perspectives have consequently deployed to great effect in explorations of urban land use and segregation. Notably, theories of uneven development have provided the basis for exploring phenomena of 'block-busting' and gentrification, with the devaluation and subsequent redevelopment of specific urban tracts seen as a key means by which capital seeks the most profitable locations for its realisation (N. Smith 1979). But Marxist perspectives also provided a way of thinking through the evolution of the urban system (notably, the changing relations between cities) as well as exploring the importance of the state in the regulation of capital/labour conflicts at scales varying from the household to the urban region. In the context of this chapter, it is impossible to do justice to the rich diversity of Marxist urbanism. However, it is probably fair to suggest that all urban theory inspired by Marx rests on the idea that urban development can be understood only in relation to the 'bedrock' of capitalism. In short, capitalism is seen as the root of all urban problems, and provides the inevitable answer to the 'urban question'.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM, POSTMODERNISM AND 'OTHER' THEORIES OF THE CITY

Managerial and Marxist perspectives on city life are widely acknowledged as having rejuvenated and reawakened urban studies, and inspiring a fertile cross-disciplinary dialogue on city life. Yet such radical ideas were never subscribed to by all, and it is probably fair to say that the majority of urban researchers continued to work within positivistic traditions which prioritised agency over structure. Some of these urban researchers were openly critical of Marxism, suggesting that it was less of an explanatory theory and more of a political dogma. Yet some of the fiercest criticisms of Marxist urbanism were to emanate from those who sought to work with Marxist theories but ultimately found them too rigid to account for the range of differences and diversity characteristic of city life. For instance, while feminist critiques predated much of the work carried out in the name of Marxist urbanism, the radicalism of both encouraged a fecund dialogue between feminist and Marxist scholars. However, the diversity of feminist

positions meant that while some feminist scholars felt gendered inequalities could be adequately explained within the plenary geography of capitalism, others were less convinced of the merits of a Marxist approach (see Walby 1997). In this sense, many feminist scholars concluded the experiences of women in the city are connected in important ways to their allotted place in the capitalist workforce (with the feminisation of particular economic sectors having important implications for women's mobility and visibility). Yet the primacy of capitalist work in shaping gender inequalities was questioned by others, who felt tales of class oppression deflected attention from crucial issues of sexism and gender domination in other social spheres (G. Pratt 1991; Valentine 1997). For some, the fact that gender inequalities seemed to be present in cities prior to the emergence of capitalism suggested that *patriarchy* (the system by which male values dominate female ones) needed to be considered as significant in its own right, albeit 'inextricably interwoven' with class, race and other axes of inequality (Bondi and Christie 2002: 293).

One implication – that both class and gender are significant in determining people's spatial freedom and mobility – indicates the limitations of Marxist perspectives which begin from the assumption that the social landscape of the city can be explained solely in terms of class. Yet another critique of Marxist urbanism emanated from arguing for postcolonial perspectives. Narrowly defined, postcolonial refers to the peoples and nations who have lived through processes of formal decolonisation, yet it has also come to denote a more wide-ranging understanding that we live in a world where knowledge forged in imperial times can no longer be regarded as appropriate (Sidaway 2000). In general terms, postcolonialism has emerged as a multidimensional critique of the hegemony of Western geographical imaginations, particularly those which divide the world into West and East and ascribe overarching characteristics to specific regions according to this duality. The work of Edward Said is often cited as a keystone of postcolonial studies given that it challenged mainstream Western imaginations of the Orient, and staked a major case for the construction of indigenous geographical knowledges. Yet the postcolonial critique is also relevant to other geographical scales, stressing that questions of race, ethnicity and power are important even in spaces which were never subject to colonial control. For example, it is possible to argue that cities like London, Paris and Berlin can be understood as postcolonial, in the sense that they are former imperial cities which are now home to

varied diasporic communities and where relationships between different ethnic groups continue to be shaped by the ideologies and imaginations of Empire in one way or another (King 2004).

The relationship between the colonial and postcolonial is a complex one, emphasising the importance of exploring the specificity of the ideological forces shaping urban space. One important implication here is that the language and concepts used to describe certain Western cities (such as Chicago) cannot be regarded as appropriate for describing those cities beyond the West; it also implies that these may be inadequate for describing the diversity of cities within the West given their varied roles in geographies of imperialism and Empire. The idea that cities are more varied and diverse than the theories that geographers make is thus an important one, and suggests our understanding of cities needs to be informed by considering different cities in different contexts (Robinson 2002). This is clearly tied into ideas of urbanisation and globalisation which suggest that it is vital to pay attention to the flows and processes that shape cities throughout the world – not least in those non-Western cities which have tended to attract less interest within a scholarly literature more fixated on the cities of the West (Marston and Manning 2005; see also Chapter 5).

Feminism and postcolonial theories have thus become increasingly significant in human geography, as have other theoretical frameworks (e.g. queer theory, subaltern theory – see Hubbard et al. 2002) which emphasise questions of difference as they are played out in the identity politics of city life. In distinct ways, each rejects the certainties of Marxist structural and class-based analysis in favour of theories sensitive to other forms of difference. This openness to the world, and the idea that other forces bar capitalism are in play, is also a defining characteristic of post-structural thinking. Though difficult to define, post-structuralism's emphasis on questions of language, representation and power points to a different way of understanding the production of space, involving the entwining of immaterial and material forces (see Chapter 2). Notably, many of the key proponents of post-structural thought – Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Irigaray, Baudrillard – explicitly critiqued Marxist thought and sought to develop alternatives more flexible and open to the messiness of life. Foucault in particular developed a critique which destabilised the authority of the scholar, and posed important questions about the power of disciplinary (and disciplined) accounts of the social world. Critical of the totalising discourse characteristic of social science,

Foucault argued for the recovery of subjugated knowledges ('those that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy' – Foucault 1980: 82). In the wake of such Foucauldian critique, it has been difficult for researchers to argue that they have a privileged gaze, or to essentialise difference in the name of generalisation.

Widely cited in urban studies, the rise of post-structural thought has (directly or otherwise) encouraged urbanists to develop accounts of city life somewhat at odds with Marxist ones (and, for that matter, the neat models of urban ecology). Chief here has been a concern to move beyond totalising theories and embracing the richness of the local and the particular. By way of example, we might briefly consider the issue of gentrification – the phenomena of working-class populations being displaced from inner city districts as housing areas are appropriated and redeveloped by the more affluent. Marxist perspectives, and most notably the rent gap thesis proposed by Neil Smith (1979), indicated that gentrification represented the movement of capital back to the city, suggesting that the gap between actual ground rent and potential ground rent in such areas provided the incentive for capital investment in inner city areas. In turn, this could be seen to be related to phases of economic growth and decline, with investors engaging in property development when other areas of the economy appeared sluggish. In contradistinction, other commentators considered the increased demand for inner city living among diverse social factions as the key driver of gentrification. In the work of David Ley (1996), for instance, it is the aesthetic disposition of particular actors – especially artists – that is described as encouraging this valorisation of 'mundane' and run-down areas. Though lacking economic wealth, this group is regarded as rich in what Bourdieu terms 'cultural capital', prompting other groups to cluster around these artistic communities. For Ley (2003), this points to the intersection of economy and culture, and the limitations of explanations which seek monocausal explanation.

Hence, the pre-professional, creative middle class have been identified as especially significant in processes of gentrification (van Wesep 1994; Ley 2003). Yet there are other factions who have been identified as important, not least female-headed households and single women in paid employment (Bondi 1991; Mills 1993). In many instances, gentrifying households are dual income couples who have remained childless for personal or career reasons, with gay and lesbian groups often depicted as

instrumental in creating geographies of gentrification (Lauria and Knopp 1985). In each case, it has been suggested that these sections of society have cultural interests and housing demands which can be satisfied by city centre living. For example, many gentrifiers work in business or creative industries in the central city and have long or irregular hours and want to live close to work and the cultural and entertainment facilities offered by the city centre (Hamnett 1991). In part, the attraction of living in the inner city for such groups is also that they feel part of the creative life and 'buzz' of city life, and are participants in putative 'urban renaissance' (see Chapter 6). For instance, Butler's (2003) research suggested that a principal attraction of living in some central neighbourhoods in London is their 'metropolitan habitus': the cosmopolitan and cultured outlook that unites gentrifiers in an 'imagined community' of like-minded individuals. Distinctions of Self/Other may also be worked through in the midst of such processes, encouraging those who can afford to do so to distance themselves from populations which they regard as threatening because of their apparent difference (Sibley 1995).

In such ways, the gentrification literature suggests that gentrifiers are attracted to the central city for a number of reasons, and that although economic structures are important, varied questions of lifestyle and identity may be equally or even more significant. This type of conclusion demonstrates the limitations of Marxist perspectives which tended to view social and cultural processes as mere side-effects of capitalism. Caricaturing the work of Marxist theorists (such as Harvey), Barnes (2005: 67) argues that culture was frequently reduced to an epiphenomenon, 'sloughed off' as not essential to understand the 'real' business of the urban economy. Yet a widespread attempt to rethink the relationship between economy and culture, and to recognise that the lines between culture and economy are not so sharply drawn, impelled many dyed-in-the-wool Marxist geographers to reconsider the importance of cultural values and practices as constituents of political and economic life. This realisation, when coupled with the insights of post-structural philosophy, was to be a major factor encouraging urbanists to develop accounts of the city more attuned to cultural difference and diversity (see also Chapter 2 on the 'cultural turn').

Yet there was a perhaps more significant reason that many urbanists began to turn away from class-fixated Marxist theories. Simply stated, by the late 1970s the industrial city had mutated into a very different species,

and theories evolved in the context of industrial cities no longer appeared to hold. One significant observation here is that many Western cities were decentring. New office complexes, science parks, retail malls and leisure parks were springing up around the periphery of most cities, while a rash of gated communities (privatopias) produced new residential foci. In some instances, this peripheral urban development created new urban centres or cores which effectively become *edge cities* (a term originally coined by Joel Garreau 1991). This decanting of residential, leisure and workspace to the periphery of Western cities has been a widely noted phenomenon, and while this tendency has been tempered in much of Europe by planning controls, peripheral development has taken extreme forms in the United States, often accompanied by wholesale disinvestment in the central city. This leads to the so-called 'doughnut syndrome', where the majority of the city's job creation and consumer spending is located not in the centre, but at the edge: the city literally turns 'inside out'. In the metropolitan region of Dallas/Fort Worth, for example, the core of the region accounts for only 10 per cent of the jobs: the majority are in new growth corridors and urban 'centres' dotted along interstate highways (W.A.V. Clarke 2002).

For such reasons, the post-industrial city has often been described as a *centreless* urban form. This decentring appears to be connected to important changes in the economy of cities, with the economies of scale which were important in the context of 'Fordist' mass production giving way to 'post-Fordist' economies of scope. In simple terms, this meant that large, inflexible businesses sought to retain their profitability by becoming leaner and more flexible. In part, this was achieved by firms outsourcing certain stages of production through subcontracting. In practice, this meant that firms and businesses were seeking to move out of older industrial districts to more specialised 'flexible production districts' where firms benefited from proximity to subcontractors and firms in related industries (A. Scott 1988). Given these districts could be quite specialised (as in the crafts and furniture production that predominated in the Third Italy region), there was little requirement for these districts to remain in accessible urban cores: on the contrary, many of these districts decentred, locating adjacent to the neighbourhoods from where most of their knowledge-rich workers originated.

But while many commentators have emphasised that the post-industrial city is characterised by new types of industrial space, what is perhaps most

significant about post-industrial cities is that they are organised around consumption rather than production (Zukin 1998). Manifest in a plethora of spaces of mainstream and alternative consumption (malls, multiplexes, cafes, festival marketplaces, nightclubs, super-casinos, heritage parks, museums), the implication is that the post-industrial city is subject to a new logic of social control in which individuals were divided into consumers (the 'seduced') and non-consumers (the 'repressed') rather than workers and the unemployed (D.B. Clarke 2003). Herein, consumers' need for commodities has seemingly been replaced by desire: a desire that cannot be sated, only fuelled. According to Bauman (2001), consumer wants have been wrenched out of the grip of needs, with seduction and temptation stimulating capricious and conspicuous consumption. Yet this is a process replete with contradiction: in an era of rampant job insecurity and global risk, consumption promises security, but fuels that very insecurity:

Seeking security through consumer choices is itself a prolific and inexhaustible source of insecurity. Finding one's way amidst the deafening cacophony of peddlers' voices and the blinding medley of wares that confuse and defy sober reflection is a mind-boggling and nerve-wracking task. It is all too easy to be lost, even easier to make costly mistakes . . . I have no way to say whether the blouses hawked and huckstered this summer are smart and flattering or downright ridiculous, uglier than the blouses in the next shop. But . . . this is not really my business – I am not to be blamed for wearing one; there is a designer/brand label on my neck or the designer/brand logo on my chest for everyone to see and shut up . . . Designers breathe supreme and absolute authority. There is no point in contesting that authority, but a lot of sense in hiding behind it. And there is the 'return to shop if not fully satisfied' promise, the 'money back' guarantee.

(Bauman, cited in Rojek 2005: 303)

We thus allow ourselves to be seduced into the consumer fantasy that we can buy security and freedom, irrespective of the fact that there are always new brands, commodities and ideas to buy. The design and appearance of consumer spaces belies this contradictory logic, with enchanting and seductive architectures encouraging a playful form of consumerism that promises security and satisfaction, but leaves our

desire unsated. Significantly, consumer spaces often trade on the notion of individuality and the myth that the desires of different groups can be accommodated via practices of mass consumption. As such, consumer architectures often celebrate minority cultures, and may be themed around specific ethnicised identities (e.g. Banglatown and Chinatown in London). Yet at the same time, surveillance is ever present in these settings, excluding troublesome non-consumers and the credit-poor from the leisured consumption spaces which pockmark the post-industrial city and act as its chief loci of economic growth. For the excluded, the city appears an ever-more repressive and violent space, offering fewer and fewer public spaces of democratic social interaction (M. Davis 1990). Indeed, it has been widely noted that the presence of non-consumers in many public spaces triggers panic and fuels Zero Tolerance policing, with the homeless, prostitutes, drug-dealers, itinerant traders and youths all having been subject to policing which circumscribes their spatial freedom (Sibley 2001) (see also Chapter 3).

In sum, the post-industrial city is regarded as a more flexible, complex and divided city than its predecessor, with the ordered and production-based logic of the industrial era giving way to a more invidious mode of social control based on one's role as consumer-citizen. The result is a patchwork city of different ethnic enclaves, consumer niches and taste communities, spun out across a decentred landscape where the boundaries between city and country are hard to discern. Given this, a rash of new terms emerged to describe the post-industrial city and its attendant spatial forms: the splintered city, the edgeless city, the urban galaxy, the spread city and so on (Taylor and Lang 2004). But above all else, this form of city became identified as *postmodern* (see Box 1.3).

Taking on board a range of ideas about the triumph of consumerism over production in Western societies, theories of the postmodern city imply that it not only looks different from its predecessors, but also it works according to different 'logics'. This has impelled several Marxist urbanists (most notably Harvey and Soja) to revisit their ideas of urban political economy. For example, Harvey (1989b) takes Los Angeles to be symptomatic of contemporary urbanism as it is a city in which there is a plethora of cultural signs and images which come together to form a melange within which there seems to be no overall order. However, Harvey suggests that this is largely an outcome of a new form of capitalism which he has termed 'flexible capitalism'. Harvey makes this claim on the basis that he can discern

Box 1.3 THE POSTMODERN CITY

Although postmodernism is a term used in a number of diffuse and complex ways, it is principally used by urban geographers to describe the type of Western city emerging in the late twentieth century in response to a complex range of economic, social and political restructurings. Soja (1989) gave a flavour of these changing urban geographies in his book *Postmodern Geographies*, which presented Los Angeles as the quintessential postmodern city. His description of the diversity of downtown LA gave some initial indications as to the new forms of demarcation emerging in the city:

There is a dazzling array of sites in this compartmentalised corona of the inner city: the Vietnamese shops and Hong Kong housing of a redeveloping Chinatown; the Big Tokyo financed modernisation; the induced pseudo-SoHo of artist's lofts and galleries . . . the strangely anachronistic wholesale markets . . . the capital of urban homelessness in the Skid Row district; the enormous muralled barrio stretching eastwards toward East Los Angeles . . . the intentionally yuppifying South Park redevelopment zone hard by the slightly seedy Convention Center, the revenue-milked towers and fortresses of Bunker Hill.

(Soja 1989: 239–240)

What Soja described was a new type of city permeated by divisions and fractures which could not even have been guessed at by the members of the Chicago School, let alone in Marx and Engels' day. Soja's focus on LA is significant as it has become the 'ur-city' of postmodern urban theory, spoken of variously as 'a prototype of our urban future' (Dear 2002: 10), 'a polyglot, polycentric, poly-cultural city' (Dear and Flusty 1998: 52) and 'one of the most dramatic and concentrated expressions of the perplexing theoretical and practical urban issues that have arisen at the end of the twentieth century' (Scott and Soja 1996: viii) (cited in Brenner

1999). LA has thus served as the basis of a plethora of models of the postmodern city, with a putative LA School emerging among those urbanists and geographers who have been most influential in developing theories of postmodernity. What is particularly interesting about the LA School is their almost uniform pessimism and identification of LA as teetering on the verge of dystopian meltdown. In particular, Mike Davis (1990) has emerged as a widely heralded spokesman on the death of cities, his ideas of urban life being undermined by ecological disaster, terrorism, inequality and dysfunction informed by his own reading of Los Angeles' dystopian landscapes.

Key reference: Soja (1989)

close similarities in the way the postmodern city is produced and the way capitalism works: 'I see no difference in principle between the vast range of speculative and . . . unpredictable activities undertaken by entrepreneurs . . . and the equally speculative development of cultural, political, legal and ideological values' (Harvey 1989b: 344). Related to this, he has argued that much of the postmodern city appears to be produced by and for institutions which are clearly capitalist in nature (multinational architectural firms, property-developers and financial institutions).

Rather than being an imposition of different cultural values and desires on the city (a postmodernism of *resistance*), Harvey depicts changes in the urban landscape as driven by big businesses which manipulate tastes to create profitable urban landscapes (a *reactionary* postmodernism). As Cloke et al. (1991: 182) note, Harvey suggests that the practices of 'pastiche' employed in postmodern art and architecture might be regarded as 'nothing more than an extreme manifestation of the relentless and structurally determined quest for new and unusual commodities to sell'. In an era in which sites of consumption are increasingly rationalised settings, it is argued that the postmodern theming of places is a means of 're-enchantment' – replacing the impersonality and instrumentalism of consumption (Ritzer 1999). The spectacular form of many postmodern enclaves and spaces is thus significant, with Harvey suggesting that postmodern design acts to cover over some of the problematic practices of capitalism (see Plate 1.2).

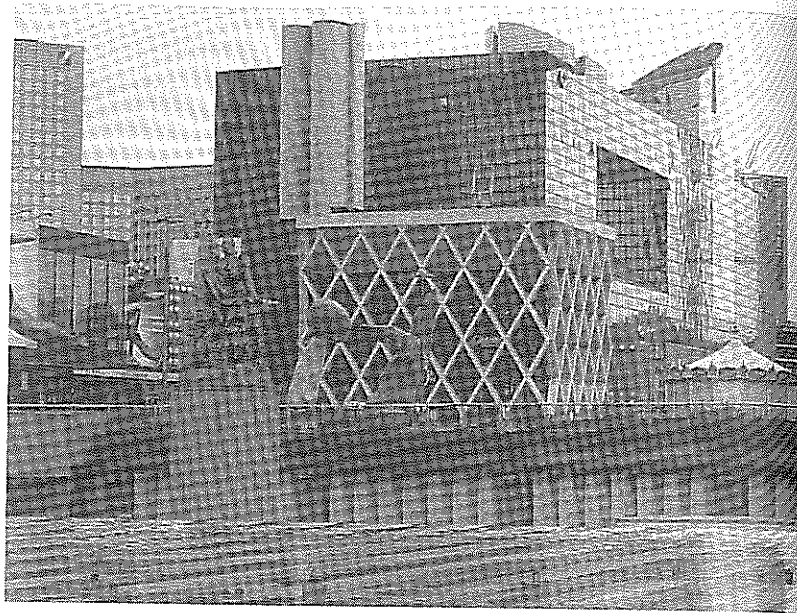


Plate 1.2 Postmodern urban forms: a complex, playful architecture of surface and seduction (La Defense, Paris) (photo: author)

Harvey also argues that the postmodern city is designed to mystify people by making things appear more exciting, more individual, more open, more human scaled and yet still house corporate, multinational firms which carry on their practices as before.

Harvey's distinctive interpretation of the postmodern city was enthusiastically greeted in many quarters, and, read alongside Soja's (1989) *Postmodern Geographies* and Jameson's (1984) essays on postmodern art, suggested an important link between the logics of capitalism and the emergence of a new type of city. Yet this interpretation was also subject to critique, attacked for being insufficiently postmodern in approach. Dear (2000: 76), for example, claims that both Harvey and Soja established 'profoundly modernist' accounts of the postmodern city, characterised by a lack of attention to 'the consequences of difference' (Dear 2000: 766). Among the neglected differences identified by Dear are those of 'gender and feminism' which he claims are almost completely absent within Harvey's (1989b) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Concurring, Massey (1991b) suggests that when Harvey (1989b) describes the experience of

being in the postmodern city as having no stable bearings and being unable to impose order on one's surroundings, this is very much a white, male, middle-class academic view. This failure to account for and see the world through Other eyes means that Harvey's Marxist version of postmodernity constantly falls back into the language and logic of modernism, and imposes an order on the postmodern city which simply does not exist (Watson and Gibson 1995). Here, it is important to note that one of the key precepts of post-structuralism is that being open to difference, and adapting different modes of representing the world, can lead people to adopt very different behaviours and instigate a 'politics of change'.

In the eyes of many, this apparent lack of 'critical self-reflection about the author's own epistemological stances' (Dear 2000: 76) has devalued Harvey's highly nuanced interpretation of postmodern cities. Michael Dear (2000: 78) complains, for example, that while 'taking an axe to postmodernism, Harvey leaves his own historical materialism almost totally unexamined' and offers a starkly modernist, structuralist analysis of postmodernity which seeks to 'get behind' the fragmented features of postmodernity to identify its 'essential meanings' (Harvey 1989b: 74). Barnes (2005) likewise suggests that Harvey employs an interpretation of the relationship between culture and economy which appears quite close to a classical 'structuralist' one, whereby culture is seen to be determined by economic processes. Even in later work where Harvey has sought to respond to his critics by exploring questions of difference in a more sustained manner (e.g. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* 1996; *Spaces of Hope* 2000), Barnes (2005) suggests his account remains rooted in Marxism and fails to develop a more nuanced account of culture in the making of contemporary cities. Somewhat similarly, Soja's (1996) *Thirdspace* presented an extended engagement with feminist, postcolonial and subaltern theory, yet remained open to accusations of tokenism given the unshaken belief that the changing forms of the city could be explained away with reference to transitions in the nature of capitalism (see Latham 2004).

What appears to be at stake here is whether the contemporary (post-modern) city can be usefully explained with reference to the theories evolved in the context of the modern city (as Harvey and Soja's work implies). Here, we need to remain mindful that some of the characteristics taken to define the postmodern city were actually those of the modern city. Underlining this, Savage et al. (2003) suggest that movement, restlessness

and dynamic transformation were essential qualities of the modern urban experience as much as the postmodern (cf. Wirth 1938; Harvey 1989b). Moreover, one has to be mindful that many postmodern theories have been worked through in the context of Los Angeles, a city whose ethnic diversity and residential segregation is 'almost unique' (see Johnston et al. 2006). In this regard, some commentators remain sceptical that new theories are needed to explain the spatial forms of the postmodern city, for example see W.A.V. Clark's (2002) empirically derived bid-rent curves describing the evolution of a decentred, polycentric metropolis.

Notwithstanding this, much appears to have changed about the city since the mid 1970s, with cities having undergone dramatic transformations in their physical appearance, economy, social composition, governance, topographical shape and cultural vernacular (Savage et al. 2003: 32). Taking this into account, many commentators insist that we need new theories more in-tune with contemporary urbanism, and that 'modern' theories are simply past their sell-by date. For instance, Dear and Flusty (1998) attempt to develop a new theory of postmodern urbanism which acknowledges what is really happening in contemporary cities where:

Urban process is driven by a global restructuring that is permeated and balkanized by a series of interdictory networks; whose populations are socially and culturally heterogeneous, but politically and economically polarised; whose residents are educated and persuaded to the consumption of dreamscape even as the poorest are consigned to carceral cities; whose built environment, reflective of these processes, consists of edge cities, privatopias, and the like, and whose natural environment, also reflective of these processes, is being erased to the point of unlivability.

(Dear and Flusty 1998: 59–60)

This leads them to offer a 'model' of the postmodern city which is very much at odds with the centred and ordered models of urban ecology (see Figure 1.1). Herein, 'keno-capitalist' processes create a pseudo-random patchwork of balkanised industrial, consumer and residential landscapes.

But even in the case of Dear and Flusty's writing on urban form, we can detect an attempt to theorise and explain the city in terms of existing and established theories (notably, Marxism). No matter how much Dear and Flusty (1998) appear to embrace postmodernism's suspicion of

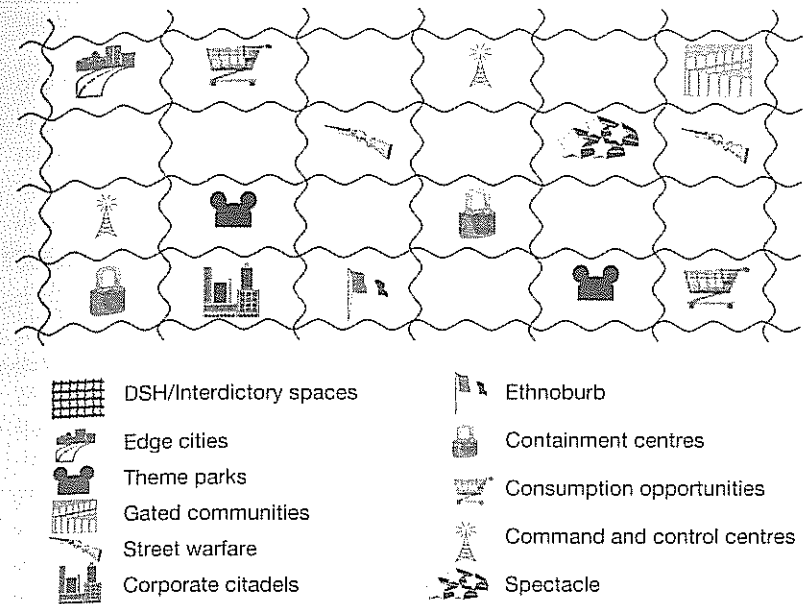


Figure 1.1 The postmodern urban landscape (after Dear and Flusty 1998)

metanarrative, they quickly fall back into the language and assumptions that underpinned explanation of the modernist city, remaining ideologically wedded to a Marxist narrative in which historical materialism provides the bedrock of theoretical explanation. Following Lake (2005: 267), I take such contradictions as evidence of a theoretical crisis in which urban scholars have sought to move beyond the twin horrors of positivist quantification and Marxist abstraction, yet fear the 'capriciousness' of post-structural, postmodern and post-positivist approaches which insist on the particularity of each and every event. Hence, while there is a widely noted dissatisfaction with the 'will to abstraction' which forced the city to conform to abstract models, categorisations and languages, urban scholars have often fallen back on these very forms of abstraction in their attempt to comprehend new forms of urbanity. Lake (2005: 267) accordingly concludes that in the last quarter of the twentieth century, urban geography reached a theoretical nadir, with the urban becoming little more than 'an epiphenomenon, a barely significant by-product of structural forces'.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have taken a somewhat breathless tour through two centuries of thinking about the city, alighting on some of the most celebrated and important urban theories. As we have seen, these theories have been tailored to answer particular questions about cities, such as what they do, how they work and why they exist. In essence, however, all concern the urban question – that is to say, they seek to say something about the relationship between the city and society. As was argued at the outset, many of these theories have borrowed ideas and languages derived from other disciplines – for example, biology, mathematics, economics, political science and so on. This has meant that urban geographers now have a rich lexicon of terms and concepts at their disposal. Yet for all this, it is difficult to discern any *progression* of urban theory. The debate around gentrification provides an obvious illustration: while alternative explanations have been proposed for this phenomenon over time, there remains little agreement about the respective importance of culture or economy in this process, which is regarded variously as a movement of people back to the city or a movement of capital back to the city. Similarly, while the identification of a putative postmodern city has encouraged the development of postmodern urban theories, these have not totally supplanted modern ones, which continue to have proponents and supporters. Circling around the same issues to increasingly little effect, we have seen that many theories of the postmodern city remain ideologically wedded to a political economy that seems unable to offer any new insights into the nature of urban life.

Commenting on this lack of progress in urban studies, Nigel Thrift (1993: 228) contended that urban studies had reached something of an impasse by the 1990s, being characterised by 'recycled critiques, endlessly circulating the same messages about modernity and postmodernity'. In a review of theorisations of the city, Michael Storper (1997) echoed this, arguing that while urban geography agrees on many of the central aspects of contemporary urbanisation (e.g. the importance of consumerism, the role of global flows of capital, knowledge and goods, and the flexibilisation of production), no theory seems able to put these phenomena together in any meaningful way.

In addition to the failure of urban theory to 'speak to' the urban conditions that characterised the city of the late twentieth century, by the 1990s it was apparent that what passed for urban theory was increasingly

devoid of urban specificity. Indeed, it is possible to argue the geographies so eloquently described and explained by members of the LA School were not urban geographies *per se*, but more broad-brushed accounts of the way space was restructuring in accordance with the dictates of postmodern times. Hence, in contrast to the many rural geographers and sociologists who stressed the continuing need for new theories of rurality in the face of rapidly changing socio-spatial relations (see P. Jackson 2005), urban geographers seemed more concerned with contributing to more general theories of spatiality. Others, as Wylie (1993) notes, were simply content to get on with 'doing' urban studies, examining issues, populations and problems that just happened to be located in urban areas, rather than thinking through what was distinctively urban about the nature of the research they were undertaking.

As I detailed in the introduction to this volume, there were accordingly many reasons to be pessimistic about the future of urban geography at the dawn of the twenty-first century, with fewer and fewer geographers appearing interested in making any substantive contribution to urban theory. Yet at the same time, human geography remains a vital and vibrant sub-discipline, characterised by new and exciting ideas about the nature of space and place. Consequently, I would argue that – even if contemporary urban scholarship seems unwilling or unable to say anything in depth or profundity about the spatiality of cities – there are many concepts and ideas in contemporary human geography which are highly relevant to developing new understandings of the 'city' as a distinctive and important spatial formation. Developing this argument, the remainder of the book will seek to review four recent approaches in geography which have significant implications for how geographers study the urban: a 'representational turn'; a (renewed) interest in embodiment and performance; the emergence of a 'post-human' geography, and an interest in the formation of a network society. In different ways, each of these provides a distinctive take on the city's distinctive and immanent materiality: taken together, they arguably provide the basis for a rejuvenated urban geography.

FURTHER READING

As has been stressed throughout, this book is about urban theories and conceptualisations of the city. For those who are studying urban geography for the first time, it is recommended that this book is read alongside an

introduction to urban geography. Many of these are organised thematically, and deal with economic, social and political aspects of city life: John Short's (1996) *The Urban Order* is particularly recommended, while Tim Hall's (2001) *Urban Geography* provides a succinct and balanced overview. Paul Knox and Steve Pinch's (2001) *Urban Social Geography* focuses (as its title implies) on social segregation and consumption issues, but contains useful material on urban policy and politics. The Open University series *Understanding Cities* comprises three books, the first of which is concerned with urban definitions, the second with urban order and the third with urban movement. The latter volumes are referred to later in this book, but in this context it is worth tracking down the first volume (Massey et al. 1999) as an introduction to debates concerning the definition of the city. For those interested in discussions of the origins of urbanism and changing city forms, Harold Carter's (1988) *An Introduction to Urban Historical Geography* remains a useful overview and Spiro Kostof's (2001b) *The City Shaped* and (2001a) *The City Assembled* provide a lavishly illustrated history of city design.

In relation to the material discussed in this chapter, Savage et al. (2003) *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity* provide a good interdisciplinary account of modern and postmodern theories. Extracts from the writings of key theorists can be found in LeGates and Stout (eds) (1996) *The City Reader*. Finally, it is well worth exploring the writing of two of the figures whose work has exercised such an influence on the recent trajectory of urban studies – Manuel Castells and David Harvey. Andrew Merrifield (2002) profiles each of these in his excellent *Metromarxism*; Ida Susser (2002) has compiled a useful *Castells Reader* while Jones et al. (2005) provide a critical overview of Harvey's work.

2

THE REPRESENTED CITY

The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language.

(Barthes 1975: 92)

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there was much talk of a 'cultural turn' in human geography. Though subsequent evaluation suggests there was not one turn, but many (see Philo 2000), the key notion underpinning the cultural turn – that culture needed to be taken seriously – was one that was widely embraced by geographers. In particular, geographers studying the built environment began to acknowledge the need for an interpretative approach that would disclose the intersubjective meanings and symbolism of the urban landscape. Indeed, the identification of urban landscapes as legitimate objects of study was crucial to moves within the 'new' cultural geography intended to shake off the rural and historical predilections inherited from the Berkeley School of cultural geography in the United States (P. Jackson 1989; Crang 1998).

However, the cultural turn had another key impact on the trajectory of urban geography – namely, that it encouraged exploration of the image of the city and its representation in a variety of media. Crucial here was the suggestion that space is constructed both in the realms of discourse and practice, and that it is impossible to conceive of any space outside the realms of language. Indeed, Jones and Natter (1997) suggest it is only through representation – words, images and data – that space exists, with

all spaces being both 'written' and 'read'. A widespread approach to urban geography since the late 1980s has thus been to conceptualise the city as a text (Duncan 1990). Simply put, this textual metaphor has encouraged researchers to explore the 'discourses, symbols, metaphors and fantasies' through which we ascribe meanings to the city (Donald 1999: 6). This approach takes inspiration from a wide range of sources, including the literary theories of Roland Barthes, the cultural materialism of John Berger and Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault's ruminations on the power of discourse and Jacques Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction.

In this chapter, I thus want to explore some of the key facets of this 'representational turn' in human geography, describing how it has changed the ways that many urban geographers look at, visualise and generally make sense of the city. This overview considers geographers' attempts to unpack the images of cities conveyed in fiction, film and other media, as well as the efforts made to situate urban mythologies within a richer theoretical context. Moving from these efforts to 'read' cities, I then consider how the incessant production of new urban images and stories constantly revises our perception of particular cities via processes of place marketing and identity-making. I begin, however, by exploring some of the (long-established) knowledges of the city that frame these attempts to rewrite the city.

URBAN MYTHS AND IMAGINATIONS

The idea that cities are symbolically associated with particular values, lifestyles and ideas is a long-standing one. In contrast with the countryside, which is principally known through the myth of the 'rural idyll', dominant understandings of cities tend to be framed within two prominent myths. The first of these is an anti-city myth which depicts cities as a nadir of human civility. In this anti-urban myth, the city is associated with sin and immorality, with a movement away from 'traditional' order and mutual values. Biblical references to Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by God for sins against His law, demonstrate the antiquity of this imagination of the urban, while more recently the sheer ugliness of Victorian industrial cities, and the 'urban decay' experienced within contemporary urban areas have inspired many journalists, writers and artists to catalogue a range of urban ills. John Ruskin, for example, the nineteenth-century essayist and anti-industrialist, said that cities are 'loathsome centres of fornication and covetousness – the smoke

of sin going up into the face of heaven like the furnace of Sodom' (Ruskin 1880, quoted in Short 1991: 45). Here, the anonymity which the city often provides, instead of providing an opportunity to be whatever one wishes to be, becomes associated with a sense of alienation, of not belonging.

In many ways, this myth is backed up with reference to many of the ideas of urban anomie and isolation developed by urban sociologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (see Chapter 1). Yet it is also a myth bolstered by the persistence of the myth of the rural idyll, in which the city is counterposed with a timeless, harmonious picturesque rurality characterised by an absence of social problems and the fostering of good physical, spiritual and moral health (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). The redemptive qualities of rural living accordingly informed the emergence of a town and country planning movement which attempted to reintroduce some of the characteristic features of country living into the city: Ebenezer Howard's Garden City ideal, for instance, argued for small, self-contained communities set against a green background, while even Le Corbusier was concerned to reintroduce nature to cities (Hall 1988). Contemporary experiments in 'neo-urbanism', such as Poundbury in Dorset or Seaside in Florida, also romanticise many aspects of small-town and rural living, suggesting these produce cohesive and friendly communities (McCann 1995).

The idea that rural living is therapeutic and morally uplifting therefore exists in opposition to mythologies which emphasise the city's role as a locus of immorality, criminality and disorder – 'a temptation, trap and punishment all in one' (Nochlin 1971: 151). Such views may be supported with reference to the onslaught of media stories which focus on 'urban problems' of gun crime, drug-dealing and antisocial behaviour. This type of mythology is evident in any manner of songs, computer games, music videos, books, films and comic strips which script the city as a combat zone in which different clans or tribes face a daily battle for survival: gangsta rap, for example, has frequently been condemned for its glorification of gang violence on the streets of South Central LA, Compton and Detroit, yet is interpreted by many to be an authentic account of life in the post-industrial city. Other representations are perhaps not meant to be taken too seriously, yet similarly reinforce ideas that cities are sites of disorder. For example, Pierre Morel's (2003) *Banlieue 13*, which is set in a Parisian suburb 'sometime in the near future', imaginatively locates gang conflict in a dystopian urban landscape on the periphery of Paris. The fact

that the best-selling computer game of all time, *Grand Theft Auto: San Fernando*, dwells lasciviously on the terrors of urban life is no mere coincidence either, given it taps into long-standing fantasies and fears of urban disorder.

Developing such arguments, Short (1996) concludes that the cinematic city is often a site of anonymity, crime and vice (Box 2.1). For example, in *film noir* (literally 'dark film') the city becomes a brooding, threatening presence, a place of isolation and fear. This often takes exaggerated form in films where the city's lawlessness can be contained only by crime-fighting superheroes, such as *Batman's* Gotham City or *Spiderman* in New York. Science fiction representations of the future city (e.g. *Things to Come*, *Alphaville*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Blade Runner*) similarly paint a dystopian image of urban life (see Kitchin and Kneale 2001), contrasted with the simple and idyllic nature of rural life (e.g. as exhibited in Merchant Ivory costume dramas). This anti-urban/pro-rural representation is very common in cinema, far outweighing the small number of rural horror films as *The Straw Dogs*, *The Blair Witch Project* or *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

Box 2.1 THE CINEMATIC CITY

The connections between cinema and the city are many and various. For instance, it has been suggested that the synergy of film and the city was cemented in cinema's earliest years, when film was used as a medium which allowed urban citizens to make sense of the city: in short, film captured the restlessness and frenetic pace of the city in ways that other media could not. Likewise, cinema-going and (latterly) the consumption of video, TV and DVDs have been thoroughly integrated in the rituals of city life (Barber 2002; Hubbard 2002). Spaces of cinema – from the earliest spaces of film exhibition to the digital cinemas and multiplexes of the contemporary era – consequently tell us much about the changing spatial forms and practices of urban life (see Plate 2.1). But, in representational terms, what is especially interesting about the relationship between film and the city is that we have come to experience the city cinematically. In effect, this is to suggest that films have changed not just the way we *look* at the city, but also the

way we *act* in cities. In part, this is a consequence of films' mobile gaze, which lends the medium its veracity and believability, mirroring our own experience of urban spaces (Friedberg 2002). In another sense, it is because film-makers work in traditions of narrative cinema which impel us to identify with those whom we see on the screen, and to see the city as they do. Taken together, it is clear that film has had an extremely important influence on our understanding and conceptualisation of cities. By way of example, one can trace the influence of specific films on architects and planners, who have often designed cities as if they were 'stage sets' waiting to be populated by a cast of thousands. For instance, it is surely notable that many of those responsible for the post-war planning of British cities adopted a sleek, modern aesthetic which had first come to prominence in science-fiction representations of the future city. In a rather different respect, it is interesting to reflect on the influence of *film noir* on urban nightlife. Krutnik (1991: 23) explains that the *noir* city of Hollywood's thrillers of the 1940s and 1950s 'is a shadow realm of crime and dislocation in which benighted individuals do battle with implacable threats and temptations' (a theme that continues in modern films such as *Sin City*). Playing on our own fears and anxieties about Others and Otherness, *film noir* locates social threats in the shadows and fog of an unknowable and unmappable city. *Noir* themes of unknown people preying on others (and especially women) in the dark spaces of the unsafe city have arguably been important in implanting fear of the city at night among certain populations, and perpetuating the idea that cities are spaces of isolation and anomie (Slater 2002; Farish 2005).

Further reading: D.B. Clarke (1997)

In sum, the persistence of anti-urban myths means that the countryside is frequently imagined to be a more pleasant and idyllic place to live than the city. In the West, such views have encouraged processes of counter-urbanisation and selective out-migration as those who can afford to buy into the rural idyll leave the city for the countryside. More recently, however,

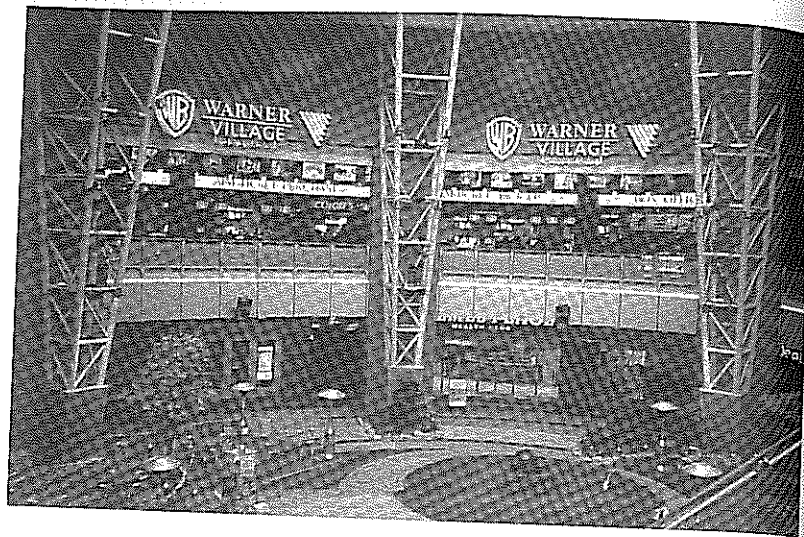


Plate 2.1 Star City multiplex, Birmingham: the multiplex cinema is bound into rituals of urban life in a variety of ways, both mirror and mould of urban society (photo: author)

it is apparent that many populations are returning to the central city, drawn by the combination of competitive property prices and talk of the urban renaissance. As we saw in Chapter 1, the idea of urban renaissance relies upon the valorisation of certain pro-urban myths, not least the notion that cities are attractive, vibrant and cultured places to live. In this mythology, cities are deemed to offer multiple opportunities for business and pleasure, their multiple social worlds perpetually throwing up new ideas, food, music and fashion. For the hip and trendy, cities are therefore the place to be. The idea that cities are somehow unpredictable, unknowable and even dangerous may furthermore be an attraction for such returning populations, not least those young, creative individuals who imagine themselves as pioneers on the 'urban frontier' (N. Smith 1996).

Accordingly, it is possible to identify both pro-urban and anti-urban myths, each of which takes form in relation to, or in opposition to, the other (Lees and Demeritt 1998). If the city is imagined through antithetical notions of desire and disgust, it is perhaps useful to examine the basis of these myths. These are not solely recent inventions, having developed over hundreds of years. For instance, in the classical Greek and Roman

periods, urbanism was associated with the idea of 'civilisation', planting the seed of the myth that the city is the seat of culture, learning, government and civil order (Sennett 1994). Since that time, it has been an icon of progress, enlightenment and opportunity, a sentiment celebrated in the story of Dick Whittington, for example. According to this tale, the eponymous hero set out for London where, he had heard, the streets were 'paved with gold'. He ended up becoming Mayor of London, of course, justifying this view of the city as being full of opportunities for those bright or lucky enough to be able to take them. In a more recent context, the UK Conservative Party in the 1980s made great play of the entrepreneurship and enterprise associated with the city, and implored the out-of-work to 'get on their bikes' to seek employment in the big cities. Similar myths of urban opportunity abound in other nations, of course, not least in the United States, where Hollywood's 'Dream Factory' reputation has inspired many to seek out the bright lights of the big city in search of fame and fortune. In the 1991 film *Pretty Woman*, the character of the street prostitute played by Julia Roberts apparently shows this is a routine occurrence when she is swept up off the streets by a wealthy businessman (Richard Gere). While there are many subtexts in this film (e.g. heartless businessman finds redemption in true love), the cliché of Los Angeles being a city where you can make your dream come true is one that underlines the pernicious myth of city as opportunity. Incidentally, another film with Julia Roberts – *Notting Hill* (1999) – represents London as an urban village where people from all walks of life mingle, allowing social and sexual relations to be forged between unlikely protagonists.

In part, this romantic view of city life is supported by the idea that cities are connected to what is happening elsewhere, opening a world of opportunities. From their earliest origins, cities have frequently been centres of international trade and migration, global media and international politics, a strategic role that is often imagined to be increasing in an era of globalisation (see Chapter 5). Further, the city is viewed as having dominion over the surrounding countryside. If cities are cultured and vibrant, the farmed countryside has, as one side of its own mythical existence, the stereotype of the ignorant and brutish yokel. This stereotype contrasts sharply with that of the liberal-minded and educated townsman or woman, perpetuating the idea that rural folk are isolationist and technophobic in contrast with the sharp-suited and quick-witted urban dwellers who keep their 'finger on the pulse'. To underline this, Short

(1991: 43) paraphrases Marx in saying 'towns saved people from the idiocy of rural life'. While Marx was using the term idiocy to imply the isolationism of rural life, it is perhaps significant that many have taken his comment at face value, and reproduced the myth of the country 'bumpkin' or idiot.

Hence, the connection between urbanism and order, progress, power and learning is widespread, sustaining other pro-urban mythologies. Here we might think about the myth of the city as a cultural 'melting pot'. This valorises the very size of the city as providing opportunities for variety, social mixing and vibrant encounters between very different social groups. Because of this, the city may also be regarded as having a radical potential, where it is possible to challenge entrenched order and struggle for liberty and egalitarianism. The French and Russian revolutions, for example, had largely urban roots, while the student riots of 1968 were played out on the streets of major towns and cities, from Bologna to San Francisco. It is difficult, therefore, to specify a single pro-urban mythology if we consider that the city is associated with both order and revolution, where both of those things can be thought of as positive. Neither are these things solely urban. The countryside has historically been associated with the order imparted by feudalism (in Western Europe), while the contemporary countryside is becoming a place for protest against entrenched social order – in Britain, for example, fox hunting and experimentation with genetically modified crops have recently been challenged, while demands for access to privately owned moorland and mountain areas have been made for many decades.

In this light, we might conclude that cities are polysemous (i.e. signify different things simultaneously), to the extent that some of the attributes of anti-urban mythologies also appear in the pro-urban myth. The loss of 'traditional' values, for example, can signal either an irretrievable breakdown of social order (as part of an anti-urban mythology) or a liberation from oppression (as part of a pro-urban mythology). These mythologies are complicated creatures, then, shifting as they are explored from varying perspectives. By way of example, we might consider the film *My Son the Fanatic* (1999) directed by Udayan Prasad and written by acclaimed author Hanif Kureishi. This film follows Parvez, a Pakistani taxi driver (played by Om Puri), as he contends with the sudden conversion of his teenage son to Islamic fundamentalism, as well as his own dissatisfaction with life in the city of Bradford (northern England). Taking Parvez's point

of view, the film explores his commitment to his wife and his developing love for a prostitute who eventually becomes a target of his son's religious and moral outrage. Based loosely on events that unfolded in Bradford in the mid-1990s, where (mainly) British Asian pickets sought to hound sex workers off the streets of Manningham (see Hubbard 1997), the film progresses across different urban landscapes (e.g. the café where Parvez meets his taxi driver colleagues, the local mosque where Parvez's son falls in with a charismatic convert to the fundamentalist cause, and the industrial wastelands in which sex is transacted for money) as it explores the imbrication of urban and personal identities. Bradford therefore becomes a key actor in this unfolding narrative, and emerges as a hybrid space whose identity is highly ambiguous. Shown to be a space of conflict, violence and endemic racism, Bradford is also shown as a city where interracial, cross-cultural friendships and alliances are creating new, positive understandings of what it means to be British.

While few films offer the social nuance and geographical texture of *My Son the Fanatic*, it is certainly true to say that most films cannot be neatly labelled as pro- or anti-urban. Underlining this, Pratt and San Juan (2004) suggest that *The Truman Show* and *The Matrix* simultaneously present and critique utopian visions of the city. In the former, the seemingly idyllic town of Seahaven (actually Seaside in Florida) is exposed as an inauthentic and intensely surveyed space which condemns Truman (Jim Carey) to a blissfully repetitive life; in the latter, Neo (Keanu Reeves) joins a group of unbelievers who choose to live in the 'real' world rather than the simulated utopia of corporate towers and shopping malls. In both, the city is seen to provide access to a multitude of seductive consumer goods and desires, but there is a price to pay: the loss of individuality. Through a process of redoubling, these films emphasise both the positive attributes and significant downsides of contemporary urban life.

Such a blurring of urban mythologies of the city, making ambiguous the distinction between simply 'pro-' and 'anti-', perhaps better reflects the true complexity of the social experience and representation of urban places. Indeed, this is an argument that recurs in the literatures on geographies of sexuality. On the one hand, this literature conceptualises cities as offering an 'escape from the isolation of the countryside and the surveillance of small-town life' (Weston 1995: 274; see also Castells 1983; Lauria and Knopp 1985). In this way 'cities' have often attracted those whose sexual identities differ from the heteronormal (see Weston

1995; Bech 1998). Yet the safety of cities for gay populations has been repeatedly brought into question (Myslik 1996) and the rural has also been advanced as a site of sexual liberation (Valentine 1997; Phillips et al. 2000). Again, the relational constitution of town and country demands that we reject any straightforward interpretation of urban life as either empowering or repressive. The imaginative geography of urban and rural, while useful in framing discussions of urban geography, therefore has significant limitations that need to be carefully examined and worked through in specific case studies.

READING THE CITY

Given the existence of a wide range of (apparently contradictory) urban myths, urban geography has recently been replete with efforts to document the way that different urban imaginations are brought into being through different cultural forms and media. Here, geographers are building upon a long-standing tradition in the arts and humanities of subjecting novels, poems and drama to critical scrutiny. Written by those ostensibly skilled in the use and manipulation of language, these texts frequently offer deeply evocative accounts of life in particular times and places. Because of this, they offer rich pickings for geographers interested in examining the character of certain cities. Some authors have consequently been feted by historical geographers because of their ability to weave beguiling and vivid 'word-pictures' of life in the past. A notable example here might be the work of Charles Dickens, whose novels serve to map out the geographies of Victorian London in rich detail (see Donald 1999). Far from occurring in a blank landscape, Dickens' novels are played out in 'real' landscapes whose physical forms, topography and appearance are made legible through a thoroughly spatialised language. In many of Dickens' books, for example, the plot unfolds in a landscape that is thickly described as one of danger and dread, with the fog of the capital enshrouding malodorous characters.

Yet it is not only in the realms of urban history that literature may be a useful source for excavating urban meanings. Many contemporary novels offer topologically detailed accounts of life in specific towns or regions, and these may capture many facets of everyday life that are effaced in academic accounts based on survey or ethnographic work. This is perhaps most obvious in those novels where the setting is emphasised as a significant

component of the storyline (rather than an inconsequential backcloth against which the story unfolds). For instance, Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full* (1998), Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* (1985) and Jay McInerney's *Brightness Falls* (1992) and *The Good Life* (2005) offer rich descriptions of the post-Fordist American metropolis, describing Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York respectively. Likewise, those seeking descriptions of life in contemporary London can dip into works by writers as diverse as Martin Amis, Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Nick Hornby, Geoff Nicholson, Michael Moorcock, Doris Lessing, Ian McEwan, John Lanchester or Helen Fielding. Such novels are valuable not only because they offer detailed descriptions of individual buildings, neighbourhoods and locales, but also because they locate particular social groups and individuals in these spaces, mapping out the fractures of social class, race, gender, age and sexuality which characterise city life (for interesting accounts of literary London, and other cities, see Simpson-Housley and Preston 1994).

Brosseau (1994) accordingly suggests that such literary sources are useful for mapping out the social geographies of specific cities. In many instances, these works claim credibility because the authors concerned are very familiar with the milieu of which they wrote. Yet to simply regard novels as a source of factual geographical information clearly ignores the way authors imbue the places they describe with imaginative characteristics. As Pocock (1981: 11) argues, the 'truth of fiction is a truth beyond mere facts' as 'fictive reality may contain more truth than everyday reality.' Underpinning this seemingly nonsensical statement is the idea that novelists and poets succeed in conveying and communicating the 'sense of place' that is immanent in given locations better than actually being in that location could. This idea relies on the fact that literature evokes the experience of being in place eloquently, with the intensely personal and deeply descriptive language used by the writer able to convey the elusive *genius loci* inherent in a place.

Creative writing has certainly enabled many authors to express the reasons why certain cities are special to them, or to convey the sense of loss they experience when the old city makes way for a new one. For instance, Baudelaire was proclaimed the 'lyrical poet of high modernism' by the cultural critic Walter Benjamin because of the ability of his allegorical verse to capture the ambivalence of living in Second Empire Paris. Most famously, his poem *La Cygne* (The Swan) mixes images of past and present Paris in a paean to the pre-Haussmann era, as this extract indicates:

Old Paris is no more (a town, alas,
 Changes more quickly than man's heart may change);
 Yet in my mind I still can see the booths;
 The heaps of brick and rough-hewn capitals;
 The grass; the stones all over-green with moss;
 The *débris*, and the square-set heaps of tiles.
 . . . Paris may change; my melancholy is fixed.
 New palaces, and scaffoldings, and blocks,
 And suburbs old, are symbols all to me
 Whose memories are as heavy as a stone.
 And so, before the Louvre, to vex my soul,
 The image came of my majestic swan
 With his mad gestures, foolish and sublime,
 (Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1861)

Quoting Baudelaire allows us to convey something of what it was like to live in a city where (to paraphrase Marx) everything that was solid was 'melting into air'. Other high modernist novels – Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1904) or John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) – convey a similar sense of ephemerality, fragmentation and change in the modernising city. Accordingly, the use of literary texts to reveal the richly subjective and ambivalent nature of urban space constitutes an important tradition within cultural geography (Donald 1999).

Yet Brosseau (1994) has insisted that the novel is more than just a resource from which we may glean geographical facts or richly subjective accounts of place. For him, it is crucial that geographers are 'receptive to what is different in the way novels write and generate particular geographies' (Brosseau 1994: 90). After all, works of fiction are never mimetic, in the sense that they innocently reflect the world as it is. Rather, they refract that reality according to the author's positionality within systems of literary production and consumption. As such, 'critical' cultural theories have also been deployed in studies of fictional city writing. These suggest that texts are implicated in the reproduction of society, positing a recursive and complex dialectic between human agency and structure mediated through texts. This materialist conception of culture was one that was developed by the forerunners of cultural and media studies – Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and various

members of the Birmingham School for Contemporary Cultural Studies. In different ways, each of these developed radical ideas about the 'work' that cultural texts perform in legitimising social relations, accentuating the need to examine texts in relation to ideological beliefs and structures. For example, Antonio Gramsci's neo-Marxist perspective alluded to the ideological role of the media in reproducing particular ideas about society. Hegemony, in his account, represented a struggle for moral, political and intellectual leadership, played out in the mass media as much as in the workplace or marketplace (M.J. Smith 2002).

The ability of texts to impose (and, on occasion, contest) 'common sense' understandings of the city thus provoked geographers to consider the ideological beliefs sedimented in both 'high' and 'popular' expressions of culture, including not just books and poetry, but also adverts, photographs, magazines and newspapers (Short 1991). Simultaneously, the adoption of terminology associated with semiotics (Box 2.2) became commonplace in geographical writing on text. Semiotics stresses that the meaning of language is, in effect, arbitrary, lacking constancy until it is given meaning through correspondence with other signs (Berger 1977). Written language, as a sign, signifies something only when it is 'placed' in relation to other signs. Moreover, it is argued that signification remains specific to a given audience, so that texts are potentially *polysemous* (i.e. may be understood in conflicting ways by different social groups). This implies that the meaning of text is not intrinsic, but is structured through social codes and conventions which encourage certain 'readings' of text (Slater 1998). In turn, these readings are seen to reproduce certain ideologies, values and philosophies as natural, universal and eternal.

Box 2.2 URBAN SEMIOTICS

Literally meaning the 'science of signs', semiotics can trace its origins to the work of both Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand Saussure, who worked independently in the early years of the twentieth century developing a conceptual language and method for analysing signs. This method involves taking images apart and considering the signs as having two components: the *signifier*

continued

(a sound or image) and its *signified* (a concept). The latter is related to its real world *referent*: thus the word 'cold' (a signifier) can signify cold (as can the colour blue, or a picture of snow) and this refers to the feeling of actual experience of lacking warmth. What is apparent is that some signifiers work in different social and cultural contexts as they are *iconic* (for instance, a picture of snow); others are culturally specific and *indexical* as they rely on certain conventions of language and representation. In most studies, it is necessary to consider the relationship between signs, as the signifieds attached to certain signs get transferred to other signifiers, and often build to create elaborate *codes*: highly complex patterns of meaning that are common to particular society at a particular time (Aitken 2005). As such, semiotics provides an elaborate terminology for describing visual images and has been deemed a productive way of thinking about visual meanings. Its focus on ideology – and especially the codes which connect the meaning of signs to economic and political structures – means it is particularly useful for thinking through the social effects of representation (Rose 2001). Given this, significant attention has been devoted to the ideological construction and significance of urban spaces (Gottdiener and Lagopoulos 1986). This has involved semiotic approaches and techniques of reading the landscape to explore the social construction and power embedded in built environments. Much of this work has been influenced by Marxist traditions, as well as the writings of Baudrillard on signification and alienation. This is particularly evident in semiotic readings of spectacular spaces of consumption such as malls, festival marketplaces and leisure parks, which semiotic analyses reveal as illusory places of pleasure, leisure, hyper-reality and simulated 'elsewhereness' (Hopkins 1991; Shields 1991).

Key reference: Gottdiener and Lagopoulos (1986)

The idea that texts contain signifiers that send particular ideologically charged messages to different social and cultural groups was accordingly influential to those geographers seeking a more rigorous methodological

and theoretical framework for the interpretation of text – Burgess and Gold's (1985) collection brings together a representative sample. Burgess's (1985) own work, for example, illustrates how newspaper reports served to perpetuate racism through the selective and unrepresentative reporting of inner city riots. In her account, the way that the text (and associated photography) encoded the story of the riots for its readers was indicative of the ability of a text to render an essentially biased and selective interpretation as 'common sense'. In the case of the rioting, this involved a consideration of the ability of the text to classify groups and individuals along racial lines, stereotyping non-white communities as inherently criminalised (see also K. Anderson 1991; Wall 1997). Here, the exclusions and narrative silences in the text are as important as what is included, with the selective and partial representation of people and place deemed a crucial means by which social inequality has been perpetuated (and justified); as cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1990: 156) argued, 'whoever controls information about society is, to a greater or lesser extent, able to exert power in that reality.'

While this focus on newspaper and media reporting may imply something of a division between literature-based explorations of sense of place and neo-Marxist accounts of media power, the two were in fact entwined within a reformulated cultural geography which focused on the cultural politics of everyday life. The arrival of this 'new cultural geography' paradigm was signalled by a flurry of publications (e.g. P. Jackson 1989; Anderson and Gale 1992; Barnes and Duncan 1992; Duncan and Ley 1993) which highlighted questions of geographical representation and began to spell out the importance of exploring the *discourses* immanent in a wide variety of written (and spoken) texts. Defining discourses as 'frameworks that embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices relevant to a particular realm of social action' (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 12), a key focus of the new cultural geography was the spatial meanings that are transmitted and reported through different domains and texts so as to reproduce power. The implication of such work was that while there may be varying representations of people or places circulating in different texts, collectively, the embedding of discourses in social life serves to constitute these people and places, reinforcing dominant social systems (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). In contrast to the forms of cultural geography associated with the Berkeley School, the new cultural geography was thus identified with cultural

politics; namely, the ongoing struggle between different interest groups and cultures to promote their particular representations and knowledges (while obfuscating or destroying others).

The insistence that discourse does not simply reflect an already-existent social reality, but enters into the constitution of reality, is an important precept of post-structuralism (see also Chapter 1). Michel Foucault's (1980) ideas on power/knowledge were an important influence on post-structuralism: in his analysis, social categories of identification were not seen to be created by individuals (or structures), but by discourses. By way of an example, we might consider his work on medical discourse. Emanating from particular institutional sites (e.g. the hospital), medical discourse divides populations into sick and healthy on the basis of particular signs and symptoms. Further, it makes distinctions between various ailments and conditions, dividing the sick into those who require acute or secondary care. In his acclaimed work on *Madness and Civilisation*, Foucault (1967) likewise stressed that definitions of mental illness are temporally specific, with discourses of psychiatry having effectively brought certain categories of people into being, suggesting that their exclusion from the mainstream is necessary for their effective treatment and rehabilitation.

Disrupting any straightforward separation of text and a 'pre-discursive' real world, Foucault's ideas of developing a critical genealogy of knowledge became widely (though not uncritically) adopted by geographers seeking to expose the importance of text in shaping the contours of everyday life. In short, Foucault's ideas offered a fundamental challenge for those geographers who imagined that places (and people) have a real or essential existence outside the realms of language, encouraging a focus on the relations of discourse, knowledge and space (Barnes and Gregory 1997). Here, it becomes important to distinguish between methods of *content analysis* (which considers the surface or manifest content of text) and *discourse analysis* (a way of analysing texts that thinks about content in relation to its effects). Focusing on the representation of a city in a novel may well be interesting, but what has become more interesting for geographers is thinking about the role that that representation plays in creating urban identities. From this perspective, questions of what is true and false in a text are irrelevant; instead the focus is on the ability of the text to create reality through the 'invention' and documentation of difference.

Within a cultural geography that emphasises theoretical diversity, fluidity and flux, this focus on discourse has seen geographers grappling with post-structuralist ideas about the construction of society, considering the active work that text and image perform in constituting the people and places that they apparently only describe (Jones and Natter 1997; Rose 1997). Crucial here is Derrida's notion of *différance*, a term capturing the sense of difference inevitably written into any text:

The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. We cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is a deferred presence . . . According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both secondary and provisional: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence.

(Derrida 1991: 60)

Elucidating the relations of difference internal to language and other cultural codes, Derrida has expanded upon these ideas at length, suggesting things take their identity only from that which they are not. An example here is the notion of the city itself, which can be understood only in relation to what it is not (i.e. the countryside). Conversely, to depict a place as rural is, at one and the same time, to stress that it is unequivocally not urban. Meaning is thus relational, and language built on a slippery system of signification where the meaning of words is always deferred and never fixed.

Admittedly, post-structural understandings of text have not entirely replaced materialist and semiotic interpretations, but they have undeniably ushered in a new language of 'deconstruction' and 'destabilisation' (Laurier 1998). Simultaneously, they have encouraged geographers to extend the textual metaphor to encompass a wide range of cultural representations: music (see Leyshon et al. 1998), photography (Kinsman 1995), public art (T. Hall 1997) websites and the Internet (Crang 2002). Additionally, geographers have begun to explore some of the ways the discipline itself represents the world to others through varied forms of geographical exhibition and visualisation. One particularly prominent tradition here has

been to consider maps not as 'ground truth' but rather as representations which impose an artificial order on the complexity of the world. The work of Brian Harley on the deconstruction of maps is influential in this regard. Adapting a broadly Foucauldian method, Harley thus explored the 'agency' of maps, demonstrating that 'the map works in society as a form of power-knowledge' (Harley 1992: 243). Seeking 'to show how cartography also belongs to the terrain of the social world in which it is produced', Harley (1992: 232) drew upon Foucault's notions of knowledge/power to suggest 'we have to read between the lines of technical procedures or of the map's topographical content' to expose the 'rules of cartography' – rules that are seen to be influenced by the rules 'governing the cultural production of the map'. These rules, he argued, are 'related to . . . those of ethnicity, politics, religion or social class, and . . . are also embedded in the map-producing society at large' (Harley 1992: 236).

Through his selective histories of mapping, Harley made the point that maps convey particular knowledges to meet the needs and requirements of the powerful. Having established this, another of Harley's tactics was to draw on Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstruction to search for the slippages and contradictions within maps that actually undermine their authority and reason (see Lilley 2002). In this way, Harley sought to detail the 'duplicity' of maps – a duplicity that many geographers and cartographers ignored by imagining their maps to be increasingly scientific and truthful representations of reality. This duplicity can be illustrated with reference to arguably one of the most famous maps in the world: the map of the London Underground (Plate 2.2). Basically unchanged since originally designed by Harry Beck in 1931, the London Underground map provides an easily comprehended schematic guide to the underground train lines that extend over twenty miles from the heart of the city to its suburbs. Colour-coded to enable instant apprehension, the map nonetheless provides a highly distorted and simplified map of underground topography, with Beck's schema eschewing any direct correlation with the layout of the city it represented: the Thames is straightened out; the extent of central London is exaggerated and the distances between different stations bear little resemblance to the actuality. As such, Pike (2002) argues that Beck's map is best understood as a *conceptual space* which provided an idealised vision of a London where social and spatial segregations were overcome by the modern technologies of the underground (interestingly, Beck was an out-of-work engineering draughtsman at the time, and conceived of the

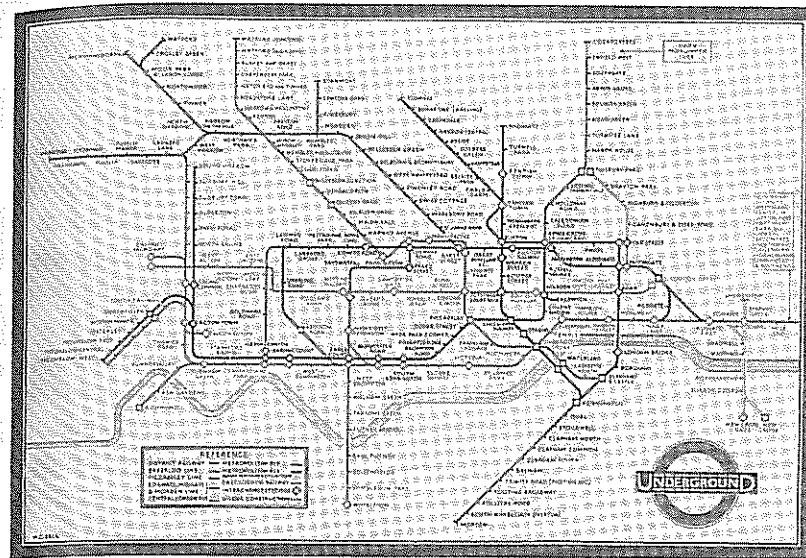


Plate 2.2 The London Underground map (courtesy of London Transport Museum)

city along the lines of an electric circuit board). Yet, by the same token, this conceptualisation has generated other effects, becoming an enduring icon of the city and shaping generations of Londoners' understanding of their place within the city.

Urban mappings such as that of the London Underground thus fulfil a deeper purpose than simply helping people orient themselves in physical space: they encourage us to conceive of the city in particular ways. Indeed, given that such maps emphasise certain places, people and flows, but suppress others, they encapsulate a particular 'way of seeing'. In the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) on the production of urban space in capitalist society, it is suggested that these spatial abstractions typically perpetuate a rational, modern and technocentric viewpoint: what he termed the 'planner's eye view'. While alternative mappings are of course possible, Lefebvre suggested that, in the twentieth century at least, such representations of space conceived the city as a coherent, homogeneous whole which could be planned and organised so as to encourage capitalist development. This is mirrored in the tendency for maps and plans of the city to render invisible those things that planners, architects and

politicians regard as 'out of place' in the city as conceived of from their 'rational', Cartesian and typically male perspective.

Rather than interpreting urban maps as objective representations based on rational, scientific procedures of surveying and mapping, many urban geographers have thus sought to explore how these spatial abstractions serve to perpetuate certain ideologies and ideals. Pike (2002) suggests Haussmann's fastidiously surveyed map of Paris (completed in 1853) represented the first example of such modernist abstraction given it provided the knowledge/power required to initiate a radical programme of urban improvement or 'surgery'. Similarly, Nead (2000: 22) alerts us to the way that Ordnance Survey maps of London were firmly embedded in the efforts to modernise London in the mid-nineteenth century, with 'the rules of measurement and the rules of society being mutually reinforcing'. As Nead details, modern maps effectively compartmentalised, classified and explained the logic of the metropolis, its aesthetics bequeathing a particular understanding of how the city ought to be planned and modernised. Poovey thus alleges mapping is a form of abstraction explicitly linked to a spatial geometry – 'a conceptual grid that enables every phenomenon to be compared, differentiated, and measured by the same yardstick' (Poovey 1995: 9). The same might be said of the plans for many of the new towns and state capitals of the mid-twentieth century, made at a time when confidence in modern planning precepts was at an all-time high. As James Scott (1998) relates, spatial order was manifest in remarkably aesthetic terms in these modern plans: simply put, they had to look regimented and ordered. Le Corbusier's utopian blueprint for the future city is therefore often cited as the quintessence of high-modernist urbanism, its influence on the design of new state capitals such as Brasilia, Ciudad Guyana and Chandigarh (as well as British New Towns, Swedish satellite communities and so on) demonstrating the affinity that emerged between state, capital and modernity in the mid-twentieth century (Holston 1991). In each, 'the order and certainty that had once seemed the function of a God was replaced by a similar faith in a progress vouchsafed by scientists, engineers and planners' (J.C. Scott 1998: 342). The plans which provided the template for urban development were thus exercises in modern abstraction rather than attempts to acknowledge the complex realities of urban life.

Of course, not all maps purport to represent reality. Del Casino and Hanna (2000) explore this when they write of the tourist maps of the city

which are designed explicitly to steer visitors away from certain sites and towards others, dividing the city into visible and invisible attractions (see also Gilbert and Henderson 2002). As they contend, tourist maps may help to reproduce certain urban spaces as unique, exotic, exciting, leisurely or otherwise in contrast to the everyday spaces of work and home. By way of example, they focus on a German tourist guide to the nightlife of Bangkok (Thailand), which, through a series of suggestive icons and symbolic conventions, identifies certain clubs, bars and massage parlours as sites of sexual encounter. This type of mapping serves to steer tourists towards these sites, and away from others, producing a distinctively eroticised understanding of Bangkok's complex urban landscape. Yet Del Casino and Hanna (2000) go on to argue that such tourism maps do not only play a role in the production of tourism spaces, but also contribute to the reproduction of identities:

Identities are defined and contested, and at times naturalized, through representational practices and individual performances. Many tourism maps include images of the people or 'hosts' who make tourism spaces unique, exotic and exciting. Tourists use these images to help them understand who these people are and how they are different from themselves. Some maps portray tourists engaged in the activities for which tourism spaces are produced, thereby confirming tourists' identities and guiding their reproduction of these spaces. In these and other ways, tourism maps contribute to the production of identity and can help us understand the relationships between identity, representation and space.

(Del Casino and Hanna 2000: 25)

In a comparable manner, the guidebooks, postcards and brochures which are the stock-in-trade of the tourist industry can be read as texts which are implicated in the making of particular subjectivities and urban identities. Nevertheless, the meanings of such texts remain 'slippery', and there is much potential for dominant identities to be undermined or disturbed by alternative readings (as Del Casino and Hanna (2000) stress).

WRITING THE CITY

Clearly the notion of the text has been extended by geographers to encompass a wide range of images and representations. Indeed, the elasticity of the textual metaphor is illustrated by the fact that it has been extended to include the urban landscape itself. Following the lead of Denis Cosgrove, many cultural geographers now understand the landscape not so much as a portion of space, but rather as a particular way of representing the (visible) world through cultural forms (e.g. landscape art, perspectival architectural drawings, photographs and visual ensembles) that serve to make the environment legible, coherent and pleasing to the viewer:

Landscape is in fact a way of seeing, a way of composing and harmonising the external world into a scene, a visual unity. The word landscape emerged in the Renaissance to denote a new relationship between humans and their environment. At the same time cartography, astronomy, architecture, surveying, land surveying, painting and many other arts and sciences were being revolutionised by application of formal mathematical and geometrical rules ... Landscape is thus intimately linked with a new way of seeing the world as rationally-ordered, designed and harmonious.

(Cosgrove 1989: 121)

The work of Cosgrove especially drew on the influence of Marxist cultural theorists and historians like Raymond Williams, John Berger and John Barrell to emphasise this way of seeing as inherently ideological. For instance, both Cosgrove (1984) and Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) explored eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions in landscape art, stressing that this mode of representation had close links with changes in land ownership and social relations in the countryside. In essence, such paintings were seen to incorporate an *iconography*, a set of symbols producing certain meanings of place in accordance with the interests of particular class groups. In turn, these symbols expressed a particular relationship between these groups and the landscape, so that the landscape was seen as the *natural* outcome of a particular mode of land ownership and husbandry. In short, the selective and stylised representation of landscape in art was interpreted as a statement of power, encouraging the

preservation and maintenance of certain spaces and social relations (see Bender 1992; Daniels 1993; Nash 1996).

This type of interpretation, which brings social and cultural theory to landscape interpretation, offers a distinctive approach to understanding landscape, one which can trace its lineaments back to the cultural geography pioneered by Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School in the 1920s and 1930s (see P. Jackson 1989). In this tradition, the appearance of the natural landscape was seen to be transformed into a cultural landscape through the human practices and traditions indigenous to a particular area (providing 'a means of classifying areas according to the character of the human groups who occupy them' – Wagner and Mikesell 1962: 2). Less overtly radical in orientation than the iconographic tradition pioneered by Cosgrove and his colleagues, the Berkeley School's emphasis on mapping the distribution of material artefacts in the landscape continues to be an important influence, especially in North American geography. In the so-called 'new' cultural geography, however, the reading of landscape as caught up in political, social and economic power relations has encouraged more *critical* readings of landscape. The difference between these different traditions in cultural geography is subtle, and hotly debated (see W.J. Mitchell 1995), but in sum, it appears that the thrust of the new landscape studies is to consider landscape as part of a *process* of cultural politics, rather than as the outcome of that process.

This focus on the cultural politics of landscape has also provoked stimulating attempts to bring textual theory into dialogue with feminist and postcolonial theory. For example, postcolonial critiques of Western modes of representing and imagining the developing world have pointed out the importance of landscape in imperialist and colonial traditions (Kenney 1995; Neumann 1995; Phillips 1997). This notion of landscape as a highly classed, gendered and racialised way of seeing is also highlighted in many analyses of landscapes of national identity. Herein, the mapping of ideas of (for example) Englishness onto certain landscapes has been seen as central in processes of exclusion which serve to render ethnic, sexual and disabled minorities invisible in dominant constructions of national belonging (Kinsman 1995). In Daniels' (1993: 5) view, 'landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape to the nation'. The connection between nationhood and identity as mediated through landscape has accordingly provided a key tradition in landscape studies, manifest in some lively and

historically nuanced accounts of the role of visual culture in the legitimising of the nation state (Lowenthal 1991; Nash 1993; Matless 1998). While many studies emphasise the importance of rural and Arcadian myths in the construction of national identities, there have been several which have explored the role of particular built landscapes in consolidating national values and ideologies. Notably, Jacobs (1994) has considered the importance of Bank Junction (in the City of London) as a highly charged symbolic landscape, often perceived to be at the heart of the City and the heart of Empire (see Plate 2.3). When threatened with redevelopment in the 1980s, this site became the centre of a major public debate, in which luminaries such as the Prince of Wales invoked the national importance of the site, opposing this to the 'foreign' plans for the site's redevelopment. On a different scale, the layout of entire towns and cities may be read as expressions of national power, such as Canberra, designated as the new capital of Australia in 1908. Here, the state utilised the landscape to express and legitimise its power through the 'persuasive symbolism of landscape meanings' (Winchester et al. 2003: 71).

Likewise, it is clear urban public art generates ideological effects in so far as it mobilises meaning to sustain relations of political domination (see Miles 1998). The power of public art has certainly not been lost on those in positions of authority, with much research highlighting the role



Plate 2.3 *Heart of Empire* (Neils M. Lund, 1904) (permission of London Guildhall Art Gallery)

of public art in legitimating specific socio-spatial relations. For example, Atkinson and Cosgrove (1998) have asserted that the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome was intended to embody particular notions of national identity, providing a 'memory theatre' through which the rhetoric of a united imperial Italy was to be conveyed (see Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998). Built in Beaux Arts style, this elaborate monument to the monarchy included multiple references to the history of imperial Rome in the recurring motif of the human body. Like many other monumental and sculptural works in the nineteenth century, this monument relied on the conventions of realist art and the adoption of a masculine 'way of seeing'. Moreover, its placement on a key ceremonial axis insured that this particular celebration of Italian identity was seen by many, and incorporated into national rituals of belonging and identification.

A ubiquitous feature of prominent public squares, official representations of heads-of-state and war heroes thus represent an important means of attempting to fix national memory – deciding not only who is remembered, but also the form these memories take. Related analyses suggest that monuments and built forms can imbue corporations, institutions and even individuals with power and prestige. Knox (1991) thus proposes the urban landscape represents a remarkable synthesis of 'charisma and context' (see also McNeill 2005, on 'skyscraper geographies'). As such, the townscape can be interpreted as 'written' by architects, developers and planners who operate within specific socio-economic context, its architectural styles and forms highly suggestive of the relations of culture, power and landscape. Domosh (1989) provides a useful guide as to how such a textual interpretation of the urban landscape might proceed, focusing on the sixteen-storey New York World Building, constructed in 1890 in Manhattan to house the offices of Joseph Pulitzer's *The World* newspaper. In this examination, she moves beyond a functional analysis of the building to explore the social and economic context in which it was constructed. Here, she suggests the building had to be tall not only to satisfy a demand for office space in a costly property market, but also to satisfy Pulitzer's personal ego; the French Renaissance Revival style demanded a level of respect, being fashionable among bourgeois classes at the time. Tacking between the shifting commercial imperatives of construction that informed the design and Pulitzer's flair for self-promotion, her reading thus alerts us to the multi-layered task of interpretation:

To understand the World Building necessarily involves one in several layers and types of interpretation – both functional (land values) and symbolic (need for legitimacy), of immediate relation to the object (Pulitzer's concerns) and very distant from the object (development of a class-based society). And all these different layers and types of explanation are related, although how these relationships work may not be so readily apparent.

(Domosh 1989: 351)

While the importance of personal and corporate ego was crucial in the design and iconography of office buildings in Manhattan at the start of the twentieth century, King (2004) contends that such readings of architectural symbolism often need to be informed by a postcolonial perspective. This is the case both in the former colonies (as King shows in his writings on Old and New Delhi) as well as the 'imperial cities' – Vienna, Paris, London, Berlin – which were the command and control hubs of these empires (Driver and Gilbert 1999). Interrogating architecture and social spaces to reveal the colonial constructions and identities which they embodied has thus become an important task for those urban geographers determined to expose the ways in which colonial powers exerted their will over the colonised through the manipulation of space.

Such textured readings of the symbolism of the urban landscape indicate how the text metaphor has been stretched to encompass many urban phenomena. Here, it is apparent that geographers have also started to think about the ability of the contemporary urban landscape to promote particular messages through its appearance and design. Consideration of the way specific buildings promote particular cultural values and social rituals has accordingly been emphasised in studies such as David Ley's (1991) examination of the iconography of cooperative housing in Vancouver, Jon Goss's (1993) analysis of the signs and symbols of the West Edmonton shopping mall and Sharon Zukin's (1995) work on Manhattan, while a more general consideration of the staged inauthenticity of the postmodern urban landscape has been offered by David Harvey:

We can identify an albeit subterranean but nonetheless vital connection between post-Fordism and the postmodern penchant for the design of urban fragments rather than comprehensive planning, for ephemerality and eclecticism of fashion and style rather than the

search for enduring values, for quotation and fiction rather than invention and function and, finally, for medium over message and image over substance.

(Harvey 1989b: 13)

For Harvey, the depthlessness of the contemporary city, with its emphasis on surfaces and signs, is evidentially a means by which capitalism has sought to both attract and distract, transforming spaces of production into spaces of postmodern play and capricious consumption. Disney-esque architectural assemblages are thus a familiar component of city redevelopment schemes, their playful forms obscuring their 'real' role as spaces of capital accumulation and real estate investment.

Ostensibly combining Marxist political economy with post-structural ideas about the instability of meaning, Harvey has offered some stimulating and influential interpretations of the new urban forms emerging in the post-Fordist city (see Chapter 1). Yet, for some, Harvey's continuing emphasis on the imperatives of (disorganised) capitalism lessens the value of his work. Nonetheless, his attention to the commodified signs, styles, metaphors and images is richly suggestive of the importance of signs and symbols in the consumer city. Here, there are significant links to several accounts of postmodernism – particularly that of Jean Baudrillard – which stress that the consumption of signs has become everything, their relation to real or authentic referents no longer an issue. Slipping into the seductive grasp of signs and simulacra, a widely noted tendency has been for consumers to buy into spaces offering multiple opportunities to get lost in this melange of signs and images. In Baudrillard's work, these are described as hyper-real because of the way they feign authenticity; examples include those contemporary shopping malls, theme parks and heritage centres that offer commodified fantasy versions of other places and times (see Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994). An example here is the hyper-real Irish bar, a familiar sight in cities around the world. Replete with draft Guinness, Gaelic football memorabilia, former Irish bank notes and post-cards, these bars offer a version of Irishness which is, conversely, more 'Irish' than that found in pubs in Ireland itself. Like the spaces of cinema, computer games and TV drama, these hyper-real pubs (and shopping centres, heritage parks and theme parks) are representations, at once real and imagined. In the final analysis, by demolishing any easy distinction between image and reality, work on the aesthetics of the postmodern city has therefore

underlined the importance of reading space like a text, its symbolism being created intertextually via the meanings of other texts.

REWRITING THE CITY

While some geographers still insist that particular cities have an essence that can be identified and distilled, the majority would accept that cities are in fact heterogeneous and variegated entities whose spatiality escapes any attempt at mimetic summation and representation. Notwithstanding this, urban politicians and policy-makers constantly seek to do just that, offering up a boosterist narrative that seeks to define the character – perhaps even the spirit – of a city. In the post-industrial West, this narrative is promoted through a plethora of leaflets, websites, CD-ROMs, promotional T-shirts, postcards and videos, each of which extol the virtues of a given city as a great place to live and work. Arguably, such civic boosterism is most entrenched in the United States, where urban quality of life and city league tables are widely and hotly debated (see McCann 2004a), but it is in those cities where deindustrialisation wrought widespread disinvestment and decay in the 1970s and 1980s that the orchestration of place promotion has been most vigorous. In particular, it is the rust belt of the United States where cities are seen to have pioneered city branding (Box 2.3). In such cities, promotional strategies designed to enhance city image have been deemed essential in developing new markets, attracting new investors and preventing the exodus of affluent urban citizens.

Box 2.3 CITY BRANDING

In an era where city governors have become more entrepreneurial and business-minded in their outlook, it is perhaps not surprising that the concepts and language of marketing have infiltrated the realm of urban politics. One element of this is that city governors and promoters often speak of a distinctive urban *brand*. A brand can be defined as 'a mixture of tangible and intangible attributes, symbolized in a trademark, which, if properly managed, creates influence and generates value' (Clifton and Maughan 2000: xvi).

Marketers suggest that the brand is more important than the product that is being sold, and believe that communicating the core values of the brand is the key to generating customer loyalty and brand recognition. Normally developed after an intensive scrutiny of a city's positive and negative attributes for inward investors and tourists, urban branding is designed to bequeath the city with a recognisable and consistent identity which people will immediately associate with a particular city. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) suggest that such branding is often one-dimensional, and seeks to promote one particular facet of urban identity so as to develop a niche in global flows of investment and tourism. This may be through the forging of a connection between a particular city and a personality (Joyce's Dublin or Gaudi's Barcelona), stressing the key contribution of a major landscape or Prestige Project (such as the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao) or highlighting a major cultural or sporting event (the Venice Biennale, the Monaco Grand Prix or the Edinburgh Festival). Naturally, this is tied into an effort to attract particular types of consumption or investment (e.g. Birmingham's branding as 'Europe's meeting place' was a self-conscious attempt to promote the city to high-spending business tourists and conference goers). While possessing a strong and distinctive city brand may help a city position itself on a global stage, there are also inherent dangers in promoting one facet of the city's identity over others: all brands have a sell-by date. The constant monitoring, revision and reworking of brand identities are therefore recognised to be crucial if cities are to maintain their competitive advantages over rival brands.

Key reference: Gold and Ward (1994)

What is clearly evident here is that contemporary forms of place promotion are not simply attempts to advertise the city. Rather, the intention is to reinvent or rewrite the city, weaving myths which are designed to position the city within global flows of urban images and representational practices. Short (1996) suggests the key myths here are that the city is multicultural (and accepting of difference); that it is environmentally friendly, rich in

cultural attractions and supportive of new investors – or, to put it another way, that it is simultaneously a fun city, a green city, a pluralist city and a business city (see also Short and Kim 1998).

Flowerdew (2004) presents an interesting case study of how city authorities attempt to invoke such myths. Focusing on Hong Kong he details how senior public and private sector representatives came together to consider how to develop the former British colony as a city 'enjoying a status similar to that of New York in America and London in Europe'. A report published in 2000 – *Bringing the Vision to Life: Hong Kong's Long-Term Development Needs and Goals* (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 2000) – underlined the goal of developing Hong Kong as 'Asia's World City'. The five core values at the heart of the Brand Hong Kong programme were stated as follows: progressive, free, stable, opportunity and high quality. These themes were discursively constructed not only through the reports and consultation documents that set out the vision for Hong Kong, but also the many promotional videos and brochures seeking to represent Hong Kong as a site for inward investment, tourism and trade. Flowerdew describes the content of one of these (the *Gateways and Portals* video 2001) thus:

We have images representing business activity, with an emphasis on the use of technology such as computers and mobile phones; media production technology; trade (the container port); vibrant night life (neon signs); a modern transport system (the underground rail system); the high speed railway that links the centre of Hong Kong to the new airport; the airport itself; the rule of law (lawyers in wigs and gowns, the Legislative Council and its statue of Justice); a free press (a collage of the logos of local and international print media); education (students celebrating their graduation); global links (the Chief Executive meeting Mickey Mouse [Hong Kong has an agreement for a Disneyland to be built there]); and modern architecture (scenes of skyscrapers and other modern buildings). The video culminates with the gradual appearance of the visual symbol of the Brand Hong Kong, a stylized dragon on the left side of which can be deciphered the words HONG KONG in English and Chinese. This final image coincides with the final line 'Hong Kong: Asia's World City'.

(Flowerdew 2004: 595)

To some extent, Hong Kong's attempt to identify itself as a prime site for global investment and trade has been hampered by other images and associations (such as the Asian financial crisis of 1997, and the outbreak of SARS in 2001) which are not dwelt on in such promotional texts. Similarly, Short et al. (1993) note that many cities remain encumbered with negative images of industrial decline and dereliction which are not easily reversed: it is difficult for some of the heavy engineering cities of the former East Germany to promote themselves as unspoilt post-industrial cities given that they are routinely depicted as having been heavily polluted.

Reversing inherited images of urban decay, inequality or pollution is thus essential in a global economy where 'image is everything'. Yet even when few of these inherited images exist, urban marketeers may still face an uphill struggle in selling their city as ripe for investment. For instance, some cities are simply too small or anonymous to be widely known among those who make international invest decisions. One such example of a city with a 'weak' image is Leicester in the English East Midlands. Although one of England's most ethnically diverse cities, research commissioned by Leicester City Council suggested that people know little about it compared with cities of similar size (e.g. Glasgow, Liverpool, Nottingham or Bristol). In part, this perception was shared by Leicester residents, who displayed little local pride and typically described the city as distinctly ordinary (Landry et al. 2004). On this basis, the Council launched 'Leicester Revealed' – a seven-year initiative to improve the image and perceptions of Leicester. This controversially kicked off in 2003 with street posters bearing slogans like 'Boring, Boring Leicester' and 'Leicester . . . Nothing to Shout About!' (see Plate 2.4). Seeking to acknowledge negative images and addressing them head-on, this campaign provides an interesting example of how place marketing can provoke local people to take more pride in their city (in this instance, not entirely successfully).

Nevertheless, such promotional campaigns can backfire if local populations do not identify with the messages being promoted. Much geographical scrutiny of place marketing has thus focused on the way 'official' representations occlude certain place identities, alienating specific communities. For instance, Boyle and Hughes (1995) contend that Glasgow's reinvention as European City of Culture (1990), pioneered through the 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign and the promotion of local architects and artists like Charles Rennie Mackintosh, was one that

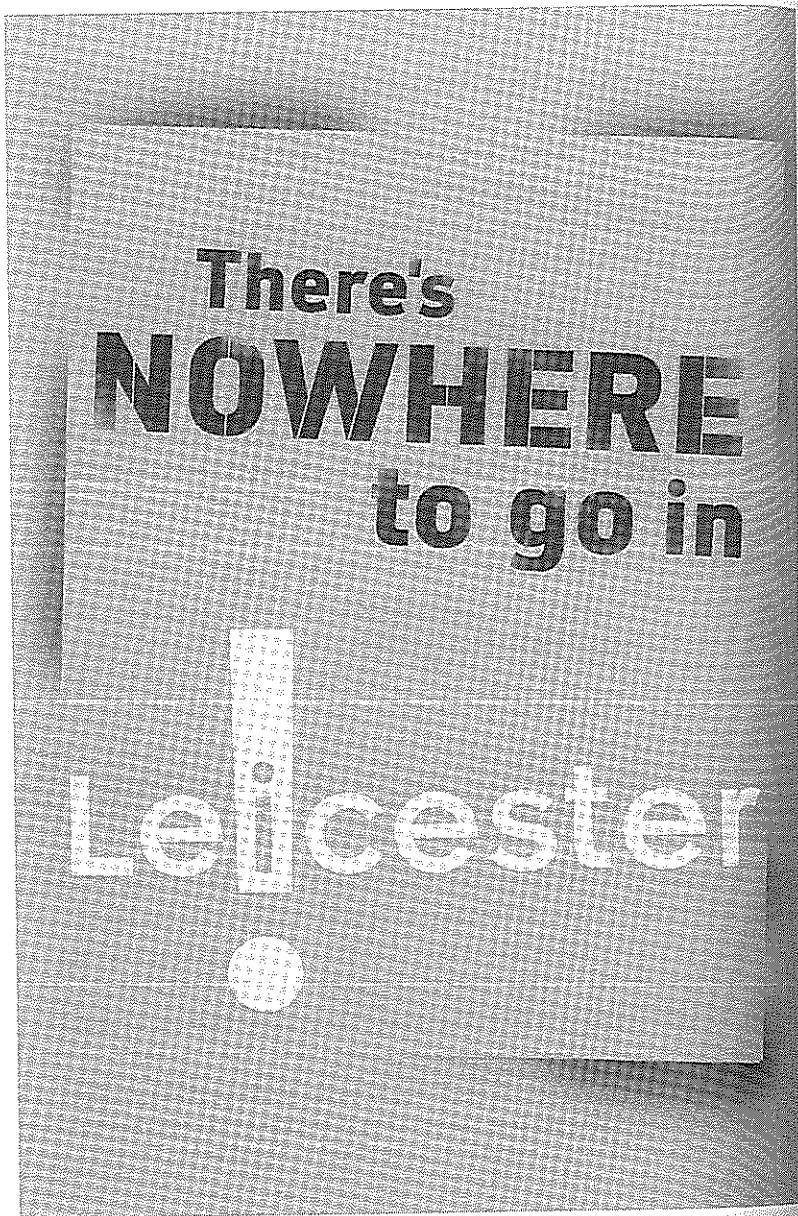


Plate 2.4 Poster used in promoting Leicester (courtesy of Leicestershire Promotions)

alienated much of the city's population. Specifically, it was seen by many on the left as a denial of the city's working-class heritage because of its failure to celebrate (for example) the contribution of the ship-building industry to the local economy, excluding industrial representations of the city in favour of a glossy, post-industrial vision. Subsequent counter-representations by leftist and labour-based groups sought to redress this balance, aiming to shatter the newly manufactured image of the city in favour of one that better represented the lifestyles and experiences of Glasgow's indigenous populace.

Equally, in other cities it is possible to discern that the hyperbole of place marketers often ignores the contribution of specific social groups and neighbourhoods to the city in favour of a 'soft-focus' imagery designed to appeal to middle-class consumers. What this demonstrates is that representations are rarely innocent, being enmeshed in a complex cultural politics by promoting certain senses of place in favour of others. Brian Graham (2002: 101) therefore makes a distinction between two parallel cities: the 'external city', which is known through dominant representations of tourist icons and spectacular landscapes, and the 'internal city ... concerned with social inclusion and exclusion, lifestyle, diversity and multiculturalism'. The tension between these is thus crucial in understanding the process of city promotion, with careful orchestration needed to create meaningful and believable place myths around which local interests can unite.

Nevertheless, as many urban geographers have pointed out, place promotion is rarely limited to the launch of a new advertising campaign, and frequently goes hand in hand with the creation of a new urban landscapes. Indeed, the construction and promotion of iconic new urban landscapes, typically in derelict or waterfront areas, has been an almost universal response to deindustrialisation in British and American cities, following the success of the rejuvenation of Baltimore's waterfront in the 1960s. Such redevelopments frequently centre on a 'flagship' project, a term commonly applied to a pioneering, large-scale urban renewal project such as a cultural centre, conference suite or heritage park designed to play an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration. Examples include the redevelopment of London's Docklands, New York's Battery Park, Barcelona's Olympic Marina, Birmingham's Brindley Place, Paris's La Defense, Lisbon's Expo Centre, Berlin's remodelled Potsdamer Platz, and so on. Inevitably, this redevelopment and 'repackaging' of urban

districts into areas of (and for) consumption is heavily promoted by urban governors, in effect becoming a representation of the city in its own right (Hubbard 1996). The appearance (and scale) of these new packaged landscapes has been proposed as a crucial instrument in the production of a city's images: McNeill (2005) identifies the ongoing race to build the world's tallest building as evidence of the importance of architecture in city promotion.

Of course, there is no guarantee that such schemes, or the publicity they generate, will create additional revenue for the city, and some are financial disasters. This means most have to be underwritten by the state and financed by private sector capital. Frequently, this means the public sector bearing the losses while private sector investors (including large corporate developers and financial institutions such as investment banks and insurance fund managers) reap the benefits. Private capital is thus attracted by the reduced risk implicit in such public-private partnership initiatives, creating a growing 'demand' for similar developments (Gaffikin and Warf 1993; Swyngedouw 1997). By the same token, it is notable that most schemes are targeted to a new global elite, with these urban development schemes supplying the working, living and leisure spaces for those who actually have little commitment to a particular city and live in the essentially self-contained 'islands of the cosmopolitan archipelago' (Bauman 2000: 57; see also Sklair 2005).

In many cases these schemes involve the transformation or gentrification of redundant or 'low grade' sites with redevelopment potential in or around the older quarters of city centres. This has led several commentators to implicate place marketing in a process of corporate-led gentrification, with the re-aestheticisation of the city centre accompanied by the development of 'playscapes' catering to the affluent (Hackworth and Smith 2001; MacLeod and Ward 2002). Hence, while such strategies of city promotion unquestionably improve the aesthetic appearance of downtown districts, when viewed through the lens of political economy, this rewriting of urban space is interpreted not as an end in itself, but the means to an end, namely, the accumulation of capital (Harvey 1989b; Swyngedouw 1997). Consequently, many urban commentators have found it difficult to be sanguine about the impacts of place promotion for those marginalised by capitalist processes. For example, Leitner and Sheppard (1998) have assembled damning empirical evidence to suggest boosterist policies merely deepened existing socio-economic polarities.

As they detail, while growth-promoting strategies created images of prosperity in such declining cities as Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Glasgow, they did not redress such problems as a shrinking number of employment opportunities, neighbourhood decay, and fiscal squeeze. Indeed in some cases they exacerbated them. Leitner and Sheppard (1998) hold up Pittsburgh as emblematic: heralded in the media as a success story because of its revitalised downtown, they point out that it nevertheless had the second-highest black poverty rate among the twenty largest metropolitan areas (36.2 per cent) in 1990, and the sixth highest male unemployment rate (12.1 per cent). For them, this underlines the more general argument that urban pro-growth agendas inevitably intensify social and territorial inequalities within cities.

Despite such critiques of place promotion, almost every Western city (and many non-Western) continues to pump out an endless stream of marketing material and hyperbole. What is particularly notable about this is the remarkably uniform narrative employed by city governors, with each city represented as 'conveniently located', boasting a wide range of cultural amenities and populated by a willing and well-educated workforce. Ultimately, this serial replication of urban representation appears to bequeath weak competition and an overcrowded marketplace (McCann 2004a). Hence, while city promotion is commonly understood as a means to achieve competitive advantage in the global economy, as well as enhancing civic pride and social inclusion, the contradictions and ambiguities of this process are clearly etched in the boosterist rhetoric of place promotion (see also Chapter 5).

CONCLUSION

Despite occasional attempts to examine the impact of city images on spatial behaviour, geographers have traditionally eschewed consideration of urban representation, preferring to describe and explain the formation of 'real' urban landscapes. As a reaction to this, the 'representational turn' has had important effects, bringing questions of culture, power and representation squarely within the ambit of urban geography. As we have seen, metaphors of reading and writing have ushered in new ways of thinking about urban texts: the city is *deconstructed* to reveal its ideological forms; its *iconography* is teased out through careful contextual analysis; urban mappings are unpacked to reveal specific geographical imaginations of

the city. Clearly, the theoretical influences here are wide and varied, taking in socio-semiotic frameworks rooted in political economy as well as post-structural perspectives that emphasise that there is 'nothing beyond the text'.

Reflecting on this representational turn, it is important to stress its ambivalent effects. On the one hand, an emphasis on questions of culture and image has alerted urban geographers to the limitations of analyses which ignore the vital importance of language and text in mediating urban life. On the other, it has been criticised for distracting from 'real' problems of poverty, inequality, deprivation and crime in cities (Peet 1998; Hamnett 2003). While many of these criticisms are misplaced, and potentially easy to allay, the idea that geographers were being led into a position where all they could do would be to offer 'readings of readings' was one that triggered a number of reactions. Hence, while this trope of city-writing (the idea of city as text) is widespread in contemporary urban geography, it is far from hegemonic, being accompanied by other important conceptualisations of urban space.

FURTHER READING

Winchester et al. (2003) *Landscapes: Ways of Imagining the World* provides an excellent introduction to cultural geography, and includes many examples relating to the representation and mapping of the city. Richard Jackson's (1990) *Cultural Geography* remains the key text on language, space and representation, while Shurmer-Smith and Hannam's (1994) *Worlds of Desire, Realms of Power* devotes much attention to post-structural and feminist understandings of landscape. More explicitly urban in orientation is Paul Knox's (1993) *The Restless Urban Landscape*, which provides some absorbing textual readings of urban spectacle, while many chapters in Duncan and Ley (eds) (1993) *Place/Culture/Representation* focus on case studies of gentrification and residential landscapes. For those conducting their own studies of urban representation, an extremely useful guide to visual methods and semiotics is provided by Gillian Rose's (2001) *Visual Methodologies*.

3

THE EVERYDAY CITY

To think about the city is to hold and maintain its conflictual aspects: constraints and possibilities, peacefulness and violence, meetings and solitude, gatherings and separation, the trivial and poetic, brutal functionalism and surprising improvisation.

(Lefebvre 1996: 53)

While Chapter 2 focused on the broad gamut of work considering the city as text, it is evident the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences has inspired other takes on urban culture. One such take is that which sidesteps questions of text and textuality to focus on the textures of the city, not least those created through the social practices of the everyday. Central to this perspective is the idea that the majority of social action in the city is unmediated: that is to say, it does not appear to rely on representational knowledges or images of place. Everyday life in cities is, after all, something that cannot be adequately prepared for: no matter how carefully scripted, urban life has a tendency to surprise, and we are constantly forced to improvise and adapt to events as they unfold around us. This is something particularly evident in the more banal and routine aspects of urban life (for instance, the way we walk, talk, drive and generally negotiate our way through the city streets), yet it is clear that everyday life in cities is characterised by all manner of practical adaptation. What is evident here is that while individuals seldom have much control over

what goes on in cities, they creatively improvise to open up 'pockets of interaction' in which they can assert and express themselves (no matter how fleetingly or inconsequentially) (Thrift 2003b: 103).

For some commentators, a focus on practice is deemed necessary to provide a corrective to the type of ideas considered in Chapter 2. For some, the textual metaphor has been stretched too far, neglecting issues of materiality in favour of a focus on a representation that is insubstantial and, perhaps, unreal:

If all culture, and all the world, becomes a matter for representation, then we may lose purchase on the differences of material substance, whether that material is concrete, earth, paper, celluloid, and similarly, the power of the textual metaphor may be lost through over-extension.

(Matless 2000: 335)

For such reasons, the emerging body of work focusing on the practical negotiation of the city can be interpreted as something of a reaction to the perceived limitations of approaches that prioritised examination of the imagined city rather than its 'material' counterpart. Equally, it can be read as an attempt to revitalise an urban studies where analysis of representational space had taken precedent over lived space. By the late 1990s, a well-established critique of 'representationalism' in general – and cultural geography's landscape fixation in particular – had emerged, centring on the criticism that it 'framed, fixed and rendered inert all that ought to be most lively' (Lorimer 2005: 85; see also P. Jackson 2000; Wylie 2002). Critics warned against 'futile exercises of deconstruction' and the 'verbal games of postmodern theorising' (Castells 2001: 404), suggesting questions of representation distract from the real business of urban studies: producing socially relevant knowledge that can help alleviate poverty, injustice and violence (Hamnett 2003). Cresswell (2003) voiced another significant concern, namely, the exclusivity of much landscape inquiry rendered it inaccessible: in his view, geographical study can be made simultaneously meaningful, popular and political only through a closer engagement with everyday practice.

As we shall see, many of the criticisms of geography's cultural and representational turn have been misplaced. Nonetheless, such criticisms echo those voiced elsewhere in the social sciences, where a concern that

the 'cultural turn' has run its course has triggered a search for new theories which focus on practice and action (Miller 1998). Ironically, this 'practical turn' has involved a re-engagement with the work of Marxist humanists including Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Michel de Certeau and Michel Bakhtin, as well as more recent theories of social action and 'performativity' (see Highmore 2002a). In this chapter, I therefore explore how geographers have grappled with the life of the everyday city, focusing on questions of embodiment, action and practice. Sketching the contours of a putative 'non-representational theory', I thus outline some of the distinctive ways that contemporary geographers are approaching questions of practice, and, on this basis, consider what this tells us about the nature of urban life.

CITIES FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

At first, it appeared simple: to gain an overview of Paris, one needs to find a suitable viewpoint. But where from? The top of the Montparnasse tower? No – the crowds there would distract. The top of Montmartre (where one would have the advantage of not seeing the Basilica Sacré Coeur)? Perhaps, but the view would be too oblique there. Maybe a satellite photograph? But then only one plan would be obtained . . . The balcony of the office of the Mayor of Paris, in the Hotel de Ville? An empty and cold place, surrounded by ugly fountains: one would see nothing of the vitality of the metropolis. So, is it impossible to comprehend the city? Not if we keep moving! Let us circulate, and then, suddenly, Paris will become gradually visible.

(Latour and Hermant 2001, my translation)

As Bruno Latour and photographer Emilie Hermant imply, the search for the essence of a city is one that impels urban researchers to look at the city from different vantage points and viewing angles. Traditionally, it has been thought that one of the best ways of comprehending the city is to look at it from afar and above: the mythical 'god's eye' view of cities which informs all manner of maps, plans, models and abstractions of urban space (Vidler 2002). As we saw in Chapter 2, the pursuit of totalising visions of the city has led to the powerful seeking ways of surveying and

mapping cities from the air, from the earliest surveys by balloons to the use of photogrammetry and satellite imagery. Such aerial perspectives allow one to perceive and represent the city as a totality which can be easily and immediately comprehended (and, by implication, ordered).

The appeal of such an overview of the city was famously captured by de Certeau (2000: 101–102) when he wrote of the ‘violent delight’ of travelling to the top of the World Trade Center in New York, high above the roar of the ‘frantic New York traffic’. The popularity of viewing platforms and observatories in some of the world’s tallest buildings is testament to the thrill of seeing the city from this vantage point (see Plate 3.1). Adopting some of the metaphors of reading and writing we explored in Chapter 2, from this perspective it is possible to read the city as a vast and static panoramic text which stretches out before the viewer. While the pleasures of the tourists who throng around the telescopes and trolleys on observation decks are normally quite innocent, it is from similar vantage points that the powerful have been able to project their mastery over the urban scene. The appeal of this ‘panoptic’ view for those who would seek to order and govern our cities is obvious: it allows them to conceive of a city in which many of the things which potentially disturb their conception of an ordered city can be conveniently ignored: from above, one cannot register the rubbish that piles up in the city’s back alleys, hear the constant noise of traffic and people, or smell the fumes that choke the streets below. Crime, deprivation, death, loss, anger and pain all cease to have any existence in a city that is rendered as a visual ensemble rather than a living, breathing entity.

Hence, as de Certeau spells out, the view from above may exercise a strong appeal, yet it may lead us to (literally) overlook some of the most important facets of city life. For de Certeau (2000), ‘the story begins on ground level with footsteps’ – the activity of thousands of walking bodies constructing the city at street level through a multiplicity of footsteps which can never be added and which never comprise a series. Continuing with a textual metaphor, he argues that pedestrians ‘write’ the city without ‘reading’ it. By this, he implies that when we walk in the city, we are indifferent to representations, not least the panoptic knowledges of those who would control our cities. In effect, the movements of people (and traffic, and animals, and goods . . .) construct a different urban text which cannot be apprehended from afar and above. To ignore this text is thus to ignore a key dimension of urban life. As Benjamin (1985: 50)

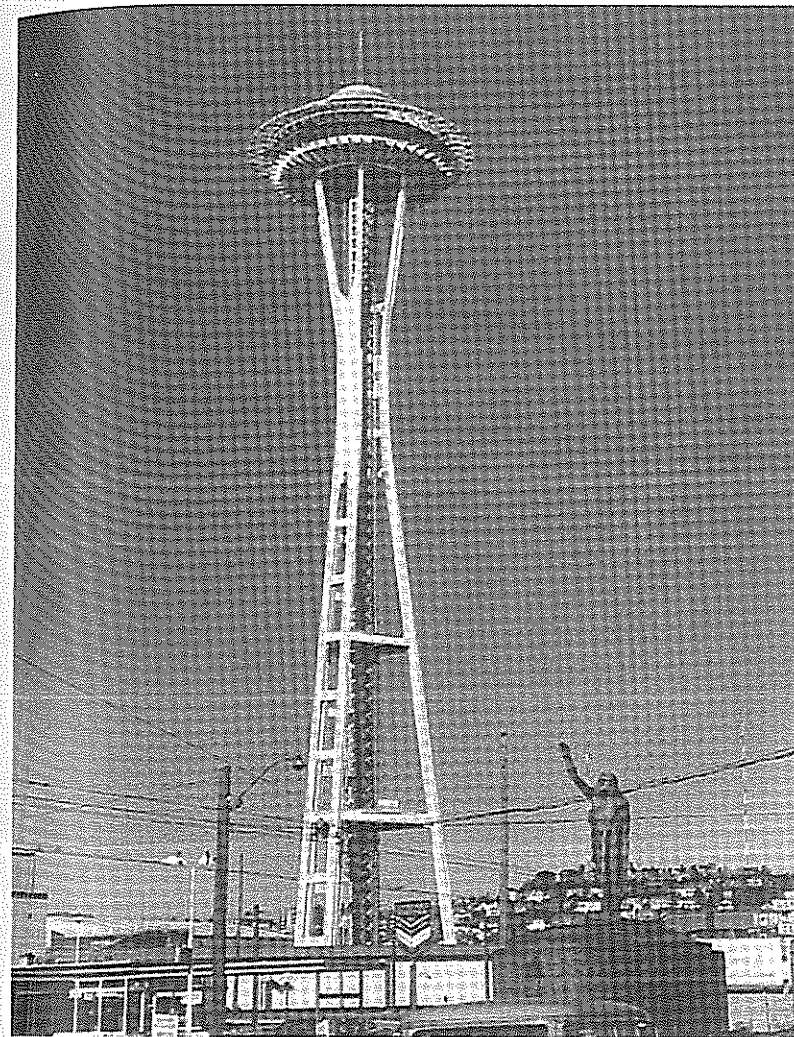


Plate 3.1 The Seattle Sky Needle, opened for the 1962 World's Fair, taps into our desire to see the city 'from above' (source: Bernard Mayo Rivera, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey)

stressed: 'the airline passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it: only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands.'

There are thus important connections between scopic regimes and the exercise of power: as Rose (2003: 213) points out, visualities always have 'their foci, their zooms, their highlights, their blinkers and their blindnesses'. Putting it bluntly, Miles (2002) argues that official accounts of city life (maps, census returns, plans etc.) write the city from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged male. He argues that this 'view from above' unifies disparate elements of urban form, reducing 'human participants in its spectacle to a role equivalent to the figures in an architectural model.' Repressing the agency of those who live and experience the city at 'street level', the implicit danger here is that we get a distorted record of a city's redevelopment: a story told 'by intellectuals and for intellectuals' which ignores the complex ways that 'ordinary' citizens engage with, and change the city in the realms of everyday life. As Thrift (1993: 10) contends, the result of such writing strategies is to perpetuate 'a particular form of urban theory which sees the city as the stamp of great and unified forces which it is the task of the theorist to delineate and delimit.' In his estimation, this creates distinctly modern accounts of modern cities, and dispels the 'magical' elements of urban life, not least the extraordinary capacity for urban dwellers to change the city through everyday practice (see also Pinder 1996).

This emphasis on everydayness is nonetheless problematic (see Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Elaborating, Highmore (2002a: 16) proposes that the everyday is 'a problem, a contradiction and a paradox', being simultaneously 'ordinary and extraordinary' because it is both a collection of repetitive and banal actions which reproduce the status quo, yet is also a site of resistance, revolution and ceaseless transformation. Everyday life has consequently captured the attention of many cultural theorists and activists, who have sought to articulate its ambivalence. Among these thinkers, it is Walter Benjamin who probably did more than any other to elucidate the equivocality of the everyday city. Most famously, his unfinished Arcades project sought to understand how Paris became an industrial capitalist city in the nineteenth century through a series of notes and essays inspired by his wanderings through the shopping arcades of the 1930s. As was described in Chapter 2, Benjamin used the poetry of Charles Baudelaire to

exemplify the sense of magic and loss that was experienced by those living in the city as it underwent rapid and spectacular urban redevelopment. As a wealthy 'man of the streets' (or *flâneur* – see Box 3.1), Baudelaire treated the streets of Paris as his own personal realm, visually consuming its sights and sounds and using them to inspire his art and poetry. His poetry captured both his desire for the new experiences that could be bought and sold in the cafés, arcades and theatres of Paris, as well as his sense of disgust that life had been reduced to an industrial process of production, advertising and consumption. For Benjamin, Baudelaire captured the essence of modernity – and signalled the key contradictions evident in everyday urban life. As such, Baudelaire became Benjamin's alter ego – a figure whose intoxication with Paris reflected Benjamin's own dictum that each moment provides an opportunity for profound illumination (see Merrifield 2002).

Benjamin thus delved into both the arcane and mundane elements of urban existence in his efforts to apprehend the actuality of everyday life. Antiques, books, trash, dioramas, food, films, prostitutes and rag-pickers are all discussed in the unfinished Arcades project. Here, and in his other works (especially *One Way Street* 1985, originally published in 1927), he favoured juxtaposition and montage to draw attention to the contradictions of everyday life. This allowed him to highlight both the 'cancerous' commodity fetishism that intruded into every facet of urban life while still expressing the sheer vitality and possibility of the city (Benjamin 1999: 872). Further, he believed this form of *dialectic imagery* would 'break the spell of the capitalist dream' and give rise to new forms of life (Highmore 2002b).

Through his attention to the poetics of the street, Benjamin demonstrated that Marx's discussion of capitalist commodity forms could be brought down to street level – and, conversely, that the everyday city could be thought about critically. Similar ideas about the revolutionary potential of street life are offered in the work of Henri Lefebvre. Renowned as a philosopher of the everyday, Lefebvre produced a remarkable series of publications that explored how the lived worlds of people (and their sensual and sexual desires) had been gradually colonised ('papered over') by the forces of capitalism (see Lefebvre 1972). In his final works, Lefebvre argued that capitalism had survived and flourished by producing and occupying space, suggesting that each society produces a space suited to its own perpetuation. In effect, this superseded Marx's historical materialism (where class conflict is theorised as the basis of social

Box 3.1 THE FLÂNEUR

While the flâneur is not the only male who used the modern city as a site for observation (e.g. see Farish 2005 on the detective), the flâneur has become a key figure in the histories of urban space and an important trope in city-writing. In essence, the flâneur exists both as a real figure who inhabited the modern city and a metaphor for a particular mode of visual apprehension. In relation to the former, the flâneur was a fashionable man of leisure for whom the streets of the city effectively served as a living room, place of work and source of artistic inspiration. Inevitably a member of the upper classes, the flâneur and his close relations, the rambler, dandy or macaroon, seemingly had no need to work, and instead spent their time promenading in the city. At one and the same time, they were a quintessential part of the urban scene yet also remained distanced and aloof. Their privileged role as men of the streets thus afforded them a distinct vantage point looking at the city and re-presenting its sights and sounds in their poetry, art or writing. As an ideal of urban exploration and representation, many have followed in the footsteps of the flâneur. However, the fact that the flâneur is a gendered figure whose gaze objectified women and allowed them little agency has often been commented on (see especially E. Wilson 1991). It is thus significant that there is no female equivalent of the flâneur, with the 'women on the streets' (i.e. street sex workers) having been subject to the predatory advances of the flâneur. Weighing up these arguments, some have suggested that romanticising the flâneur is dangerous, and that flaneurialism has passed its sell-by date as a mode of experiencing and writing the city.

Further reading: Jenks and Neves (2000); Rendell (2002)

change) with a geographical materialism that focused on spatial conflict. Lefebvre accordingly outlined the importance of urban space in effecting the transition from classical and feudal society (typified by 'historical space') to a capitalist society (characterised by abstract space) by routinising and legitimising the rhythms of everyday life:

What space signifies is dos and don'ts – and this brings us back to power. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order – and hence also a certain disorder. Space commands bodies. This is its *raison d'être*.

(Lefebvre 1991: 121)

Lefebvre dismissed the idea that urban space simply exists, emphasising its social production by distinguishing between three forms of space: spatial practices (the routines that constitute the everyday), representations of space (the knowledges, images and discourses that order space) and spaces of representation (which are created bodily). He suggested that the perceived world of spatial practice (life) was held in a dialectic relation with representations of space (concepts), but that this dialectic could be transcended via creative bodily acts ('life without concepts'). Outlining the interplay between these forms of space, Lefebvre thus developed a trialectic in which all three are held in tension, albeit he suggested that the excessive energies of the body act as a mediator – and potential transformer – of the relationship between these different dimensions of space (Merrifield 1995). Hence, while the (labouring) body is central to the working life of the city, Lefebvre suggested it has the capacity to create cities in which a wider range of desires – including sexual passions – could be realised. Significantly, much of his later writing focused on the revolutionary potential of everyday life by focusing on the love, poetry and games which punctuate the everyday life in moments of 'festival' (Simonsen 2005).

Though Lefebvre expressed considerable faith in the ability of people to create cities which would fulfil their bodily needs and desires, his fear was that the abstract representations of space deployed by architects and planners over-coded 'spaces of everyday practice' by 'de-corporealising' the city. Discussing the world of images and visualisation, he suggests that bodies are effectively 'emptied out', and stripped of their life and warmth by technocratic planning discourse that focuses on the functional order of

urban space. An example here is the designation of shopping spaces as just that – spaces for consumption (and not eating, skating, dog-walking or hanging out – see Plate 3.2). This resonates with Michel de Certeau's (1984: 59) discussion of the strategies (of power) that constitute a mode of administration. In his words, these strategies are those practices of ordering that repress 'all the physical, mental and political pollutants'. De Certeau argued that this is mirrored in the tendency for architect-planners to render invisible those things they regard as 'out of place' in the city as conceived of from their 'rational', phallogocentric, Cartesian perspective. This 'planner's eye view' thus exemplifies the discursively constructed 'representations of space' that Lefebvre felt were vital in ensuring the domination of capitalist space (based on exchange values) over fully lived, spontaneous and creative space (based on use values).

McCann (1999) suggests that Lefebvre's attention to everyday life makes his work particularly relevant to analysis of public spaces, including streets, parking lots, shopping malls and parks. Although these are places often rationalised and planned as spaces of consumption, studies suggest that their occupation frequently challenges this dominant representation. This can be illustrated with reference to rituals of skateboarding, an embodied practice which often challenges the dominant conception and occupation of space:

Skaters' representational mode is not that of writing, drawing or theorising, but of performing – of speaking their meanings and critiques of the city through their urban actions. Here in the movement of the body across urban space, and in its direct interaction with the modern architecture of the city, lies the central critique of skateboarding – a rejection both of the values and of the spatio-temporal modes of living in the contemporary capitalist city.

(Borden 2001: 25)

As Borden (2001) details, the skater's engagement with the city may be conceived as a 'run' across its terrains, including encounters with all manner of diverse objects and spaces: ledges, walls, hydrants, rails, steps, benches, planters, bins, kerbs, banks and so on. In this sense, skaters see the city as a set of objects or surfaces which offer a series of challenges or experiences. This tendency to view the city in this way contrasts markedly with the architect-planners' view, which conceives of the city not as a

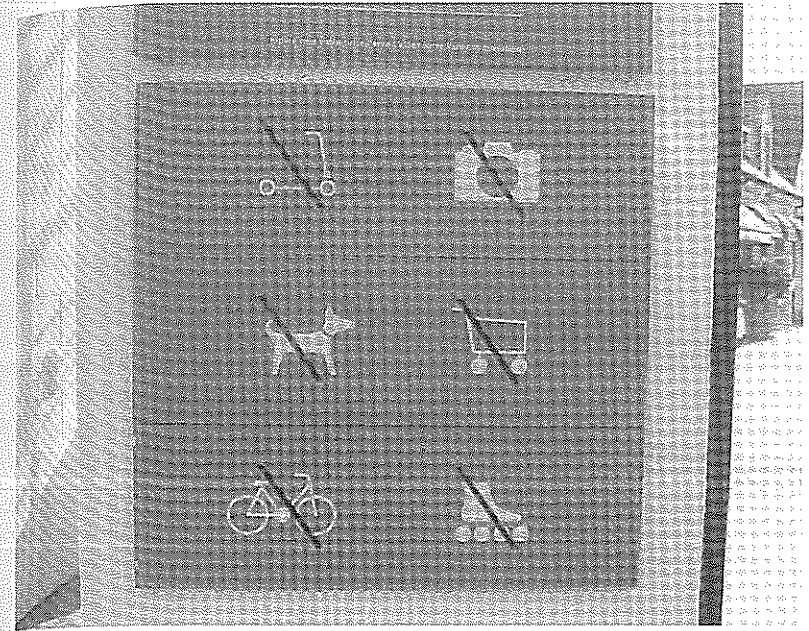


Plate 3.2 Regulating space: dos and don'ts at Marne la Vée shopping centre (photo: author)

series of playspaces but a linked series of (capitalist) functions – domestic reproduction, retailing, commerce, production, consumption, and so on. Play – in so far as it is planned for in the contemporary city – tends to be envisaged as something that only young children do, and then only in designated, safe playgrounds.

Consequently, skaters produce *spaces of representation* which oppose official *representations of space* and raise key questions about who has the right to the city (see also D. Mitchell 2003). In de Certeau's (1984) terminology, the skateboarders' use of the city constitutes a *tactical appropriation*. As he put it, the tactics of the weak do not 'obey the laws of place, for they are not defined or identified by it' (de Certeau 1984: 29); they are counterposed with the strategies of the strong. Moreover, such tactics may be self-consciously conceived as a form of opposition by groups which imagine themselves as part of the counterculture. This is reflected in the music, styles and fashions adopted by urban skaters, as Flusty (2000) suggests in his description of skaters in Los Angeles:

From deep within the bowels of Bunker Hill, Pablo, Juan, Julio and Bob come rumbling out of the Third Street tunnel. Confronted by a red light and a river of one-way traffic at Hill Street, they kick up the noses of their skateboards in unison and, tails scraping against the sidewalk, come to a dead stop inches from the curb. Dressed in Chinos and baggy knee-length shorts, T-shirts and tanktops emblazoned with skate team and band logos, visored caps askew on their heads, these four comprise the core of Mad Dog Skate.

(Flusty 2000: 153)

Like most skateboarders, the loosely affiliated skate team Flusty describes do not have the resources to build their own ramps and obstacles, so take to the streets, contributing to the evolution of a 'street style' of skating. Flusty (2000: 154) describes how they congregate around the Bunker Hill area – 'an agglomeration of low curbs, wide expanses of pavement, flights of gentle steps . . . long handicap access ramps for picking up speed, and retaining walls that protrude from plaza surfaces out into open air as the hill falls away beneath'. Although this an area providing opportunities for 'serious play', the skaters' occupation of this space is contested and often brings them into conflict with landowners and retailers. Skaters, according to local shop-owners, are 'noisy', 'disruptive' and engage in activities that endanger shoppers. Here, and elsewhere in Western cities, the police often caution skaters for 'pedestrian endangerment': infractions of skate bans in specific areas can merit fines, hours of community service and/or short sentences in juvenile detention facilities (see Woolley and Johns 2001 on the UK experience).

The idea that geographic order is imposed 'from above' through the panoptic gaze and segregationist strategies pursued by the police, magistrates, engineers and planners accordingly needs to be tempered with the observation that at 'street level' we find that individuals and groups create their own urban geographies, using cities in ways very different than bureaucrats and administrators intend(ed). Ideas of *resistance* are consequently of major importance in many geographers' discussions of the everyday politics of the city. Rejecting notions that power can be wielded only by the powerful, such work adopts a more diffuse notion of power (inherited from Foucault) to suggest that if the power to own and occupy space is everywhere then it can potentially be resisted everywhere. In such cases resistance involves attempts to create different

spatialities from those that are defined by the law and state. This can result in places being changed or adapted as people become empowered through resistance (Sharp et al. 2000).

De Certeau's work is therefore highly significant given it draws attention to the everyday manifestations and forms of resistance that may be found in cities. Deflecting attention away from the more 'obvious' forms of resistance – squatting, sit-ins, strikes, riots, parades, to name just a few – de Certeau argued that resistances are more usually assembled from the materials and practices of everyday life. These resistances may therefore be ephemeral and slight; for instance, a single look, a movement or a simple spoken word might all encompass resistance. Developing this logic, de Certeau famously wrote of the simple act of walking as resistive, describing it as a 'process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian' (de Certeau 1984: 97). Here, he implies that pedestrians can effectively reclaim the streets through improvisational tactics, with their footfall fleetingly appropriating spaces that have been rendered 'sterile' by engineers, planners and architects. The act of walking therefore becomes, in effect, one of the principal ways that citizens can refute the notions of moral and social order which have been inscribed on the landscape. Notable examples here include the way that many women's groups have been involved in attempts to 'Reclaim the Night' simply by walking on the streets of cities at night (Watson 1999); more overtly theorised instances include the situationist *dérives* which seek to expose the vicissitudes of the consumer city by enacting an unmeditated ramble through the city (see Box 3.2). Another theorised (and highly athletic) attempt to rewrite the city is to be found in the stylised activities of the free-running *parkouristes* who climb and leap across the cityscape in an often death-defying manner: their playful engagement with the city's hard landscape challenges all citizens to look at the city afresh (see Plate 3.3).

The representational mode of free-running – like skateboarding – is not interpretive, but performative. Overtly politicised street parties (such as those organised by Reclaim the Streets) and 'carnivals against capitalism' also celebrate the playful elements of urban life, staking a performative claim to space. Likewise, artistic interventions in the city – projections, street stencils, installations and 'billboard banditry' – are often playful in intent, seeking to subvert through strategies of *detournement* (Plate 3.4) (see especially Cresswell 1999). What all have in common is

Box 3.2 SITUATIONISM

Initially associated with a number of surrealist and avant-garde groups, the Situationist International (SI) formed in 1957 with the intention of re-enchanting everyday life. From the outset, the SI spoke to the conditions of contemporary urbanisation, and sought to expose the radical potential of urban space (noting that the contemporary city contained the conditions of possibility for its own transformation) (Pinder 2000). Inspired by the revolutionary actions of the French communards in the 1870s, the SI similarly sought to give the city 'back' to the people, adapting a number of playful concepts and tactics designed to emphasise the impoverished nature of everyday life in the city. Chief among these was the *dérive*, and experimental and unmediated drift through the city intended to show how the capitalist city held people in its thrall and condemned citizens to an essentially boring life. In turn, the *dérive* was intended to unfix the city's relations, and bring a more playful form of existence into being. The most celebrated proponent of the *dérive* – Guy Debord – saw the *dérive* as a way of tapping into the *psychogeographies* of place and understanding the way that cities are designed to evoke particular feelings or emotions. His own 'vagabond peregrinations' around Paris sought out disappearing spaces where malcontents and dreamers conversed, identifying points of resistance against an interminable process of 'improvement' (Merrifield 2005: 932). Romanticising those who lived an openly independent life, Debord and SI thus opposed the forces of modernisation which polished the rough edges of city life, and argued for a more 'real' (and less spectacular) city. During the student riots of 1968, situationist slogans (e.g. 'Beneath the pavement, the beach') were daubed on the streets of Paris, and for a while it seemed as though the urban revolution that the SI had sought was becoming a reality (Hollier 1994). The state's censure of some of the leaders of the 1968 revolt dissipated the influence of the movement, and threatened to relegate situationism to a mere footnote in art history. However, its ideas

have had an enduring appeal for many musicians, artists, activists and academics. In particular, a spate of positive reappraisals in the 1990s (e.g. Plant 1992; Sadler 1998), coupled with the popularity of the psychogeographical writings of Iain Sinclair and Ian Home, means that situationism is currently receiving more attention from urban geographers than it did in the 1960s. As Pinder (2004: 118) argues, in an era where utopian thinking is badly needed, situationism provides a wealth of important ideas for those seeking to construct a critical geography which might attack the 'congealed qualities of the urban'.

Further reading: Sadler (1998); Hoggart (2004)



Plate 3.3 Le parkour: a free-runner turns the city into a playground (photo: Pauli Peura)

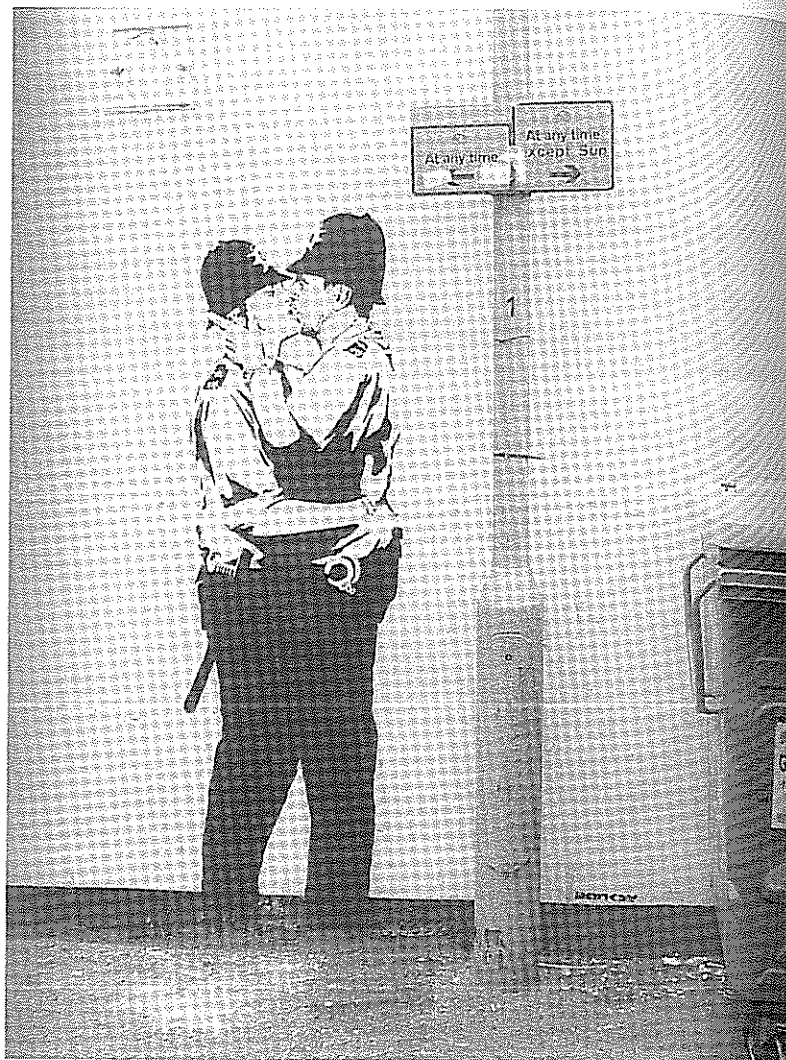


Plate 3.4 Stencil art in London: Banksy's urban interventions blur the boundaries of art, surrealism and situationism, and provoke a mixture of critical readings (with permission of the artist)

that they are interruptions which produce new urban temporalities, puncturing the humdrum routine of city life through ludic celebration. This principle of interruption is arguably that underpinning Breton's surrealism, Debord's *dérive* and Lefebvre's celebration of *la fête* (Roberts 1999). Each is based on the idea that everyday life contains moments that break through its linear repetitions to challenge processes of abstraction and ordering ('eruptions of instability through the carefully spread net of rational and homogeneous modernity' – Shields 1999: 183).

In their own ways, situationism, street stencilling, urban graffiti and *le parkour* are all deliberate attempts to subvert and subvert urban space. But if some politically motivated groups may set out to challenge codings of city space in a manner that deliberately flouts convention, others may find their presence in particular city spaces unintentionally brings them into conflict with the forces of law and order. As such, their transgression does not constitute an intended act of resistance but relies on that particular action being noticed and considered deviant and marginal (Cresswell 1996). Those who transgress are frequently subject to exclusion, being forcibly ejected or asked to leave specific places. An example here is the presence of street children in some Western, and many non-Western, cities. As Young (2003) relates in her study of street children in Uganda, for these children, survival may depend on 'street activities' such as picking vegetables in the markets as they 'fall' from the trucks, snatching wallets under the anonymity of a crowded area, or begging from passers-by and the many shops and restaurants in the city. At busy traffic lights, children may smear dirty cloths across car windows, asking for payment, or else simply beg. Young (2003) suggests this type of begging activity often antagonises other street users because the children are very persistent: further, it is a reminder of the social inequalities that are evident in the city. A common response is for the state to introduce laws intended to remove these children from the streets (adapting a time-honoured logic of 'out of sight, out of mind').

More generally, homeless people constitute a group whose everyday spatial practice brings them into conflict with the authorities. As Daly (1998) points out, this group are forced to occupy public space for both economic and social reasons (e.g. bartering, begging, socialising, finding a place to live) because they have been evicted from the private spaces of the real estate market. However, their subsequent presence on the streets is fiercely contested, and although it is possible to detect a great deal of

general sympathy for those living on the streets, at a local level this tends to translate into a concern that homeless people should be removed from particular residential and commercial areas. This urge to exclude the homeless has complex origins revolving around people's fears of difference, but certainly in societies where private property is highly valued, those without houses are often spurned as non-entities. The sight of homeless people using public space for activities normally restricted to the domestic realm (e.g. washing, urinating, sleeping) is one that appears particularly transgressive and disturbing to mainstream populations. The stigmatisation of homeless people thus resonates with the same kinds of metaphors that have been used to describe troublesome 'others' throughout history, with ideas of homeless individuals as dirty, deviant and dangerous provoking fears about the potential of homeless people to 'lower the tone' (and the house prices) in a particular area.

In an era when city governors are seeking to attract global investment through vigorous efforts at place promotion (see Chapter 2), this stigmatisation of homeless people is arguably becoming more pronounced. Targeted as a group who have no place in city centres catering for the affluent consumers, tourists and business-people, this is especially notable in Western city centres undergoing corporate gentrification. By way of example, Neil Smith (1996) graphically documents the way in which the 'improvement' and gentrification of New York's Lower East Side resulted in the systematic eviction of homeless people from a number of shelters, parks and streets. Most notably, he describes the forcible removal of homeless people from Tompkins Square Park, an area that had begun to be regularly used as a place to sleep by around fifty homeless people, recounting how the police waited until the coldest day of the year to evict the entire homeless population from the park, their belongings being hauled away by a queue of Sanitation Department garbage trucks (reiterating that notions of social purification rest on ideas that certain people are 'polluting'). He sees this heavy-handed treatment as symptomatic of the fears evident among the new middle and upper classes who had relocated to the Lower East Side; groups who regarded unemployed people, gays or immigrants as a potential threat to their dream of urban living.

Neil Smith (1996) describes such heavy-handed attempts to exclude the street homeless from particular sites as symptomatic of the *revanchism* (literally, 'revenge') evident in contemporary cities, where sometimes

brutal attacks on 'others' have become cloaked in the language of public morality, neighbourhood security and 'family values'. According to him, manifestations of revanchism have become apparent throughout the urban West with the introduction of curfews, public order acts, by-laws and draconian policing designed to exclude certain 'others' from spaces claimed by the affluent. For example, in many US cities, this has involved the passing of 'anti-homeless' laws designed to prevent people congregating in parking lots, making it illegal to panhandle or beg within range of a cash machine or even making sleeping in public an offence (see D. Mitchell 1997). Elsewhere, suitable sites for the congregation of the street homeless have been 'designed out' by the authorities barricading public parks at night, removing benches that might be used for sleeping on. Collectively, these acts send out the message that the authorities wish to remove the homeless from the planned spaces of the consumer city (something underlined in the increasing espousal of Zero Tolerance policing for panhandlers, beggars, peddlers and prostitutes in many Western cities – see Hubbard 2004).

EVENTS TO COME: EMBODIED SPACES, EVERYDAY LIVES

Documenting the diverse forms of life that take shape on the streets clearly alerts us to the varied forms of transgression and resistance practiced in the city, and offers a useful rejoinder to official representations and mappings made 'from above'. As Cresswell (1996) details, focusing on the actions that are regarded as out of place in the city helps reveal the moral and social order immanent in everyday space (explaining the current popularity of studies of urban transgression). Yet dwelling on examples which disturb the established rhythms of the city potentially distracts us from considering the routine business of getting on and getting by in the city. After all, whether or not they are part of the homed or homeless population, all urban dwellers have to negotiate the city *practically*, and work through the dilemmas, problems and possibilities of 'getting by' in the city. An example is simply walking around the city, an everyday activity that is nonetheless dependent upon a range of purposeful and directed actions. Walking from one shop to another when we are shopping, for instance, rarely involves us walking a premeditated route but requires an adaptation to circumstances: we may be drawn along with crowds or cut

through a back alley, cross roads at a pedestrian crossing or simply cross when we sense a gap in the traffic, stop to buy a copy of the *Big Issue* from a vendor or change direction to evade a petitioner. On the other hand, we may be that *Big Issue* seller, searching for a pitch that offers warmth, comfort and, it is hoped, a steady stream of potential purchasers. Whatever, the myriad of encounters we have to negotiate in the city requires a constant awareness and surveillance of other urban practitioners: the resulting 'street ballet' is the outcome of learnt modes of interaction designed to minimise contact with strangers and to deal with the complexity of the streets. Overall, the sum of our movements cannot be explained in rational terms (and is unlikely to be the shortest distance between a series of points).

Negotiating the everyday city, and connecting our home and work lives, thus involves considerable skill and aptitude. Jarvis et al. (2001) insist that much of this practical accomplishment remains underexamined by urban geographers. Notable exceptions are evident in the pioneering work of feminist geographers on social reproduction, which can be defined as concerning the world of non-work and unpaid work (i.e. activities such as shopping, housework, taking children to and from school). Perhaps more so than any other literature, it is this feminist research that has revealed just how much is missed by the planner, geographer or architect who remains fixated on the view from above. An example here is the effort required to navigate and negotiate the city when looking after children (not least those in pushchairs). Noting that childcare predominantly remains 'women's work', and, conversely, that most planners and architects are men, feminist research has highlighted the difficulty that can be faced when travelling from home to school, or from shops to home, when encumbered with children and heavy shopping. Widely cited studies such as that by Tivers (1985) reveal the tortuous journeys some childcarers have to undertake to avoid steep inclines or steps, as well as to avoid dark underpasses that may provoke fears of urban mismetings and attack (see also Valentine 1989).

Such differential gender mobilities have been widely noted in feminist critiques of planning: for example, Greed (1994: 135) suggests that the division between drivers and pedestrians 'equates nicely with the division between shoppers and workers, and hence between women and men'. Supporting Lefebvre's (1995: 73) assertion that 'everyday life weighs heaviest on women', such writing suggests that modern planning often imagined a 'time-rich' and mobile housewife that, in practice, did not exist.

The fact that many comprehensive redevelopment schemes in post-Second World War British cities incorporated city centres replete with multilevel shopping centres, underpasses, and poorly lit and inaccessible multistorey car parks further underlines the dissonance between male planners' conceptions of the city and women's use and occupation of the city (Hubbard and Lilley 2004) (Plate 3.5).

Related perspectives on the (often-problematic) negotiation of urban space are provided in work on disability and the city, which demonstrates that cities do not cater for the full range of human body types and capabilities. From the perspective of a disabled body, the city is characterised by physical inaccessibility and exclusion, with the physical layout of cities at both a macro and micro scale placing disabled people at risk of both personal injury and social exclusion (Gleeson 2001). Hence, while the marginalisation of 'disabled' people is clearly connected to the privileging of certain bodies as productive, this is compounded by thoughtless



Plate 3.5 Post-war planning – exemplified here by Coventry city centre, UK – created multilevel precincts in which a maze of underpasses, overpasses, ramps and stairs created particular problems for parents and elderly people (see Hubbard and Lilley 2004)

urban design. For example, those with locomotion problems (a category which includes most, if not all, of us at some time of our lives) have typically found their access to spaces of work, leisure and welfare constrained by poorly designed buildings which prevent the use of wheelchairs or walking frames by including stairs or excessively steep ramps. The relative lack of accessible toilet facilities for wheelchair users further constrains their spatial mobility (Kitchin and Law 2001). Likewise, those with visual impairment experience a range of everyday mobility problems in the city, only some of which are mitigated by the installation of dropped kerbs, Braille signage and textured street paving.

Such examples indicate the sheer bodily effort, resourcefulness and adaptation which is needed to cope with urban life. Literatures on everyday practice thus point to the importance of *embodiment* in urban geography:

One thing that does seem to be widely agreed is that place is involved with embodiment. It is difficult to think of places outside the body ... think of a walk in the city and place consists not just of eye-making contact with other people or advertising signs and buildings but also the sound of traffic noise and conversation, the touch of ticket machines and hand rail, the smell of exhaust fumes and cooking food.

(Thrift 2003b: 103)

Thrift's ruminations on city life serve to make the point that we cannot conceive of a city without thinking about the way it is experienced and registered via the body. Likewise, Edensor (2000: 76) insists that bodies act upon the city, 'inscribing their presence in a continual process of remaking'. And yet it is only since the late 1990s or thereabouts that geographers have truly engaged with debates about embodiment, initially via work on bodily ability and disability, but latterly in relation to a range of social identities and practices.

As has been suggested above, one way in which our everyday experience of cities varies is according to our sexed and gendered bodies (and other people's perceptions of our gendered bodies). Davidson and Bondi (2004) insist that women feel a heightened sense of embodiment, thanks in no small measure to the fact that men express themselves expansively, and impose masculinity in and on their environs. A common feeling for women is accordingly that they are caught and confined in city spaces.

One (extreme) example of this is the agoraphobic panic some women experience in social spaces and situations (Davidson 2000), yet this is perhaps just an exaggerated example of the way space presses differently on women's and men's bodies. This is also apparent in the exclusion of gay, lesbian and bisexually identified bodies from 'straight' spaces, with the majority of everyday spaces supporting a heterosexualised body ideal (Binnie and Valentine 1999). When bodies do not conform with this ideal; and cross established sex/gender boundaries (for example, through transvestism), they are often subject to intimidation and harassment. For instance, Browne (2004) describes how the traditional distinction of male and female toilets creates specific problems for those whose bodies do not conform to feminine or masculine ideals. For such reasons, some people may make major detours to avoid certain public toilets.

Such questions of the connections between gender, sexuality and the body are also highlighted in the work of Longhurst (2000). Drawing on feminist theorists including Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz, her work on the pregnant body provides an interesting example of how pressures to fulfil idealised body images make some women feel uncomfortable in certain urban spaces. Interviewing pregnant women in Hamilton, New Zealand, she found that the Centre Park shopping centre – a shopping environment targeting middle- and high-income women – was experienced as an exclusionary space. This sense of exclusion was evident on a number of levels; for example, it was evident that window displays often incorporated idealised images of women that were normatively glamorous, sexy and attractive, but which alienated pregnant women. Moreover, few shops provided clothing for pregnant mothers. More prosaically, those interviewed also reported that toilets, escalators and seating were not designed with the bodily form of pregnant women in mind. Concluding, Longhurst stresses there are many social norms which pregnant women are supposed to adhere to in terms of dress code, comportment and movement in public space. Because of cultural rules of pregnancy whereby women are not supposed to engage in sport, drink or smoke, or even have sex, it is therefore not surprising that some women found their usual public behaviours in public becoming unacceptable. In short, women whose bodies are sexed (and sexy) before they are pregnant take on different meanings during pregnancy, meaning that they may feel 'ugly and alien' in some city places that they previously felt welcome in. Sexist assumptions about women's rights to display their body may

also serve to discourage women who consider themselves 'overweight' from sunbathing in public parks and beaches (McDowell 1999). Many 'obese' women also feel extremely uneasy about eating in public space for fear that their 'uncivilised eating' may be read as evidence of their gluttony (Valentine 1999).

This focus on the relations between the body and the city suggests that the social and biological entwine to shape and constrain urban routines. Likewise, it implies that geographers need to theorise urban settings as spaces that individuals engage with through both mind and body (social action being subjective, situated and embodied). However, Amin and Thrift (2002: 85) push this further, arguing the body remains the chief source of agency in the world, but that few bodily actions actually require motive (i.e. attribution of intention, justification or premeditation). For them, it is important to realise our material surroundings provoke bodily actions that, 95 per cent of the time at least, occur in the 'cognitive unconscious'. Simplifying to the extreme, this implies many social practices are intuitive – for example, we might cycle to work without remembering how we got from A to B, or play sports without thinking about what we are doing (or why). Action in space is therefore rarely conscious, and is often improvised. Amin and Thrift (2002) go so far as to suggest this improvisational bodily action includes talk: not just as representational praxis, but as a way of making sense of the world (through the process of making suppositions about our circumstances – see also Laurier 2001).

Amin and Thrift's (2002) privileging of embodied practice over mediated thought and language draws on the phenomenological theories of authors as varied as Mauss, Benjamin, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Bourdieu (for an overview, see Hubbard et al. 2002). It also has some notable precedents in humanistic (i.e. human-centred) geography. For example, seeking to explore people's negotiation of the streets, David Seamon (1979: 16) developed a phenomenology of everyday life which sought to uncover and describe things and experiences – i.e. *phenomena* – 'as they are in their own terms'. Rejecting abstract theorisation and categorisation, he developed an experiential framework which focused on three related phenomena: movement (a focus on how bodies move through space), rest (how individual bodies find a place of dwelling) and encounter (how bodies interact with other bodies and things in their everyday worlds).

This 'triad of environmental experience' placed particular emphasis on the body as something which comes to 'know' its environment on its own terms. This may be an uncomfortable idea because we are so used to thinking about the ways in which our minds are our centres of experience, feeling and knowledge, but Seamon's interpretation suggested that our bodies too have intimate knowledge of the everyday spaces of our lives. The implication here is that we do not have to think about the way we move through urban space: our body feels its way. This idea is obviously opposed to the tendency of Western thought to separate the mind from the body, where the body is seen as largely under the control of the mind, as the tool of the mind (Butler 1999). Seamon is keen to break down this dualism. Instead of the human subject being theorised as a mind 'trapped' in, or working with, the body, he suggests that we consider individual people as 'body-subjects'. Following Merleau-Ponty (1962), the relation of a subject to the world is seen to be revealed in the purposive movements of the body – the body itself becomes the locus of intentionality (see also Cresswell 1999).

Despite the renewed interest in the phenomenology of the body, most geographical research remains predicated on the use of research methods that cannot adequately capture embodied experiences of space. The exceptions are informed by emerging debates in geography over the need to engage with lay knowledges (Crouch 2001) as well as the turn to non-representational theories (Box 3.3) that prioritise doing over discourse:

The emphasis is on practices that cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey – on forms of experience and movement that are not only or never cognitive. Instead of theoretically representing the world, 'non-representational theory' is concerned with the ways in which subjects know the world without knowing it, the 'inarticulate understanding' or 'practical intelligibility' of an 'unformulated practical grasp of the world.

(Nash 2000: 655)

The privileging of 'ordinary' people's knowledge is crucial here, with the politics of non-representational theory stressing the importance of 'appreciating, and valorising, the skills and knowledges' of embodied beings that 'have been so consistently devalorised by contemplative forms of life, thus underlining that their stake in the world is just as great as the

Box 3.3 NON-REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY

For Thrift (1997: 146), non-representational theory is concerned not so much with representations and texts (see Chapter 2) but more with the 'mundane, everyday practices that shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites'. This necessitates devoting attention to things that words and representations cannot express – the practical experiences of ordinary people that are rarely spoken of but constantly performed and felt. As he puts it, this focuses on the body, or more correctly, the body-subject, as it finds itself and remakes itself in a world that is constantly changing and becoming. Exploring the non-verbal and pre-discursive ways people 'do' identities, there is now an extensive geographical literature on the ways people dance, walk, swim, ride or sit their identities (Nash 2000), as well as the way they perform their identities through bodily gestures, modes of eating or styles of dressing (Valentine 1999). This literature has illuminated our understanding of an ever-widening range of everyday and seemingly mundane behaviours, such as cinema-going (Hubbard 2002), gardening (Crouch 2001), listening to music (B. Anderson 2004), drinking (Latham and McCormack 2004) and driving (Merriman 2004; Thrift 2004; Laurier et al. 2005). In relation to driving, for example, Thrift (2004: 58) suggests it is 'possible to write of a rich phenomenology of automobility, one often filled to bursting with embodied cues and gestures which work over many communicative registers and which cannot be reduced simply to cultural codes.' However, critics of non-representational theory (and there are many) assert it offers little new in terms of theoretical explanation. Moreover, some are dismayed that it proclaims to be anti-representation. Yet those advocating non-representational approaches insist they are not anti-representation, and that the labelling of this approach is more than a little misleading. Lorimer (2005) surmises it is better to talk of 'more-than-representational' geography, the original 'non-' title discouraging some from engaging with this important body of work.

Further reading: Thrift (2003b)

stake of those who are paid to comment upon it' (Thrift 1997: 126). Or, as Laurier (2001) has put it, it is about valuing people's everyday competencies rather than the world-views of theory-driven, professional researchers.

This shift from *theory* to *practice* is decisive as it demands that researchers consider urban spaces as embodied and lived, not just imagined and represented. Here it is interesting to note that one of the inspirations listed by Nigel Thrift (1999) in his tentative proposal for non-representational theories is Michel de Certeau. Thrift especially seizes upon de Certeau's description of the urban body as subject to social controls but endlessly expressive and resistive. Thrift (2003b: 109) echoes this when he argues that people are able to use talk, gesture and bodily movement to 'open up pockets of interaction over which they have control'. Malbon's (1999) ethnography of urban nightlife amply illustrates this, demonstrating that bodily practices and proficiencies (dancing, adornment, poise and so on) create choreographies of belongingness which often escape rational explanation or social control. Whether on dance floors, ice rinks or in crowded bars, people habitually use their bodies to make spaces of interaction, creating particular forms of conviviality and sociality. Of course, it may also be that the effects of alcohol and drugs are implicated in the particular ways of moving, gesturing, walking and talking that are in play here (Latham and McCormack 2004), while music is especially crucial to spaces of clubbing, creating particular moods through its rhythms (see also B. Anderson 2004). This points to the role of various mediators in the unfolding relationship between the body and the city – and hence a need to take the city's materialities seriously.

BEYOND REPRESENTATION? THE MATERIALITY OF CITIES

Traditionally, geographers have not ignored the materiality of the city, and have sought to map and model the city's built landscapes in a variety of ways (see Chapter 1). Yet a heightened responsiveness to matter and materiality has arguably emerged from the 'anxiety about the position of "the material" in the twists of the "cultural turn"' (B. Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004: 672). Most significant here is the argument that the recent preoccupation with representation has distracted from consideration of the non-representational. For example, Loretta Lees argues that to

analyse the power and ideology encoded in the built environment is not enough: 'architectural geography should be about more than just representation' (Lees 2001: 51). Lees consequently argues that architecture is performative 'in the sense that it involves ongoing social practices through which space is continually shaped and inhabited' (Lees 2001: 53), and therefore calls for a 'critical geography of architecture' which would explore the use and occupation of everyday spaces. For Lees, it is important to move from questions of production to questions of consumption, detailing how urban landscapes 'work' within cultural practice (see also Llewellyn 2003).

Returning to Matless's (2000) warning about neglecting the materiality of landscape, it is here we start to realise the limits of the textual metaphor; landscape is not simply perceived, it is used, occupied and transformed. Similarly, it is not only read, but also smelt, heard, felt and lived. In Lees's own studies, such questions of habitation are addressed through ethnographies of urban spaces designed to elucidate not only what buildings mean, but also what they do (in the sense of what dominant social relations occur in and around them) (see Lees 2001, 2003). Elsewhere a desire to chart how buildings are used has encouraged geographers to use interview methods to allow people to explain how they use and interact with their surroundings. By giving voice to residents and inhabitants of architectural spaces, geographers not only develop a 'polyvocal' narrative, but also highlight the way projected meanings of the city are subverted and changed through occupation. For example, Nick Fyfe (1996) has used poems to explore the contestation of the Clyde Valley plan in the 1950s, suggesting that poetic visions of Glasgow written by local residents offer a 'thick interpretation' of urban change, richly complex and contradictory. In other studies, autobiography, written testimonies and letters to local newspapers have been studied to explore the way space is occupied and lived (Finnegan 1998). A further example of this is the anthropological account offered by Holston (1991), who uses interview, archival and ethnographic evidence to highlight how the planners' conception of Brasilia was undermined by residents as they sought to recapture the atmosphere of traditional Brazilian street life and (literally) turned their backs on the pedestrianised precincts intended to act as neighbourhood centres.

Considering geographers' gradual attunement to the materiality of the city, Latham and McCormack (2004) are nonetheless sceptical about

the separation made (by Lees and others) between the material – described variously as the actual, the concrete and the real – and the immaterial, the abstract and the unreal (see also Pile 2005 on what constitutes 'real cities'). For Latham and McCormack, the problem with 'culturally inflected' urban geography is 'not the fact that it has engaged excessively with the immaterial, but, in contrast, that it has not engaged with sufficient conceptual complexity with the importance of excess to any notion of the material' (Latham and McCormack 2004: 704). Their argument is that the things and objects which might be commonly regarded as material are no more or less real than the effects of language and discourse: both involve relations of variable duration and force. This allies them with Marcus Doel's (2004) conception of a post-structural geography which is not obsessed with language at the expense of the material, but is interested in how language enters into the constitution of the world:

Contrary to popular opinion, we [*post-structuralists*] do not wish to elude the gravitational pull of the world in order to float freely among signs and images. Rather, we affirm the falling back of signs and images into the play of the world. We remain – as always – resolutely *materialist*. So, we are struck by the *force* of signs, by the *intensity* of images, and by the *affects* of language . . . we no longer recognise anything other than material and immaterial forces, the differential relations between forces, and their incessant shuffling. Whatever there may be, it always *strikes* someone or other as an articulation of force.

(Doel 2004: 150–151, original emphases)

The implication here is that signs and symbols cannot be defined in opposition to some material, concrete notion of the city as bricks and mortar. Or, to put it another way, language has a life of its own, every bit as real as that which we might regard as material. Hence, Latham and McCormack (2004) contend that the materiality of the city emerges from the relations of different bodies, machines, words, images and signs – none of which can be assumed to be more real than any other. Materialising the city evidently involves more than just considering its objects.

The idea that the city is the urban is an ongoing outcome of the interaction between a myriad of 'small-scale self-organizing processes' suggests the need for theories of the urban that do not search for an

overarching logic but instead attend to the ways that the remarkable plurality of substances and relationships give reality and shape to urban life (Latham and McCormack 2004: 709–719). One of the examples which Latham and McCormack use to illustrate their conception of urban materiality is the relationship between car and driver – one which is woven into the city in a number of ways. One need only think of the proliferation of car parks, parking meters, drive-in cinemas, drive-through restaurants, service stations, lay-bys, roundabouts, flyovers and underpasses to realise the profound impacts that cars have had on urban life. As Urry (2000: 59) details, 'the car's significance is that it reconfigures civil society involving distinct ways of dwelling, travelling and socialising in and through an automobilised time-space'. Surprisingly, however, there have been few accounts which have considered the complex ways that the car has been incorporated into everyday urban life. Furthermore, geographers have only recently begun to document the side-effects created by the dominance of the motor car, such as the aggressive geopolitics of oil production, the rise of environmental pollution, and a litany of traffic accidents (see T. Hall 2003).

Clearly, the motor car is involved in the making of cities in a number of ways. Yet Thrift (2004) insists that the car has been largely analysed in purely representational terms by cultural commentators, for instance, as the symbolic manifestation of various desires or dreads. Less frequently, the emotional relationship which the driver has with their car is considered, with the problematic ability of the car to act as extension of Self discussed (Lupton 1999). In contrast, car culture has rarely been written of as an emergent set of machinic relations between practices and technologies, involving, for example, the development of highway rules and regulations, modes of driverly conduct, road signs and markings, street lighting, radio travel warnings, road atlases and satellite navigation systems. This 'complex heterogeneity' of technical machines, petrochemical machines and corporal machines is constituted not only in the design and regulation of road spaces, but also in the materiality of the automobile itself, which makes 'particular assumptions about the proper relationship between car and driver, driver and passenger, car-human hybrid and car-human hybrid, car-human hybrid and the road surface, and on and on' (Latham and McCormack 2004: 712).

Hence, although the 'normalised and individualised' figure of the driver, and the 'mass-produced yet invariably customised vehicle' would appear

to be the central elements of urban car cultures, Merriman (2004: 159) suggests it is futile to attempt to understand the 'performances, movements, semiotics, emotions and ontologies' associated with driving by attempting to distinguish between these. Further, a focus on materiality suggests the intimate relation between car and driver represents only one aspect of the material cultures of driving:

While academics have explored the more durable or familiar practices and relations of hybridised car-drivers . . . many other 'things' became bound into the contingent and momentary orderings of these hybrid figures. Legislative codes, roadside trees, service areas, 'cat's eyes', passengers, wing mirrors, cups of tea, tarmac, fog, and various experts may serve as constituent elements in the relational performance of . . . driving.

(Merriman 2004: 162)

In his own studies of UK motorway driving, Merriman (2005) thus details the instruments associated with engineering, the judiciary and government (including road engineers and road safety experts) designed to affect the performances and movements of drivers and vehicles and to ensure safe and commodious travel. Experimental crash barriers, fog warning signs, anti-dazzle fences/plants, speed limits and new driving codes all affected the performance of motorway driving, not just as mediators, but as constitutive elements in the material spaces of the motorway.

Work such as Merriman's serves to demonstrate that a focus on the phenomenologies of everyday life involves an appreciation of the multiple relations between subjects and objects, and need not centre on the (limited) agency of the human body-subject. The realisation that the agency of the city is widely dispersed, and the cities are more-than-human, is accordingly an important reminder that the materiality of the city needs to be taken seriously indeed. Concurring with this view, Latham and McCormack (2004) conclude that, for all its achievements, traditional urban geography has presented us with a remarkably emaciated view of what cities consist of. Extending our purview of urban process to consider the remarkable plurality of substances and relationships that give reality and shape to urban life thus represents an attempt to do justice to the materialities of the city. Of course, questions

remain about which of these relations and substances should most concern us as human geographers. This is something we will explore in Chapter 4, where I consider some other ways in which geographers are attempting to theorise the non-human, more-than-human and even post-human aspects of city life.

CONCLUSION

Through its engagement with cultural and social theory, urban geography has taken on board a range of ideas about the importance of urban representations and meanings. While these undoubtedly enter into the constitution of everyday life in a variety of ways, many urban geographers have regarded the cultural turn as steering the discipline into an increasingly arid landscape of linguistic deconstruction, far removed from the creative practices and routines of city life. No matter how misplaced such criticisms of geography's linguistic and representational focus have been, a common tendency has been to assert the need for non-representational accounts of urban life. In essence, non-representational theories contend that we cannot hope to comprehend the use and occupation of urban space solely by exploring the social meanings projected onto the urban landscape: additionally, we need to explore how these settings are embodied through performance. After all, cities may be scripted, but our performances do not always follow the script. This necessitates an exploration of the sensuous and poetic dimensions of embodiment – an endeavour that may require the development of new research methods given the limits of standardised research techniques (particularly questionnaires) for elucidating pleasures and pains that may escape rational explanation. Yet at the same time, it is apparent that this requires consideration of the way practices are negotiated in relation to representations, given that discourses imbue practices with meanings that are both spoken and felt.

This chapter has thus charted a rich seam of work exploring the practical and embodied skills which are woven, almost subconsciously, into the lives of urban citizens. Although some of this work appears guilty of romanticising the banal and repetitive aspects of urban life, and endowing them with a revolutionary potential that is rarely realised, collectively it signposts some important directions for urban research. Summarising this potential Lorimer (2005: 85) seeks to distil the essence of non-

representational theory, suggesting 'it is multifarious, open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most'. As he describes, this implies a need to think through 'locally formative interventions in the world', including phenomena that may seem remarkable only in terms of their apparent insignificance:

The focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, pre-cognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions. Attention to these kinds of expression . . . offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement and ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become.

(Lorimer 2005: 92)

This emphasis on the immanent and the *becomingness* of the world is suggestive of an approach to human geography which is open to the world. This, then, is assuredly not an attempt to develop a 'grand theory', but an attempt to engage with the complexity of existence, charting out the lines of force and effect which give the city substance and meaning. In the following chapters, I consider some of these forces in more detail, and also explore how we can make sense of these in a world that appears increasingly complex and connected.

FURTHER READING

The increasing attention devoted to street geographies is nicely summarised in the various chapters of Nick Fyfe's (ed.) (1998) *Images of the Streets*: chapters discuss the geographies of the homeless, street children, disability on the street and street consumption. Amin and Thrift's (2002) *Cities* represents an important intervention in the literature on urban life, and is (partly) an attempt to demonstrate the implications of non-representational theory for urban studies. Robyn Longhurst's (2001) *Bodyspace* provides an effective summary of the relation of the body and the city, with case studies of domestic, leisure and business spaces demonstrating that the expressivity of the body is subject to control on a variety

of scales. Richard Sennett's (1994) *Flesh and Stone* is a remarkable and expansive volume that considers the unfolding relationship between human physicality and the city. Finally, it is worth noting that geographers' prosaic attempts to elucidate everyday geographies often pale into insignificance when compared with the poetic street-writings of psychogeographers, flâneurs and journalists: the writing of Iain Sinclair is always worth dipping into for a different take on the city (see especially *London Orbital* 2003), while the contemporary 'fanzine' *Smoke* contains an entertaining mixture of photo essays and paeans to London. Online blogs (i.e. web-logs) of city life are also a fecund source of writing about everyday journeys and the spaces of the city: try especially <http://londonbloggers.iamcal.com> for some distinctively ordinary takes on city life!

4

THE HYBRID CITY

Future researchers will take as given something we can only dimly perceive today – and then may be too horrified to admit . . . Namely, that all performance is electronic, that the global explosion of performance coincides with precisely the digitalization of discourses and practices, and that this coincidence is anything but coincidental.

(McKenzie 2001: 29)

It often seems the contemporary imagination is haunted by fears of technology. The rise of mobile technologies, the way we work online, new forms of data logging, satellite navigation, cybernetics and wearables all suggest that the boundary between people and technology is dissolving (Schilling 2005). Likewise, the idea that new technologies are driving cities towards a post-human (and possibly apocalyptic) landscape of surveillance and discipline is a popular trope in city writing – one that finds sharp expression in the contemporary *noir* urbanism of Mike Davis (1990) or Paul Virilio's (2005) account of the *City of Panic*. Yet it is important to note that the significance of new technologies may be no more profound than those which preceded them. A brief trawl through the histories of new technologies – printing, steam power, gas lighting, electrification, the motor car, the telephone, television, computers – confirms that all innovations are greeted with some level of moral approbation and talk about the erosion of society. Furthermore,

that established languages – particularly those associated with modern and postmodern political economy – are tired, worn-out and, well, boring. This is not to say (as Keith's extract, above, suggests) that we should simply replace the established lexicon of urban studies with an array of neologisms. Rather, it is to insist that geographers question established concepts and jettison those which are no longer useful for making sense of the urban experience. Being reflexive about how we study what we study is thus vital. So too is an awareness that our understanding of cities can only ever be partial: though some might try, there can never be a unified theory of cities, only knowledges written from particular viewing angles in particular places and times.

That said, in Chapters 2–6 this book has dwelt on the materiality of cities, suggesting that a rejuvenated urban theory might emerge from a more serious consideration of the city's diverse materiality. Problematising extant distinctions of image/reality, discourse/practice, nature/culture and local/global, it has been contended that a focus on materiality grants us purchase on what is truly urban about city life, and stakes out an agenda for urban studies which takes the city seriously as an object of study. The focus of this book has been on the contemporary West, yet many (if not all) of the ideas in the latter chapters of this book are relevant to the study of non-Western cities too. After all, suggesting the city is comprised of a more-or-less dense combination of 'stuff' – technologies, texts, people, animals, computers, plants, words and images – and that this stuff exists in more-or-less expansive networks of connection, provides an ontological framework for thinking about cityness which does not privilege any particular notion of structure or agency. Nor does it assume that people are makers of cities any more than animals, or software, or pathogens. But what it does is to impel us to explore the way these materials combine in particular instances with particular forces, and to scrutinise how this play of effects and affects produces particular urban formations. As always, there remains much urban geography to be done.

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