Sue Nichols · Stephen Dobson   *Editors*

Learning Cities

Multimodal Explorations and Placed Pedagogies

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Series Editors

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We live in a time where the complex nature and implications of social, political and cultural issues for individuals and groups is increasingly clear. While this may lead some to focus on smaller and smaller units of analysis in the hope that by understanding the parts we may begin to understand the whole, this book series is premised on the strongly held view that researchers, practitioners and policy makers interested in education will increasingly need to integrate knowledge gained from a range of disciplinary and theoretical sources in order to frame and address these complex issues. A transdisciplinary approach takes account the uncertainty of knowledge and the complexity of social and cultural issues relevant to education. It acknowledges that there will be unresolved tensions and that these should be seen as productive. With this in mind, the reflexive and critical nature of cultural studies and its focus on the processes and currents that construct our daily lives has made it a central point of reference for many working in the contemporary social sciences and education.

This book series seeks to foreground transdisciplinary and cultural studies influenced scholarship with a view to building conversations, ideas and sustainable networks of knowledge that may prove crucial to the ongoing development and relevance of the field of educational studies. The series will place a premium on manuscripts that critically engage with key educational issues from a position that draws from cultural studies or demonstrates a transdisciplinary approach. This can take the form of reports of new empirical research, critical discussions and/or theoretical pieces. In addition, the series editors are particularly keen to accept work that takes as its focus issues that draw from the wider Asia Pacific region but that may have relevance more globally, however all proposals that reflect the diversity of contemporary educational research will be considered.

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Chapter 1
Introducing Learning Cities

Sue Nichols

The title of this book – *Learning Cities* – signals a number of lines of thought. First, learning happens in places and spaces of our lives which includes places where we dwell, work, recreate and pass through. Second, *how* to live in these places and spaces is learned, as we observe, sense and practice modes of participation and as we reflect on these experiences. While it has long been accepted that school classrooms are not the only places where learning happens, learning that happens in 'other' places is still often relegated to the margins of public and academic discourse. It is referred to as out-of-school, prior to school and after school, reminding us that school classrooms remain the normative space of education.

Lefebvre (1991) argued that space is not 'a void packed like a parcel with various contents' (p. 27) but 'a tool of thought and action' (p. 26). Forging connections between thoughts and actions is at the heart of education, broadly conceived. Increasingly, there is a desire to better understand the contribution of spatial experience to the development of knowing, skilled, socially competent humans with the ability to transform their circumstances. This book joins with those that challenge the 'placelessness' of the school curriculum (Corbett 2010; Sandlin et al. 2010) as well as the exclusion of what may be called the 'streetwise'. In doing so, we take an inclusive perspective, bringing children, educators and families into the scope of analysis, explorations and actions. In so doing, we caution against a tendency for work in urban pedagogies to set 'the city' in a binary relationship with its assumed other.

Children feature more strongly in this book than in many others concerned with experiential learning in urban zones. It is important to be aware that, historically, the separation of children and mothers from men's work through the establishment of suburbs intensified the masculine connotations of 'the city' as a site of gendered and

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classed power (Cloke and Johnston 2005; Davidoff and Hall 1992). This also produced a temporal division in terms of when the (mainly male) child could leave the safe haven of the suburban school and home and 'go in' to the city. The absence of children from 'the city' was never absolute; however those who remained, and particularly child workers, have been viewed as unfortunate objects of pity and even as unnatural semi-adults (Woodhead 2004). This has fed into a tendency for work in urban pedagogies to focus on youth and adults and exclude children, their carers and, for the most part, their educators.

Historically, 'the city' has often been referred to as a singularity, particularly when set in juxtaposition to a contrastive zone, such as 'the country'. In this guise 'the city' often stands for the centre of political power, commerce and cultural establishments. The pluralisation of the term to 'cities' in the title of this book does not only indicate the scope of the authors' explorations across a number of metropolises, including London, Barcelona, Frankfurt and Medellin. It is also intended to signify that any geographic concentration of human life known as a city is actually a complex aggregate, or network, of places (McFarlane 2011; Scollon and Scollon 2003). These include neighbourhoods with their own populations located in different relationships to each other and to urban centres. It also includes zones established to fulfil various functions such as shopping, education, recreation and civic participation. The salience, and indeed the visibility, of a city's spaces to its citizens varies according to opportunity, access, membership and role. All these elements impact on what can be learned in, through and about cities. From the perspective of investigating geographies of disadvantage (Tate 2008), it is important to recognise that these may not look the same in every region. They may be outer suburbs far from urban centres, where poverty takes a quiet form minimally disruptive to those at the centres.

This book does not advance a singular definition of learning; authors draw on a range of frames related to their disciplinary backgrounds and foci including informal learning, place-based education and critical literacy. What connects them is the centrality of experience to learning. As Kolb has argued: 'To learn is not the special province of a single specialized realm of human functioning such as cognition or perception. It involves the integrated functioning of the total organism—thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving' (1984, p. 31). From this perspective, learning happens during experience and through reflecting on experience. Simply being exposed to information about a topic and acting cognitively on this information, without experience, misses valuable dimensions of learning. Interestingly, while this view was for some time relegated to a presumed hippy age of progressivism by conservative critics, it is now seeing a resurgence aided by digital technology creating immersive virtual experiences. Digital tools are also amplifying humans' perceptual abilities and are being integrated into experiential learning practices, as will be seen in some of the chapters of this book.

The book is structured in two parts, although readers are encouraged to take their own paths through its contents, just as city dwellers will take different routes dictated by their purposes and interests. Chapters in the first part, 'Multi-modal Explorations', collectively make the case that learning cities involve all of our

senses. Following Haraway, we 'insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere' (2004, p. 86).

Inquiry, from this perspective, pays close attention to the experiential nature of knowledge production. In practical terms, this may involve developing techniques and strategies for documenting experience. Awareness of one's own sensing is required as well as a rich vocabulary for describing sights, sounds, textures, terrain and aromas. These artefacts of sensory experience must be interpreted and analysed, taking into account other sources of knowledge about what has been experienced, which may include knowledge of cultural, historical, geographic or socio-political contexts.

Multimodality also references the contribution of New Literacy Studies in broadening the definition of what it means to be literate. From its initial position of defining literacy as social practice, the movement has expanded the concept of literacy to include meaning-making through orchestrating a semiotic repertoire which can include images, gesture, sounds, symbols and speech (Cope and Kalantzis 2000; Pahl and Rowsell 2006; Street 1995). The book *City Literacies* (Gregory and Willliams 2000) made the explicit link between social practice, meaning-making resources and modes of becoming and being literate. This volume follows in their footsteps.

The first part commences with **Carolyn Knowles'** explanation of visual methods for researching cities (Chap. 2). She emphasises that cities are not just 'places waiting to be characterised' but are imbued with meanings through the ways in which we negotiate and process them. Photography has many uses and effects for the city researcher from supporting a narrative to challenging taken-for-granted assumptions to deconstructing a complex whole into viewable parts.

From the visual sense, we turn to a much less vaunted research tool: the nose. **Alex Rhys Taylor** makes a compelling case for recognising the olfactory sense as a significant dimension of place-based experience (Chap. 3). An intriguing aspect is that smells are instantly apprehended and processed in the body before language and rationality has caught up. What we learn through repeated olfactory sensations is very well learned but rarely articulated.

Exploring city spaces puts inquirers into motion. The pathways taken are more than just routes through a space; they help to produce the city that takes shape and flows around one. In Chap. 4, we see how a team of linguistics researchers plan and trace routes through the city of Medellin, as they investigate and capture photographically the ways in which the English language is becoming embedded in the semiotic landscape (**Mora et al.**, this volume). As trainees to be teachers of English, Mora's coresearchers are coming to understand how languages are deployed in the places where citizens live, work and play.

Angelique Edmonds (Chap. 5) also takes up a mobile methodology in the project City for Whoo? Here groups of children are taken on a city tour, encountering spaces designed for different purposes. The children are encouraged to analyse and critique these spaces both during and following their experience, a process which generates an alternative, child-informed perspective on their character and function.

As readers, we gain an appreciation of the ways in which children sense and evaluate city spaces, including those they are rarely welcomed into.

Stefan Horn, author of Chap. 6, extends this concept of an engaged, mobile methodology for studying the semiotic landscape of cities onto a global scale. He describes how teams of youth simultaneously explored their cities across four locations: London, Barcelona, Berlin and Sophia. Using a range of arts-informed methods, participants navigated and interrogated the 'chaos of signs', producing artefacts to share with transnational peers. Multiple kinds of translation and mediation were involved in this dynamic process: between embodied experience and representation, between peers coresearching in a location and between youth in different national contexts with their multiple differences and similarities of language, culture and history.

While religious edifices are familiar elements in the built environment, the dominant discourse of the modern city is secular. In the final chapter of this part, **Terence Heng** reveals times and places in which forms of spiritual practice take over city spaces in Singapore (Chap. 7). His photographs vividly evoke the embodied, sensory and affective nature of rituals which juxtapose strikingly with the high-rise buildings, traffic lights and street grids that adherents navigate in the course of their ceremonies.

The second part, 'Urban Pedagogies', includes chapters with a more explicitly educative focus. These chapters take up the question of how the affordances of city spaces function, or may be drawn on, as resources for learning. The focus here is, for the most part, less on the sensing researcher and more on the interaction between the city as a teacher and learners and the ways this interaction is mediated.

In this first chapter of this part, **Stephen Dobson** makes an argument for the contribution of urban pedagogies to socialisation (Chap. 8). He argues that cities are zones of cognitive, physical and social challenge which demand that citizens develop a skill set (city skills) sufficient for successful navigation, access and agency. His view is inclusive of informal learning, which occurs in the course of living one's life in urban environments, as well as more explicitly designed educative experiences such as project-based and inquiry approaches.

Young children are a category of citizens most likely to be sequestered in protective environments such as the home and kindergarten. In Chap. 9, **Sue Nichols** argues that, regardless of attempts to separate children from the world of commerce, they are being socialised as consumers through participation in place-based practices. Nichols demonstrates that children are learning the limits and productivity of their power as they negotiate consumption. The ability of children to integrate city experiences into their imaginaries and play worlds means that protection should give way to active engagement.

Gabi Budach takes an intercultural perspective to considering place-based learning (Chap. 10). Using a rich mix of approaches, from taking a walking tour of Frankfurt to observing children's drawings of iconic buildings, she considers how cultural identities are produced in place. The city emerges as a place of multiple histories, including dominant and submerged narratives, which are experienced both concretely and imaginatively.

Informal learning is the focus for **Ben Gidley's** historical examination of politically active community organisations based in East London in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chap. 11). Richly documented and described, this chapter demonstrates that immigrant working-class communities actively worked to create conditions for learning. The role of politically aware organic intellectuals was vital in fostering local active citizenship through many kinds of learning programmes and activities.

Like consumer culture, sexuality has often been relegated to a marginalised position in the official curriculum. Partly as a result of this, sexual identity formation and learning about sexualities within social relations happens in our lives outside of the classroom. In Chap. 12, **Alison Rooke** explores the place-based nature of sexuality through contrasting two frames for considering queer culture in city contexts: the spectacular and the mundane. Through case studies of lesbian women living in suburban environments, she shows how learning about sexuality is indeed lifelong and involves continual negotiation of positioning, both social and material.

The place-based education movement differs from much informal learning advocacy in its active engagement with institutional contexts. **Denise MacGregor** describes how, as a teacher educator, she has incorporated place-based educational approaches into the training of design and technology educators (Chap. 12). Preparing teachers to work in so-called 'disadvantaged' communities requires, she argues, sensitivity to place and to the local knowledge and concern of community members, both children and adults.

Cities and their spaces are constantly changing, and changes are often contested. Taking urban regeneration as her focus, **Marjorie Mayo** examines the kinds of learning afforded to adult participants in grassroots organisations (Chap. 14). She identifies a tension between an instrumental adult education model, which is focused on individual development, and a critical Freirean approach, which is about transforming conditions for collectives. Being able to question when participation is being co-opted to serve non-local interests is itself a kind of learning—learning 'how to smell a rat'.

Spaces are 'profoundly pedagogical … as centers of experience, places teach us about how the world works' (Grunewald 2003, p. 621). The standardisation and trans-local power of curriculum and assessment regimes have intensified the disconnection between formal schooling and the places from which students come. Indeed, this lack of attention to the locally situated and experiential also teaches us 'how the world works'. The authors of this volume, though, advocate for different kinds of life lessons to be acknowledged and made available to balance, and in some cases challenge, the generic force of institutionalisation.

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Part I
Multimodal Explorations of the City

Chapter 2
Researching and Photographing Cities: Getting Started

Caroline Knowles

Thinking About Photography

Before embarking on photographic exploration of urban landscapes, it is vital to put some thought into what a photograph actually is. I will suggest some frameworks for thinking about photography and will preface this by saying something about seeing and photography and the relationship between them.

We learn to negotiate urban landscape in scanning mode. We selectively take in jumbles of visual data in nanoseconds, on the hoof, while sifting it for personal and social significance. These are fleeting and fragile ways of seeing. More attentive ways, the kind that form the point of departure for urban investigation, take time and concentration. The camera focuses us as researchers and provides a technology for more disciplined observation. Seeing is a skilled social practice (Jenks 1995). What we see and how we see it is bound up with how we learn to be social beings and with the ways in which the social world is organised. In other words seeing is bound up with who we are and how our world operates. Seeing does not connect us to some outside realm; it is an integral part of the bigger social matrix in which we operate. So seeing in the context of urban research is part of a delicate balancing act. We are part of the social conventions of seeing in a particular (conventional) way, *and* we can also search for new ways of seeing, ways that challenge and rearrange social conventions. This is the creative bind in which urban researchers operate.

Now let us move from seeing to knowing. How we know about things through seeing them is not immediately obvious. There is no clear map that takes us from one to the other and both are selectively focused activities. As John Berger (1977) reminds us, the relationship between what we *see* and what we *know* is never settled. This is something to think about in the context of practice and specific projects.

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Permutations in the connection between seeing and knowledge form the second creative bind in urban photographic investigation and analysis.

Take a third step from the seeing-and-knowing bind to photography. Seeing and photography are evidently interconnected activities in that they lean on each other, but they are not the same. Seeing delivers multiple vantage points on the city and its lives, so the question becomes what to select with the lens. Selection is an aesthetic intellectual decision. Visual sociologist Douglas Harper (personal communication) tells his students that a photograph is composed through light and ideas. Ideas come from observation and reading: encounters between what is seen in deeper observation and new and imaginative ways of thinking about them. Photography is an intellectual, an aesthetic and an imaginative practice. It involves aesthetic judgement about what makes a convincing and appealing image, but it also requires intellectual work and the capacity to create images of urban life in ways that transcend what we already know.

Photography is a materialised manipulation of the equally manipulated cognitive processes involved in seeing. Photographs are arrested 'moments' of seeing captured through technical decisions about framing, lighting, aperture, film speed and lens angle. Photographers have the ability to make traces of objects, people, places and circumstances into images, a creative activity requiring the same kinds of conceptualisation as the written texts composing urban theory. Photographs are composed through all of these decisions: which people, objects, places, events or circumstances to aim the lens at and how. When you take a photograph, you have already made these decisions and more besides. You have already theorised your object, and you have arranged it and told a story about it, whether you are aware of it or not.

Photography in urban research/analytical contexts involves dialogues with what John Tagg (1988), drawing on Foucault, calls 'regimes of truth' (p. 61). Despite being a 'species of alchemy', photographs are prised for their accounting of reality (Sontag 2003, p. 72); they are evidence that something has happened—a trace passed before the lens—*and* they are staged (Sontag 2003). Photographs are art, spectacle and documentary. They are both 'real'—in that a trace passed before the lens, something happened, something was there and the lens caught it—and they are contrived or staged. Decisions have been made about what to capture and how to do it. It is precisely this combination of artifice and 'reality' that makes photographs interesting, this interface at which we work in visual apprehensions of urban life. The same combination of artifice and 'reality' also characterises urban theory.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2003) used First World War photography to illustrate this point about reality and artifice. She suggests that war photographers often dragged dead soldiers to more picturesque landscapes in order to photograph them. This is an intertwining of artifice and reality: war is real, the soldier is dead but the photograph is staged. It is a real fake. Urban photography is a staged reckoning with realities, by which I mean that photographers play with the material that is 'out there'. It is these realities out there, the material that urban life furnishes, that we cannot fake, that keep us honest as we weave our social commentaries, our stories about urban life. Of course we *can* fake them now more easily than ever using digital photo manipulation applications. But erasure of inconvenient

truths in order to shape a particular story requires reflexive awareness; the producer knows what has been erased. Other, non-visual, forms of urban research data share precisely these characteristics arising from their selective collection and omission of inconvenient truths.

It would be absurd to make simple realist claims for photography, to suggest that photographs reveal 'the truth'; they inevitably dialogue with staged 'truths'. Their validity as evidence that something has happened, in which they are routinely used by the police and in court, is as flawed as all other methods of knowing and investigating the social world. Freeman (1993) suggests that the most important issue regarding validity in qualitative research is plausibility. Is this picture, this account of a lifeworld, this rendering of the city, plausible? Is it reasonable and believable—if indeed we want it to be reasonable and believable rather than provocative—given what else we know? Does it sustain the case we are trying to make with it or not? Does it work to *counter* the legitimacy of what we know by other means and thus contribute a sceptical glance, a question mark, over the operation of urban worlds? This is equally valid work. All evidence is flawed. It is limited by the techniques through which it is collected, and photographs are much more than evidence, even when they are deployed in straightforward evidentiary frameworks.

I have suggested some ways of conceptualising photography in urban investigation and analysis. Whatever the manner in which researchers conceptualise photography, it is still important to consider the boundaries of what it is and to consider how it can be used to build a set of visual-textual arguments.

What Work Do Photographs Do?

What can photographs do? Answering this question involves thinking about how photography might be used in the *practice* of urban research, commentary and analysis.

Perhaps the most valuable property of photography is that it works in a register that is beyond words. Photographs transcend and extend verbal and written articulation and don't need to be reduced to words. Photographs capture a sensuous world of social action, aesthetics, kinaesthetics and live performances, as well as action as it unfolds in social contexts (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). I am not claiming that only photography does these things but that it does them particularly effectively, more effectively than other ways of investigating familiar and unfamiliar urban worlds (such as ethnography). Photographs issue an invitation to the viewer to imagine the scenes of the research and place themselves within the frame. In the following pages I unpack some of these properties and say something of their usefulness in urban research, commentary and analysis.

I began using photography in my own research practice out of a sense of desperation. I was investigating the circuits, circulations and lifeworlds of homeless and marginally housed 'schizophrenics' living in the 'community care' system in Montreal (Knowles 2000). In the context of state welfare retrenchment, this meant they were left to insert themselves into the city in any way they could. I had been

funded by the Quebec Provincial Government to investigate something (community mental health care) that didn't exist except in the most minimal form.

At first I approached them with a microphone, but it soon became apparent that their verbal narratives—what they could, or were willing to, say about themselves and their lives—were very thin. Translating any life into spoken narrative demands huge skills in translation. Translating troubled lives makes excessive demands on informants, something I only began to appreciate after visiting an exhibition of artwork created by people with schizophrenia. Their vivid and complex images suggested so much richer lives than their verbally narrated stories. In contrast to their slender spoken narratives, the contexts in which they operated and the way they looked were visually stunning. They were full of information and evoked rich atmospheres. Therefore I speculated that photography stood a better chance of capturing narratives than my microphone. The schizophrenics I was studying had other ways of telling stories—to the lens. I found a photography student—Ludovic Dabert—at the university where I taught and convinced him to join my research team. Ludovic Dabert used his camera to try to untangle their relationship with the city and with each other.

Many urban sociologists, anthropologists and geographers take their own photographs. I take photographs too, some of which are useable in presentations and publications and some of which are not. My own photographs work best for me as a field site inventory: I use them as a form of note taking from which I later write. They are especially useful when I am trying to access unfamiliar urban lives from objects of material culture. Compared to those taken by the photographers with whom I work, they don't capture atmosphere or the feel of things very well. They are technically competent but often over-lit or not taken from the most interesting angle. My visual literacy is limited; I specialise in writing.

Because of this I prefer to work in collaboration with those who think visually and who thus have a well-developed visual literacy that parallels my own skills as a researcher and writer. The photographs from my projects are therefore better—technically and aesthetically—and more useful analytically than any I could have taken. Working with photographers generates a synergy in which each of us bounces off the other's skill, expertise and investigative energy to develop and extend our own. In place of visual literacy, I bring years of reading social theory and skill in biographical and mapping research techniques. Some photographers like this energy as much as I like theirs. This arrangement has the additional benefit of a research division of labour: it is difficult to collect verbal and visual data simultaneously, and two approaches to the research are inevitably richer than one.

Building Critical Commentaries

Photographers *work* to build critical commentaries and alternative analyses. They work against the grain of conventional wisdom as well as sustain it: photography is entirely promiscuous. Photographs have embedded selections and arrangements of people, objects and contexts, things to tell and not to tell. For example

African-American photographer Thomas E. Askew who collaborated with the famous sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois made a powerful case for the descriptive but critical power of photography in their 'American Negro' exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exhibition (Smith 2004). Using commentary, photographs and statistics, they repositioned Southern American Negroes, transporting them from a landscape of rural poverty to more central and prosperous social locations. In Askew's photographs, bourgeois African-Americans sit at a desk or in a dining room. Simple description re-theorises, repositions and delivers as critique that chews away at political context—at what it meant to be black at that time—offering alternative versions of race in a grammar of images (Smith 2004; Massey 1999; Knowles 2006).

What Lies Beneath?

Photographs—always a microcosm unless taken from a great height—invite a probing of depth. They challenge us to think about the forces that lay beneath the image exerting a controlling influence on it. What lies beneath the surface on which the image rests? What combination of systems and circumstances produce this and not some other image? What must be the case at a larger scale of events and systems for this photograph to be possible? This too suggests a critical, analytical framing that goes beyond what we see. But most significantly it invites us to speculate on the macro-circumstances of the micro in the spirit of C. Wright Mills (1959): to consider private troubles and public issues. Not only do photographs demand a positioning of the micro within larger social frames, they simultaneously invite speculation about the *connections* between the micro and the macro. This is where photography is at its most analytically powerful in urban investigation. A photograph can peer at a tiny speck in the city and position it within larger social questions and debates about regeneration, gentrification and the operation of financial capital in making urban landscapes (Harper 1982, 1987, 2001; Knowles 2011; Knowles and Harper 2009; Knowles and Sweetman 2004; Smith 2004).

Seepage

Photographs reveal surface and seepage. They challenge our attempts to exclude, manipulate and theorise because an image's surface contains clues which we may find inconvenient. This takes us back to my earlier comments about staged reckoning with 'truths'. In *Photography's Other Histories*, Chris Pinney (2003) writes about photography's collision with politics and life, by which he means the camera lens include everything visible, foiling attempts to select. With photography's seepage we can never be fully in control of the resulting photograph; consequently we must deal with what is 'out there'. We can't entirely filter out the random

information contained in photographs, so we are forced into some kind of a reckoning with it, and this keeps us honest as researchers.

Social Context

Photographs log the material contexts in which people live. Inventory is a classic tool in anthropological ethnography (Collier and Collier 1986). What objects articulate a life? How are they arranged and what does this assemblage look like? How do people interact with their material environment? Photographs not only reveal the aesthetics of places but can be returned to again and again, mined for further information as our understanding expands and new things come into the frame which we didn't previously think significant.

Environmental portraiture (Harper 1982, 1987, 2001; Suchar 2004) captures people in their cultural, social and economic contexts, both those they create for themselves and the broader structural constraints in which they operate. There are examples of powerful uses of this by Charles Suchar (2004) who captures macrocharacteristics of gentrification in Amsterdam and Chicago and by Ana Maria Mauad and Alicia Rouverol (2004) who detail the working life of a poultry factory worker through Cedric Chatterley's photographs. In environmental portraiture, photographs capture the relationships between people, the ways in which they interact with each other, their posture, comportment, conviviality and hostility. How close or distant are they? How frequently do they interact? What is the character of their social interaction? Environmental portraiture captures moments, glances, postures, clues about relationships, things that are written across the face and on the surfaces of the body and its performances. Douglas Harper and I used it to investigate the ways in which British migrants in Hong Kong 'do' migration (Knowles and Harper 2009).

The Unspoken

Harper's photographs reveal the built landscape of Hong Kong and the stories told by inscriptions of culture in transition from empire to globalisation on its surface (Knowles and Harper 2009). They expose the relationships people form with their everyday landscapes. This was particularly useful in this project because we needed to figure out the relationships that British migrants formed with the city. Their *talk* revealed an expansive and comfortable relationship with their landscape of new settlement. Their activities and journeys around and beyond the city—which Harper photographed—told another story. This alternative story told of restricted geographies, centred on other expatriates and activities familiar in Britain. Where people go and how they go contain important clues, and documenting this leans on mapping as much as photography. Bodily movements reveal ways of walking, and ingrained habits, which tell stories about who an informant is and how they interact

with the world. In this case, bodily movement revealed the migrants' habitual scenes of everyday life and their threading together of specific places in Hong Kong. These in turn told bigger stories about their relationships to this place, about how they *lived* as migrants. These stories, told in movement rather than words, are unspoken performances by bodies, flesh monuments, revealing unfolding social action in context (Leigh Foster 1996; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000).

There are two significant registers of the unspoken. The first is unspoken because it is routine, ordinary and ingrained so that no one thinks to articulate it. These are the overfamiliar verities underpinning our lives, the frameworks we are not aware of and don't articulate. The second is the unspeakable. These are the things which cannot be articulated because they operate only in the register of action and feeling, not words (Kristeva 1982). Photographs often augment or contradict verbally produced narratives, and, where speaking is not possible, they provide a silent narrative. Stories are told in people's movements and in the things they wear and do, offered to the camera lens, not to the microphone. Les Back's (2007) essay on tattoos 'Inscriptions of Love' is one of the most powerful accounts of imagery's silent articulations. As Back tells the story, the imagery of the tattoo articulates the life which a dying sailor is unable to verbalise, which he was always unable to verbalise even before he was dying, because not everyone has this capacity or the confidence it requires.

The schizophrenic persons I interviewed in Montreal 'talked' a relationship with the city in their verbal narratives, but this was challenged when we walked with and photographed them. The lives they talked and the lives they walked were quite different and provided contradictory information about their relationship with the city and in the process showed how ambiguous and contradictory such relationships are. In their movements their accounts of participation turned to a visceral marginalisation; their relationships with public space were easily dislodged. Yes, they spent time in the mall but on the stairway in fear of ejection by private security guards. They used the mall because there was no other inside 'public' (private) space in which they could be in cold weather. The homeless shelters threw them out during the day. They walked a different story than they talked, and if we had listened rather than looked and photographed, we would not have understood this. I am not claiming that observation and photography are better, more real or rigorous, but these techniques tell different stories thus adding to what we know by other means. Photography captures what people *do* as well as what they say and often reveals the tensions between these dimensions—between saying and doing—throwing an analytical spotlight on action and practice.

Micro and Macro Worlds

Photographs, like the ethnographic practices in which they are often rendered, are detailed and deep, and this depth is traded against the superficialities of big samples and broader applicability. Like ethnography generally, photographs capture the

specific and the particular, tableaux frozen in time and place. But do they only do this? I contend that photographs capture particular moments in the unfolding of action from which we can work the general in the particular in the spirit of C. Wright Mills (1959).

There are a number of ways of thinking about this. I use environmental portrait photographs in a particular way in the course of my collaboration with photographers, such that I seek to situate people in the city and in their relationships with others. I combine these photographs with mobile biographical interviews in which I go about their daily routines with them, exploring their lives in depth and in their specificity. Interviewing that is embedded in the processes of everyday life rather than separated from it by being stationary in a room with a microphone yields rich and detailed information. The result is that these characters are offered as biographically unique subjects who nevertheless share characteristics with others, for instance, migrants or homeless persons. Howard Becker (2002), reviewing Berger and Mohr's *A Seventh Man*, suggests another way he calls 'specific generalisation'. Berger and Mohr (1975) put together multiple portraits of migrants without naming them or detailing their circumstances. This visual strategy formed part of an argument about the operation of capitalism and the use of migrant labour as an abstract category to which the photographer Jean Mohr gave faces and allowed us to imagine lives.

Photographs offer forms of application beyond their frames and thus enable us to situate images in broader social landscapes and in other important investigative frames. The particular may have unique and random elements, but it is unlikely to be entirely unique or entirely random. The specific is often an instance of something bigger than itself, and it is up to urban researchers to make that argument. Statistics and surveys are useful in drawing the bigger landscape of which the particular is a part. The case for this must be made.

Live Performances

Working visually involves a significant shift away from the often oddly lifeless and mechanical accounts of everyday life in textual representation (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000), towards engagements that are contextual, kinaesthetic and sensual—that live. Visual work allows us to see the ongoing and embodied practice of everyday life, productions that are multi-dimensional and chaotic, skills and performances that cannot be reduced to words. Visual work embeds its subjects in context. It places the unfolding of action in space and time, in particular material and symbolic circumstances, and emphasises action as the performative arrangement and rearrangement of these resources (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). Seeing with visual methods imposes the situatedness, the embeddedness of social life. The use of moving images takes this further, admitting the kinaesthetic more directly.

I have drawn together some of the things photography can *do* in investigation and analysis of urban life. There are many things I have not covered, for example taking

photographs over time to show longitudinal shifts. Douglas Harper has photographed the same square in Bologna over 20 years. In that time his photographs show changes in social activities and uses of the square, changes in transport, in dress and more besides. Other sociologists working more quantitatively with photographic data code images around key themes. The photographer Manuel Vazquez photographs the same space repeatedly over a few days and then layers the images on top of each other, taking out the background context to enhance the people and activity. The result is a hyper-real exposure of the space in which time is compressed to make a point about place. (www.manuelv.net).

Photographic methods are rarely used alone even in the context of a photographic exhibition. They are in practice combined with other methods such as statistical analysis, observation, mapping, interviews, large-scale surveys and focus groups. They can be used effectively in interviews as 'photo-elicitation' where the researchers' or the informants' photographs are used to deepen the interview. How photographs and interviews can be combined is a very important issue but one beyond the scope of this chapter (Harper 2005; Knowles and Harper 2009).

Writing with Images and Words

In urban research and analysis, photographic images are combined with words, positioned around and with words. It follows that the ways in which words and images are combined is very important. Even photographers use words, if only minimally in captions and titles, fixing subjects, often places and dates too. In a logocentric world, images often occupy a subsidiary position as illustration, as evidence of 'the real' or as a souvenir that the researcher was there and did this or that. This is problematic, not least because photographs have a much greater capacity than illustration. Some of the weakest visual research uses the textual formulation: 'This is what we are doing and here is a picture of it'. Equally banal is the photograph followed by a lengthy literal description of its visible contents. A variation of this uses the obscure lexicon of semiotics to intellectualise banality, ignoring the fact that photographs work in a register beyond words and need not be reduced to them. Photographs are most effectively used to extend the text in the register of mood, look and feel. They do different work. They can be used to support a narrative built in words or to undermine it, to suggest other ways of thinking.

Slicing Cities

I suggested earlier that whole cities are un-researchable. Cities are networked circuits and nodes: matrices of multiple mobilities rather than just places waiting to be characterised. They are dynamic living entities, mosaics of diverse lives that defy easy access and are notoriously difficult to 'capture' either with photography or any

other investigative or analytical technique. It is important to think about cities more broadly as a tapestry of fabrics. There is the fabric of the built environment, the buildings and street patterns that betray some of the dominant interests and activities through which cities are composed. But there is also the rich human fabric, the tapestry of diverse lives in parallel and intersection sharing the same space. It is also important to consider time when thinking about the city. Sukhdev Sandu's (2007) book *Night Haunts* shows that London is a very different city animated by a different set of lives and purposes at night. What follows are some ways of slicing cities to make them more research-manageable.

Following the Trail

Following the trail is one way of slicing a city into manageable proportions. This can be the trail of a person, a small subsection or group of people or an object. Mapping the personal geographies of a person, using them as a guide, provides vital clues about how they live their version of the city. Selecting a person can be tricky and selection impacts on the data generated. This often begins from a category of people, young people, old people, homeless people and people who roughly hold in common a set of circumstances with the proviso that there are always wide biographical variations so that no one is purely a category. Questions then arise about how to choose people from such broad categories. These are often settled by geographical locations within the city. You might, for example, know from previous research that a particularly interesting group, interesting in terms of the potential richness of the data they will yield, is found in particular areas. The choice is sometimes settled through personal access opportunities and happenstance. The key thing is to leave a warrantable trail of methodological decision making and the reasons why the decisions were made. For example, in one of my own projects referred to earlier, we tracked the movements of homeless and marginalised schizophrenic persons to establish something of their relationship to Montreal. Where do people go? Which parts of the city do they use/not use? How expansively do they travel and how do they travel? On foot, by car, bus and so on?

Object Guides

Using an object as a guide is also effective and provides a route through a city. People circulate with objects and people's lives are entwined with objects, making objects rich fields of urban enquiry. With photographer Michael Tan, I have been tracing the circuits of a pair of flip-flop sandals made in south-east China (Knowles 2015). The sandals nicely sliced the city of Fuzhou, concentrating our investigations on the industrial villages to the south. Following its route, we found that the sandals moved in container trucks along ring roads and bridges to the port and were then

distributed all over the world. We decided to follow the trail to Ethiopia, one of the biggest markets for Chinese plastics. Here the sandals passed through the territories of Somali pirates and the route divided between legal and illegal (smuggling) routes only to recombine on Addis Ababa markets. At this point we followed them onto the feet of an elderly woman and followed *her* routes through the city.

Events and Microcosms

A variation of this is to find a resting point in a place rich in the things you are interested in and watch what passes by. Other strategies involve finding an event, an eruption, a concentrated burst of activity that grounds some of the things you want to investigate. Examples are a street market, a festival or a performance. Another way of slicing cities is to find a set of practices to focus on such as funerals, dance, hairdressing, shopping or work. Successful student projects in the programmes I work on have included, among others, plotting funeral routes in East London and using money transfer shops and barbershops to unravel migrant lives and activities. Microcosms like this serve as tiny capsules of urban life with bigger resonance. The important thing here is to situate them in those bigger issues and draw the connections between the micro and the macro effectively.

Sometimes it is possible to find a small part of a city that displays the bigger processes in which it is bound up. Investigating the city of Fuzhou in south-east China, I found the point where a crumbling version of the old city abutted the new via a bridge called 'Liberation'. This provided the opportunity to explore the theme of social change through building and architecture, as well as the transformation of a post-socialist state that used the lexicon of liberation to name its bridges. As I suggested earlier, the particular provides the opportunity for a more broad-ranging discussion of what makes the city in macro terms.

Conclusions

Cities pose an exciting challenge for researchers. They are where most people will live in the next few years, and this makes them important laboratories for investigation and critical commentary. The most phenomenal growth in urbanism and the most improvised cities, where people innovate in creating the basics in daily survival, are in the global South. In Jakarta, Johannesburg, Shanghai, Mumbai and Buenos Aires, urban citizens live transitory and improvised lives (Simone 2004). They live in ways that extend the provision of facilities by municipal authorities. There are great opportunities for urban researchers in these cities to understand how daily life is constituted and lived in precarious and resourceful ways. There are new opportunities to understand the networks into which cities are drawn by the traffic constituting globalisation and the new forms of social inequality generated. The

challenge for urban researchers is not just slicing cities to make them researchable but understanding the myriad forms of social life they sustain and, sometimes, conceal. Photography is proving itself an invaluable tool in urban investigation and analysis as well as in campaigning arenas for global social justice. But there is scope to work in still more imaginative ways in bringing what is not seen before the public gaze in new and exciting grammars of images (Smith 2004; Massey 1999) that wrestle with the complexity of the global cities of today. Over to you!

In this chapter I have invited you to think about what photography is and some of the things it can do in the context of urban research and analysis. Photography's potential is far greater than the ways in which it is ordinary deployed in developing description and illustration of urban theory. I have suggested that the camera is an instrument for theoretical work through some of the questions photographs pose. I have also suggested some shortcuts to accessing cities, making them into bite-sized researchable projects. Cities are fascinating places to do geography, sociology and anthropology. Pursuing urban research, commentary and analysis through the lens adds new and exciting dimensions to what can be done by more logocentric means.

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Chapter 3
Coming to Our Senses: Multiculturalism, Urban Sociology and 'the Other' Senses

Alex Rhys-Taylor

As I walk towards it, I am initiated into the East London street market by a strong smell of fruit commingling with the sweetish petrol smell from the slow-moving traffic on the main road nearby. As the fruit stall is approached, it is possible to discern the fragrances of different fruits: mangoes, melons and bananas, each revealing itself to me in order as I move my nose closer. These smells seem to gain strength from the fruit stalls to my left and right, which draw my attention away from the cloying petroleum. As I move past these vendors, a very familiar warm and doughy baking smell enters my nose, followed swiftly by a blend of South Asian spices: coriander, cumin and cardamom, the cardamom being particularly strong. The sources are not immediately discernible, but upon inspection it becomes clear that the baking smell is coming from the local bagel bakery, a residue of the old Jewish community that populated the market in the mid-twentieth century. The spice, it seems, is coming from a delicatessen next door and their tandooried meats. Both are hidden from sight behind the odourless clothes stalls to the left of me. Moving on, the smell of fresh fish, or rather the smell of the sea (as fresh fish rarely smells of fish), makes its presence fully sensible, having been there, I now realise, at a low level since I entered the market. The source of the smell is clear: a cluster of fishmongers, the visual recognition of which notifies me of the aroma's pre-existing presence in my nose. I simply had not registered it before. This cluster is interspersed with relatively odourless, yet visually and aurally aggressive, toy stalls. The simulated baby cries, bleeping and whirring coming from these pieces of plastic are audible above the sounds made by real babies passing by in pushchairs. Next my momentum moves me into a clearing lined with three sizzling hot food vendors. From these arises the dough-nutty smell of fried dumplings and salt fish patties, which mixes with the unmistakeable frying smell of bacon sandwiches and

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seemingly oxymoronic 'halal hot dogs'. I move on still, past a handful more fruit and vegetable stalls, these ones with less fruit and more vegetables. Notably there is also very strong smell of fresh peppermint coming from one of the stalls on the right – I crave new potatoes, mojitos and Arabian mint tea for the rest of the day.

A turn of the head to the left leaves the smell of mint behind and confronts me with a distinctive fusion of smells – polythene bags, dusty factory storage and mass transit – emanating from a luggage stall, most likely from the filling that is stuffed into the luggage to demonstrate just how much it can hold. A mix of this smell and again the sea water and fish then washes past until I arrive at a fruit stall where plate-fuls of mango slices are offered for the delectation of potential customers. The smell emanating from them is strong, and arresting enough initially to obscure the source from visibility, by convening a crowd of bustling elbows and handbags.

My walk continues and here, about halfway up the market, is an entirely new set of fragrances hitherto absent from the aromascape: 'Egyptian Musk', 'Sandalwood' and 'Laxmi Pooja' – variations on the type of otherworldly woody musk familiar everywhere from Greek Orthodox churches to Buddhist temples to sultry candle-lit bathtubs. Although some of these incenses are coming from a stall selling only incense sticks, most of the incense aroma derives from Ali's ongoing efforts to ward off the seagull attacking a neighbouring fishmonger. This scent of incense is intensi-fied by a neighbouring stall – again incense but more subtle and complicated by an array of oils and essential extracts combined in large handmade blocks of soap.

How is the sociologist to make sense of the remarkable, everyday, multicultural life that comprises an East London street market? How can one articulate the complexities of the interaction that happen at such places without recourse to crude caricatures of culture or cumbersome models of 'mosaic multiculturalism' (Benhabib 2002, p. 7)? How can one express the complexities of individual biographies without losing site of the wider social patterns that they relate to? How can one draw out the significance of such interactions for our understandings about identity in a twenty-first-century city? Here, I shall argue that attentiveness to 'the senses' is paramount.

This chapter has four interrelated aims. The first is to provide an outline and his-tory for a sociology that is attentive to sensory experiences. In particular, I want to focus on a sociology of smell and taste, although the analysis stretches into reflec-tions on tactility. The next is to suggest this sensory sociology's usefulness to spheres of life that elude adequate sociological representation and comprehension. The third is actually to 'do' a sensory sociology of an East London street market. The last is to highlight, via that sensory sociology, the deeply embodied and sensu-ous roots of a city's lived multiculturalism.

Urban Sociology and the Eye

Although the sensuous aspects of everyday experience are often ignored by sociol-ogy in favour of abstract generalisations, urban sociology, from its inception in the work of Georg Simmel (Simmel et al. 1997), has maintained a peripheral awareness

of sensory experiences. The eye especially became a recurrent point of focus within late-twentieth-century urban sociology (Jay 1994). It was particularly in the wake of Michel Foucault (1977, 2003), a 'voyant' with a 'passion for seeing' (Deleuze 2006, p. 42), that a sociological attention to the visible became pronounced. Following Foucault, sensitivity to the gaze and 'ways of seeing' that shape urban life became recurrent themes across urban sociology (Pile 1996; de Certeau 1988; Sennett 1992, 1996). In addition to developing a critique of vision, sociological practitioners studying urban environments also pioneered the use of film and photography as mediums for representing aspects of urban visual experiences (Knowles and Sweetman 2004). Doubtlessly, the development of a visually sensitive urban sociology and new visual methodologies are to be welcomed. A deeper understanding of the social role of the eye is central to an enriched understanding of social processes in urban contexts. Not least, a social constructivist attention to the visual has helped to challenge the logics of race and racism, 'a discourse of power that thinks with its eyes' (Bull and Back 2003, p. 14).

However, the sociological attention paid to the sensory experience should not end with the eye. As pioneer of urban sociology, Georg Simmel wrote, in an urban context, 'every sense delivers contributions characteristic of its individual nature to the construction of sociated existence' (Simmel et al. 1997, p. 110, emphasis added). This is especially so with regard to the perception of race and construction of racisms, which, although dependent on the eye, are refined through all of the senses (Smith 2006).

Writing Sensibly

It is not that sociology has been completely numb to the 'other' senses. Indeed, since Simmel, a literature engaging in a 'democracy of the senses' (Berendt 1992, p. 32) has grown steadily (Back and Bull 2003; Bull 2000; Classen et al. 1994; Howes 2003; Lupton 1996; Pink 2009; Sutton 2001; Stoller 1997). However, as Serematakis (1994) notes, it is still often the case that, when the experience of nostrils, tongues, fingers and ears are rendered in sociological texts, it is as an ambient background against which the sensational 'spectacle' of real life takes place.

There are a few obvious explanations for the lack of sociological attention to the 'other senses'. One relates to the 'ocular-centric' hierarchy of the senses developed in the discourses of European 'Enlightenment' and bequeathed to modernity (Jay 1994, p. 83). Immanuel Kant, to take only one example, was explicit when placing vision at the top of a hierarchy of the senses suitable for 'science', with smell as 'the basest of the senses' at the foot (Kant 2006, p. 49). Not unrelated to the systematic exclusion of the 'other senses' from scientific processes is the difficulty posed to writers tasked with representing these aspects of experience. In his essay 'The grain of the voice', Barthes (1977, p. 179) meditates on the historical difficulty of translating one semiotic system into another. Language, Barthes suggests, is perhaps one of the only means of undertaking such translations. Even then, the author notes, it generally does

so 'very badly'. As hard as transcribing audition into text might be, the difficulty is compounded with regard to texture, gustation and olfaction, about which most languages are particularly ill equipped to write. In general, the only words available for describing the experience of taste and smell are either emotive and clumsy adjectives (such as repulsive, fragrant, pleasant, pungent) or undescriptive nouns-cum-adjectives that refer only to the object being experienced ('this orange both tastes and smells very orangey'). The scientists' disregard for the 'other senses' and the lack of language for talking and writing about them are not unrelated, and both combine to overdetermine the sensuous impoverishment of sociology.

Sensing Social Strata and the Smudges Between Them

Having outlined the exclusion of the 'other senses' from sociological texts and offered related explanations for their omission, I now want briefly to outline why these under-theorised aspects of experience might be deemed of sufficient interest to warrant sociological attention. While there are a range of good reasons for focusing on each sense, here I want to focus particularly on the interrelated senses of taste and smell in relation to the formation of social strata.

Flavours and aromas fill cities. They punctuate city space in various combinations and change according to the season and the time of day. However, the banality of encounters with flavours and aromas in the city often means that they occur outside of conscious reflection, right, as it were, under our noses. Yet, far from rendering the nose and taste bud sociologically insignificant, the city dwellers' absent-minded relationship with them makes them all the more important. It is because smell and flavour are sensed by the body, and responded to, outside of conscious thought, that they become central to making 'distinctions' between social strata (Bourdieu 1984). For Bourdieu, as private and personal as experiences of 'taste' and distaste might seem, they quietly fix a body to wider impersonal processes of social stratification. Crudely speaking, for Bourdieu, gut feelings, aroused by the experience of particular flavours and aromas, separate and cement social strata by marking one body, social group or space by its associated 'essence', as distinct from the other. This results in differentiated social strata being mutually defined by their tastes and distastes. We might say that the nose and the mouth, with their tastes and distastes, are the guardians of the culture lived by that body.

Another important reason to explore the aromatic and flavourful aspects of experience is the relationship that they have with memory. This peculiar relationship with time arises from a relation to 'episodic memory', unparalleled by other senses. As Julian Pallasmaa (2005) writes in his architectural essay *The eyes of the skin*, 'A particular smell makes us un-knowingly re-enter a space completely forgotten by the retinal memory; the nostrils awaken a forgotten image, and we are enticed to enter a vivid day dream. The nose makes the eyes remember' (p. 54).

As the author Marcel Proust (2001) and sociologists Nadia Serematakis (1994) and David Sutton (2001) have all illustrated in their own ways, an encounter with

even the most diluted of substances from an individual's or culture's past – a biscuit, a fruit, a herb – has the potential to teleport entire episodes from another place and time into the present. This is significant, not least to the reconstitution of cultures within globally interconnected lifeworlds; flavours and smells are one of the key ways in which culturally or biographically specific memories are translated into global cities, despite vast temporal and spatial distances.

Both the flavourful and aromatic experience of urban environments are central to the making and remaking of social strata. They arouse memories and meanings that unite social groups, and they help establish the boundaries between social groups. Yet the capacities of smell and taste are not just involved in the making and remaking of social boundaries. They are also involved in dissolving boundaries and smudging social strata. With every aromatic or gustatory encounter, be it an accidental inhalation or an intentional slurp, the boundaries of body and world, subject and object, self and other, are technically speaking blurred. Admittedly, in most instances, the essences entering the body are already considered extensions of the self and culture and only fortify the sense of the culture and identity lived through the body. At other instances, however, the flavour or essence is unfamiliar. While the unfamiliar is normally met with a squirm, occasionally olfactory and gustatory revulsion, 'the guardians of culture', are caught resting. Accordingly a new taste or essence is able to enter the body. If this is repeated, the body acquires a familiarity with a new flavour or aroma and learns to discern it amongst others. Occasionally, it even comes to crave it. This change in sensitivity to certain aromatic and gustatory stimuli is what we would commonly call the acquisition of a taste.

While acquired tastes might seem sociologically insignificant, they point towards the plasticity of aesthetic dispositions and, through that, the mutability of the cultures to which aesthetic sensibilities are attached: Although taste is deeply related to fixed senses of self and culture, the acquisition of new tastes and aesthetic sensibilities happens all the time in cities. This occurs either accidentally through unwitting osmosis between urban lifeworlds or through a process of deliberate repetition and familiarisation. While they are the sensory modalities through which the parameters of identity and culture are most readily fortified, it is through urban noses and mouths that the boundaries of what we think of as culture and identity are also most readily smudged.

Considering these reflections, I want to return to the East London street market with which this chapter opened. Applying a multisensory sociology, I want to exemplify what the 'other senses' lend to an understanding of social formation within multicultural urban contexts.

Fragrant and Textured Biographies

While the aromatic inventory of multicultural space that this chapter opened with was an interesting way of bringing into relief the multicultural 'ambience' of a given space, and was suggestive of the cohabiting tastes within a given space, it tells

us little about what this aromatic ambience 'does' nor how everyday life is constructed in relation to it. To do so requires an explicit engagement with the 'senses' of the market's patrons and traders. Accordingly, the analysis expands where this chapter's opening walk ended – surrounded by wafts of sandalwood, lavender, nutmeg, palm oil, paraffin and cinnamon. Most of this highly perfumed combination shrouds a stall from which Dickson, a man in his early thirties, dispenses the handmade perfumed soaps and creams he makes in a nearby workshop.

Dickson has lived in London since moving from Ghana over 8 years ago. He speaks in an accent similar to many of the traders around him, a voice tinged with Caribbean inflections, West African cadence, the odd cockney turn of phrase and consonants enunciated with Arabic definition. His hair is styled into dreadlocks, and, in a contemporary spin on Caribbean Garveyites' conspicuous identification with Africa, the African wears a gold and green Jamaica-shaped pendant. Despite a professed lack of explicit religious or cultural affinity, most of those at the market who know him (and lots do) call him 'Rasta'. Dickson has worked at the market for 6 years, having first started there with a casual pitch (a stallholder having temporarily vacated a position), before getting a permanent pitch and storage years later. The tabletop of his market stall is covered with a cloth made from green and brown camouflage netting, bought from an army surplus store. On top of this netting are laid long solid slabs of different handcrafted soaps, marbled variously blue, pink, yellow and brown. These sit behind a row of brown and blue glass pots containing creams and an array of loosely arranged bottles: small ones containing essential oils and large ones containing homemade tonics. Between them is an aerosol full of luck: 'Gamblers Spray'. Most of these, the aerosol excluded, Dickson makes himself in a nearby workshop. Behind the stall is a laminated black and gold poster of Barack Obama and 'America's First Family', beneath which are bowls of fresh Jamaican Scotch bonnet peppers and African naga peppers, two small bowls of Ghanaian mangoes, sugarcane and three fresh coconuts. To the sides of his stall, an assortment of Africana – carved wooden statues and, folded and wrapped in cellophane, a pile of gold, green, red and black starred Ghanaian flags. Almost every day of the year (apart from the wet ones, the really hot ones and Wednesdays when he manufactures his goods), Dickson sells his produce, primarily the handcrafted soaps, to a notably broad cross-section of the market's patrons.

At a casual glance, Dickson and his stall could be seen as authentic Africana, with inherited handicrafts transplanted from Africa and reassembled in London. This is, without a doubt, an impression that Dickson attempts to impart. When I first met him and asked him where he got his products from he stated, curtly, 'Africa' before returning to his work at the stall. Accordingly, if we take his own initial explanation at face value, Dickson's existence in the market *could* be interpreted as the importing of 'essential' essences into East London, for consumption by other Africans or orientalist consumers of Africana. This view of the market stall would be congruent with an interpretation of globalisation wherein hermetic cultures are seemingly teleported into and reconstituted in global cities and made amenable to a shallow 'boutique multiculturalism' (Fish 1999, p. 56).

Yet familiarisation with the trader, his stall and their place in the lives of his patrons casts doubt on this simplistic notion of globalisation and mosaic multiculturalism. On top of the seemingly linear Ghana–London link, there is a vast, non-linear meshwork of locations, practices, bodies and sensations. Tracing the paths taken by the aromas at the stall, as well as the acquisition of a 'taste' for them in the noses of the market's users, disrupts visions of the global transference of ethnic essences and an ensuing multiculturalism of tessellating cultural entities. To bring into relief this meshwork of locations, practices, bodies and sensations, I will first detail some key points in Dickson's biography. This, incidentally, is by no means a complete biography but one that relates specifically to the texture and aroma of the soaps and lotions that he crafts and sells, the production of which is analogous to the complex production of identity and social formation in East London.

(Sort of) true to his initial word, Dickson's first contact with handmade soaps was as a small child at the feet of his grandmother and mother in Ghana: 'You see this soap?' Dickson reaches underneath his stall and produces, from inside a worn brown piece of paper, a large rough white ball. It is about the size of grapefruit but crumbly and unevenly textured. It does not, to me, look like soap.

> 'This is soap.'
> 'That's soap?'
> 'Yes. This type of soap is what my granma an' mother make. She makes different types of soap but this is where these come from … They always mixing them. Water plus palm oil and plantain leafs and stuff. They always mixing them. An's using them on me. Heh. D'ya get me? So I know what she use.'

The 'base' of the soap which Dickson mixes and blends himself is indeed very much the same as that used by his grandmother and mother in Ghana. Like women across West Africa, the maternal side of Dickson's family had their own locally 'inherited' recipe for blending 'black soap' or *alata samina* as it is known locally. The soap balls that Dickson manufactures alongside his more rectangular blocks are frequently recognised as authentic by female West African users of the market who often fondle, although they rarely buy, the large waxy lumps. In this sense Dickson's production of the soaps does *appear* to result from the teleportation of sensoria and practices from Africa into London. Yet at this point, it is important to point out that, as a young man growing up within a patriarchal culture, Dickson made little conscious effort to inherit the highly gendered sensory affinities that were being passed along the matriarchal side of West African families: 'Do you know what I mean? Making soap. It was not my thing. I just watch them. It's not like my ideal. If it was my ideal I would learn it straight away. I would have studied straight away'.

It was not until he moved to London from Ghana and endured a prolonged stint fulfilling the allotted roles of African migrants (as undervalorised feminised labour) that soap entered Dickson's economic life. It was after a particularly long stint as a cleaner that a friend came to him and said, 'They making soaps and they's looking for somebody. Who knows how to be making soap?'

The opportunity to make something was certainly more appealing than cleaning. More importantly, however, the word 'soap' had something vaguely familiar about

it – a strange quality that rekindled dormant memories contracted into his body as a child, a scent, a texture and a set of actions and practices: 'And so I was like, "Oh, I know how to make soap!"'

The important moment here, it must be said, was not the moment when Dickson *said* to himself 'Oh, I know how to make soap!' Rather it was the strange familiarity he felt in his nose and his hands and the ignition of an old memory deposited deep within his bones that led him to say to himself 'Oh, I know how to make soap!' The difference is small but important, as it is the difference between actions based on narrative reasoning and actions based on the sensory experience that precedes narrative.

Returning to the biography, at the turn of the millennium, Dickson took up the soap-making job and worked for a company based in South London making what turned out to be a range of synthetic cleaning products. While this job filled an economic need, he had not found anything that satisfied his hunger for the scent and texture that the initial mention of 'soap' had awakened. In this craving for a lost smell and texture, Dickson started to 'sense' a potential niche in the market:

> I have an education for how to making soaps. How to making cream and stuff. But it was a different way to making them kind of products. After a while it was like ... 'Oh no! I'm making soap, an' I know how to make soap better.' So then I was like 'Why don't you … Use your own ideas from back home, an' make soap?'

The experience of watching his mother and grandmother mould soap out of ashen plantain leaves left him with vague memories based on olfactory experience. However, having made little effort to inherit the practice, Dickson lacked the requisite corporeal experience with which to make the soaps himself. Accordingly, he felt that he needed some formal and practical training before he could set up his own business. Not long afterwards he enrolled in a nearby college:

> 'Why not study them much more to improve my idea? So I just find herbal medicine courses.'
> 'Where?'
> 'Islington College. So they give me more ideas like mixing things, herbals, to the product. They tell me about new things.'
> 'New ingredients?'
> 'Yes, an' I pick things up and stuff. But then other things; I'm like, "That is true because my mum and family use it." So some of the things she use, they was like "look at this" and I was like, well, she used it too, so it's good.'

At the college Dickson, alongside a class of others, underwent a carefully designed programme of sensory training, a soft version of the processes described by Bruno Latour (2004) in his account of the training of perfumers. Therein Dickson learnt about various compounds and their aromatic differences as well as the tactile and medicinal properties of a range of substances and their combinations. Through the repetitious process of learning, he acquired a new type of nose and a new type of hand, able to discern the distinctions between a range of complex compounds as well as the bodily states aroused by them. At some points these new ways of sensing synchronised with old ones – 'That is true because my mum and stuff use it' – and at other moments they contradicted the pre-existent sensory intuitions.

Accordingly, to the Ghanaian base of his soap, Dickson added deviations from his family's age-old recipes. While Dickson continued to source various products and influences from Africa, he also sourced olive oils, tea tree and lavender extracts from across Europe and Asia and combined them with extracts and oils from 'all over the place'. To each blend Dickson contributes a montage of accumulated ingredients, influences and practices, all of which he stirs into large vats before moulding the soap into rectangular blocks. The end result is a highly popular, green, pink, white, beige or brown marbled soap bar dispensed for cleansing and the treatment of 'eczema, stretch marks, chill skins, dry skins, psoriasis, you know? Terrible skin disorders'.

One moment at the stall, the customer is a fidgety old Caribbean man demanding that the 'Rastaman' sort him out with a 'remedy fi' me itchy balls' (which Dickson duly supplies), while behind him a Polish mother waits to buy a block of chamomile soap for her sleepless child. The next moment a new resident of the rapidly gentrifying area around the market approaches the stand. She is drawn in by the combined ego-consumerist connotations of the rough brown paper wrappings and the scent of lavender reminiscent of her aunt's house. She arrives simultaneously with a small 60-year-old Rastafarian, peering from beneath a sagging 'tammy'. He waits for her to move aside before asking, in a South London accent, for a small blue tub of cream and a stick of sugar cane. The latter Dickson deftly prepares with a machete before handing it over with a paper towel. Between these customers, Dickson deals with pairs of older African women who pass rough balls of unprocessed soap between them, sniffing and rubbing them, turning them over and asking questions before leaving, buying nothing. Many more passers-by stop to say hello, surveying any new items on the table. Most of Dickson's customers, it should be noted, are regulars, returning every month or two for a refill of a new lotion, tonic or soap.

Despite the Afrocentric adornments surrounding Dickson's stand, the biography of the soaps Dickson sells confounds notions of a globalisation wherein 'essential' essences are transplanted into new contexts. The visible marbling on Dickson's soaps mirrors the multiple cultural influences that Dickson himself embodies and mixes into his products. Dickson's customer base too confounds the notion of a multiculturalism, whereby discrete cultures live side by side, peering through windows into each other. The influences flowing through Dickson's stall make it impossible to define any hermetic 'origin' of the products nor of Dickson himself. Moreover, the interactions with a diverse customer base suggest the existence in East London of something other than a simple 'mosaic multiculturalism'.

The Global Circulation of Taste

Where Dickson's conscious melding of various aesthetic influences – from the Caribbean, from England, from Africa – into his stall not enough to help sustain the multicultural connections of the market, the long transnational biography of the ingredients he uses certainly is. While Dickson himself may have a hybrid

biography, the individual ingredients that he combines into his soap, as well as a taste for them, also have a history of intercultural exchange. In fact, it is not possible to reduce a taste for any of the essences that Dickson melts into his soap bars – coconut oil, cloves, cocoa butter, cinnamon, lavender, sandalwood, nutmeg, palm oil, tea tree oils – to a specific national or even continental context. A taste for, or a familiarity with, each of these ingredients has its own transcultural history.

For instance, the spiced floral notes of nutmeg, clove and cinnamon that Dickson regularly uses in the brown and green marbled 'Healing Soap', although native to India, Java and Sri Lanka, became familiar to the noses and tongues of Europeans from the seventeenth century onwards, primarily by way of Portuguese, English and Dutch colonial companies (Cook 2007). Today the delicate flavours of nutmeg and clove are a well-established part of a 'traditional' and 'authentic' British cuisine and are very familiar to the British palate. Moreover, at the same time as being carried north to European ports by trade winds, the same spices were increasingly transplanted, along with other flora and fauna, as well as slaves and indentured labourers, around the trade circuits that span Earth's tropical girdle. Accordingly, the spices, once native to a small part of the world, from the seventeenth century onwards were ingredients in a wide array of 'indigenous' and 'traditional' Asian, African and American cuisines and medicines.

A taste for the mangoes that Dickson also sells, perhaps the second most common item to be found at the market, can also be mapped directly onto the trade routes of European colonialists through the tropics. This 'king of fruits', and a taste for it, started life in South Asia (Susser 2001). However, throughout the seventeenth century, the messy, fleshy fruit and a taste for it were stirred brutally with blood and sweat clockwise through the tropics, from Asia to Africa and over the Atlantic to the Caribbean. In each location, the fruit entered biographies in different ways (Rhys-Taylor 2007). The distribution of a taste for the hot chilli peppers, the most common item at the market and sold by Dickson also, reflects the strong, stirring arm of colonialism. This time the taste for them moved anticlockwise from the Americas, through Africa to India and South-East Asia, where they became a staple ingredient in a wide array of 'authentic' regional cuisines. These items, suited to tropical climates, only arrived in Europe in any substantial quantity with the twentieth century and the birth of aviation, not long after the first wave of postcolonial migration from the tropics northward to Europe.

Doubtlessly, different bodies with analogous tastes for these fruits of colonialism would have met on the fringes of plantations and colonial outposts in which they were corralled, enslaved or indentured. It was in such contexts that the diverse creolised cuisines and cultures of the Caribbean were developed, combining elements of Asian, African and European cultures. However, it was particularly with the postcolonial northward migration from Commonwealth countries into the fringes of cities such as London that the gustatory and olfactory affinities between cultures, bequeathed by colonialism, would start meeting and synchronising in less constrained contexts. While the Asian, African and Caribbean diasporic cultures that were translated into the context of European cities are irreducibly different, in the context of Ridley Road and other street markets like it, affinities derived through the dislocating experience

of colonialism overlap. In their overlapping aesthetic sensibilities, separate lifeworlds become mutually sustaining and combine to shape the poly-sensory, multicultural, convivial life of the East End street market described above.

The remarkable affinities between the small community of regular customers and traders at the market partially hinge upon the points at which the scent and texture of the market overlap with the sensory affinities accumulated between the market's users. That the aesthetic dispositions of the market's users are partly bequeathed by the circuitry of colonial projects lends them a political significance: the fusion of flavours between cultures reveals the blurred lines between racialised social strata and, in reaction to colonialism, challenges any politics organised around absolutist notions of ethnic or national exceptionalism.

Interestingly, Dickson does not put the broad appeal of his products down to the combinations of aromas and essences that he carefully blends nor to the multiplicity of interwoven cultures in which the aromas stimulate a response. Rather he attributes the popularity of his produce to the tactile work that it does: to the fact that it works on skin, at a level of sensory experience where distinction and discrimination is seemingly impossible. Holding up his left arm and rubbing it with his right hand, he once stated, 'it's not white skin with white remedies or black skin with black remedies … it's all the same remedy … it's just skin'. Without a doubt, there is a profound truth in his observation. It is not, however, a universal truth, and the tactile experience of skin blind to colour is a historically and culturally specific achievement.

As Mark M. Smith (2006) describes in his multisensory history of antebellum race making, the tactile differentiation between epidermal surfaces has never been simple. Therein the 'white' person's experience of touching 'black' skin was synaesthetic (Smith 2006, p. 42). That is, tactile experience was shaped by the other senses, not least by vision and by the knowledges derived from visual experience. In many respects, this synaesthetic experience of touch was more akin to that of a penetrative and poisonous aroma or flavour: a threat to the boundary of the white body and, through the body, 'white culture'. The tactile experience of skin based on racist eyes was not just peculiar to the antebellum American South. Visual tonality of skin created a shadow over its tactile experience nearly everywhere throughout much of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite the relatively universal texture of epidermal surfaces, the touch of skin on skin has certainly not always transcended the distinctions of race. In the instances illustrated by Smith, touch was a key sensory modality through which race was constructed and acted upon.

However, the differences between a street market in East London and the antebellum South are more than simply a couple of centuries and a few thousand miles. Not least of the differences are the histories that shape sensory experience in the context of the East London street market. For example, it is important to recognise the fact that the numerous communities living and working in the area of Ridley Road market were subjected to recurrent racist violence throughout the twentieth century (Keith 1993, p. 82; Macklin 2007, p. 41). Accordingly, the residents and users of the area have been at the forefront of a socially imagineered 'skin-colour blindness'. This is not, it must be said, the type of institutional colour blindness that

passes as a *means* or shortcut to racial equality in the assimilationist rhetoric of conservative municipal anti-racism. Rather it is the type of colour blindness that is the *end* result of sustained grassroots, local anti-racist struggle. Such blindness to skin colour does not only affect the ways in which bodies are seen; the sense of tactility also 'loses touch' with the divisive power it derived from racist eyes. Dickson's succinct affirmation of a universal skin is without a doubt an accurate explanation of the popularity of his produce. Above that, however, it is testament to the long journey that the senses have been on between the 'haptic protocols' of twentieth-century segregation (Smith 2006, p. 390) and a contemporary inner-city street market.

Slippery Soaps

Dickson's sensory biography is suggestive of the plurality of practices and cultural influences that he mixes into large vats in a workshop in Hackney and sells at the market. First, the trigger for making the soap was a sensory memory of his mother's *alata samina* – the traditional African soap. On top of his faint memories of a texture and smell, he built a further literacy in the tactile and olfactory languages of a number of different cultural arenas, in particular those of a local westernised herbalism taught in a local college. He also developed a general 'sensitivity' to what people in an impoverished part of London have historically needed in terms of epidermal care, irrespective of skin colour or cultural affiliation. The ingredients he uses too also have a complex biography, the taste for them having been deposited by the transnational circuitry of colonialism. While in each location a taste for these items evolved along their own path, at the inner-city street market of the global city, the evolutionary paths of the 'tastes' of colonialism reconverge and form the pivot of a vibrant everyday multiculturalism.

Certainly, each of the market's users takes great pride in their own personal sensory repertoires and the cultural heritage to which they relate. Consider, for instance, Dickson's proud proclamation that his products come from Africa. It is tempting, in fact, to believe that for each of the market's many aromas there is a correlating identity and culture that, accumulated, make up the mosaic of multicultural East London. Yet, while the aromatic inventory with which this chapter opened is an interesting way of bringing into relief the multicultural ambience of a given space, in singling out separate smells as isolatable units, the inventory of 'essences' loses sight of something very important about the market. That is, in painting a portrait of separate essences, it loses sight of the continual blending of aromas in the air of the market. And in doing so, it loses sight of the smudging of cultural boundaries within the lives of the market's patrons and across the history of the world. This is not just a colourful metaphor and a pun on essences and essentialism. On the contrary, the blurring of cultural boundaries and the co-mingling aromas of the market are isomorphic. Scratch the surface and sniff, and the 'routes' that cut across and connect

the 'roots' that each affixes to a particular culture and its sensory repertoire are revealed (Gilroy 1999).

It might not be that sensory 'overlaps' or convergences in taste reflect a 'deep' understanding of one another's biographies or a conscious appreciation of cultural histories (although this is not excluded). Neither however is it that a shared taste reflects only a shallow 'boutique multiculturalism' (Fish 1999). Rather they produce quite literal 'gut feelings' through which the boundaries of cultures are conspicuously smudged. It is in these smudged areas, zones of literal and metaphorical osmosis between lifeworlds, that the everyday multicultural life of the street market is produced, sustained and evolved. In the thick aromatic air of the market, you will find a form of life that, although developed under constraints, presents in its everyday hybridity a universal challenge to the racialised stratification of societies everywhere and offers hope for the future of cities in a global age.

There are, of course, different ways of making 'sense' of such multicultural locales using other senses. Turning an ear towards the twenty-first century inner-city contexts, for instance, provides a particularly useful way to understand the dynamics of contemporary multiculturalism. The evolution of language (Hewitt 1986) and diversifying modes of musical expression (Gilroy 2002; Back 1996) provide particularly sonorous illustrations of complex social processes. However, much of everyday life goes unspoken and unsung. Often, it is not even reflected upon or narrated in our own heads. Rather it is sensed through noses, tongues and fingers and felt deep within the guts, and it is translated into the meals we prepare every day, the fragrances we dress ourselves in, the movements we make with our bodies and the interactions we engage in. As much as the 'other senses' might seem to create an ambient backdrop to real life, they are, in many respects, the senses most central to everyday life. They regulate interactions with other bodies and spaces and (trans)form identities and cultures in the process. It was, for instance, through the work of all of the senses that race was made and racism enacted in the antebellum American South (Smith 2006, p. 2). However, it is also through all of the senses, shaped by particular histories, that a vibrant multicultural life is formed and sustained in contemporary London. It is for both reasons, and many others, that sociology needs to, and thankfully is beginning to, come to its senses.

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Chapter 4
English Literacies in Medellín: The City as Literacy

Raúl Alberto Mora, Carla Pulgarín, Natalia Ramírez, and María Camila Mejía-Vélez

Defying Conventional Wisdom and Revisiting the City as Literacy

Despite its current status as a non-official language, interest in English has grown in Colombia. This can be seen in the emergence of official policies on graduation requirements, more language centres and bilingual outlets in local media, government-led initiatives at the city level seeking full command of English by 2019 and more resources to increase the amount and quality of English instruction (Mora 2015b). The aim of these initiatives is to help students reach specific proficiency levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001): B2 level for college graduates and C1 for students graduating from pre-service English teacher education programs.

While it remains true that English is not an official language in Colombia, that does not mean that English only appears in classrooms or official media. Walking around Medellín (our hometown), one finds texts in English on billboards and store ads, in local bookshops and libraries and as graffiti. It is no longer unusual to find inhabitants having a casual conversation in languages other than Spanish, and more immigrants have found a niche in our city. What is missing from the conversation, however, is further evidence of how people appropriate English in the city and its urban spaces (Mora 2012). Despite the few studies on the English language in Colombia (e.g. Velez-Rendon 2003; González 2010) and on the pedagogical power of urban spaces (e.g. Sharkey and Clavijo-Olarte 2012), some of the existing views of language in the local media and even some government policies promote the vision that Colombian cities are monolingual. This view is a stark contrast to the language landscape in Colombia. As Mora (2012, 2015b) has claimed, Colombia is

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a country with almost 70 recognised national languages (including indigenous, Afro-Colombian and Colombian Sign Language), which would render its cities and communities anything but monolingual.

However, these views from media and policy makers (and oftentimes academia) limit our understanding of how languages operate in urban contexts, perpetuating the idea (based on the lack of official status) that English in Colombia will never transcend its traditional classification as a 'foreign language' (Mora 2013, 2015b). This view also ignores how Colombians play with the language and use it as a communicative resource (Mora 2013, 2015b). Some of the linguistic profiles mentioned above bring to mind the existence of advertisements (Velez-Rendon 2003) and policies (González 2010) that promote the use of language. What we are calling for is a closer look at what happens *inside* the city, where English is emerging as a resource that adds richness to the messages that people produce in the city's physical and cultural spaces (Soja 1989).

Since 2013, our research team has explored, based on the realities of out-of-school literacy practices (Knobel 2001; Hull and Schultz 2001; Street 1995; Tannock 2001; Warriner 2009), how English is appropriated as a semiotic, aesthetic and linguistic resource in Medellín, becoming part of the local culture. In this chapter we report our findings about the presence of this language in different physical spaces of Medellín. We believe that our research may help debunk the conventional wisdom that English is limited to the classroom and absent from the local landscape. To address this, we developed the following research questions:

1. What kind of English literacy practices appear across different urban spaces in the city of Medellín?
2. What means and modes of expression are present among these literacy practices?
3. What are the implications for the promotion of second languages in our local context?

We intend this study to be part of an extended conversation about what it means to talk about urban literacies in today's language ecologies (Mora 2014b, 2015b). We also want to raise questions about the validity of the present frameworks to define languages and how they may be responding to or ignoring the new linguistic landscapes that we face today (Mora 2013, 2015b).

Our framework of 'the city as literacy practice' revisits Freire and Macedo's (1987) idea of 'reading the world and the word', claiming that the city itself is literacy (Mora 2015a). We see the city as a polychromatic, nuanced and layered place where different texts converge and help generate a world with a certain identity and layers of expression and understanding. To really understand those interactions, one must carefully analyse their diverse textual and semiotic interactions. This framework (and the study, as a consequence) acknowledges the city's multilinear and complex nature as a necessary aspect of describing and analysing the texts that make the city.

Contributions from New Literacy Studies

The field of literacy, specifically New Literacy Studies (Heath and Street 2008; Kell 2006; Street 1984, 1995, 2013a, b), has posed important questions over the years about literacy practices outside of school. NLS has looked at places such as community centres (Blackburn 2003), neighbourhoods (Compton-Lilly 2003; Gregory and Williams 2000) and the streets themselves (Conquergood 2005; Iddings et al. 2011) to understand how literacy practices have emerged to help their inhabitants make better sense of their surroundings. However, many of these studies look at literacy in the context of the participants' mother language. What happens when we bring second languages (Mora 2013; Uribe and Gómez 2015) into the equation? How does our view of literacy practices change under these circumstances? The research team has discussed these two questions since the inception of this project.

Heath and Street (2008) described three features of culture: 'unbounded, kaleidoscopic, and dynamic' (p. 7). We can use these three categories to describe literacy in the city. Literacy and the city, we argue, have a symbiotic relationship: literacy helps make better sense of events and actions in the city, and, in turn, the city provides new outlets for literacy practices. If we add languages to the equation, then this symbiosis becomes even more dynamic and multilayered. Our idea of 'the city as literacy', thus, intends to address the different, and sometimes new, kinds of literacies (Lankshear and Knobel 2011) that emerge in different spaces (Soja 1989) in the city and how those literacies are not mono – in any way. They are, in fact, polychromatic, movable and very resourceful. The idea of 'city as literacy' recognises that languages and literacies do not necessarily operate under the traditional canons that ascribe them to sanctioned places (Makoni 2012). We argue, instead, that physical and virtual spaces appropriate (Engeström 1999) these languages and literacies to create other messages.

Adding New Elements

We recognise that today's complexity of literacy practices in urban spaces requires an extended framework that addresses the evolution of social practices (Cope and Kalantzis 2009). Therefore, in addition to ideas from New Literacy Studies, we have drawn from four recent concepts that help us understand and analyse how to rethink text and language in contemporary globalised urban contexts. A reading of all four concepts shows that language can be 'invented, disinvented and re-constituted' (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010, p. 243) to enable us to understand the new textual manifestations in the city.

Multimodality encapsulates the view that today's texts feature a fluid combination of multiple visual, textual or iconic resources, to create meanings whose impact

may transcend print-only texts (Albers and Harste 2007; Kress 1997, 2003, 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Mejía-Vélez and Salazar Patiño 2014). Multimodal design involves looking at the messages that go beyond *just words* and combine other modes (images, colour, icons, etc.), as well as the actual location of these messages (e.g. billboards, posts, walls, windows, etc.). An exploration of multimodal design within analysis therefore explains how the resources pooled for the message affect its meaning and intention.

Metrolingualism is a concept that looks at the fluidity of language use in the city and how the presence of language in different societies plays a dual role, as it shapes and is shaped by interactions in the city (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010).

Polylanguaging is used to explain the emergence of languages in urban spaces as resources at the disposal of multilingual communicators where 'ownership' of a language relates to use instead of proficiency (Chiquito and Rojas 2014; Jørgensen et al. 2011). This concept brings in the lens of *creativity*, which refers to innovations produced by meeting the different purposes and intents for the English language especially those that transcend traditional taxonomies.

Indexicality. We understand indexicality (Davila 2012; Dickerson 2012) from two vantage points. First, we understand it as exploring the importance of connecting language forms, social meanings and the macro (i.e. the effect of language on people) and micro (i.e. the effect of people on language) features' effect on language (Blommaert 2007, 2015). Second, indexicality entails the discussion of how language affects identity or how people seek to use language more authentically and the ways and goals individuals set up for language in social contexts, both officially and informally (Grayson and Martinec 2004).

These concepts combined have helped us explain the language uses that we are finding in the city. While multimodality, as a complementary concept to literacy (Kress and Street 2006), opens a space to see how people in Medellín are combining English words with different forms of design (Cope and Kalantzis 2007), metrolingualism and polylanguaging open a door to look at language interactions as something that follows a different set of cultural norms from those in traditional language instruction. These two concepts help us realise that second language use becomes a matter of appropriation that goes far beyond the traditional geographical boundaries of concepts such as 'foreign' language (Mora 2013, 2015b). We recognise that people are playing with, in this case, English, in forms that are different, creative and even defiant. Our idea of city as literacy establishes a dialectical (Dressman 2007) relationship among these concepts to create a deeper, symbiotic understanding of the relationship between city and literacy practices. Languages and literacy practices create new definitions of the city, and, at the same time, the city generates new and creative uses of languages and literacies.

The notion of 'city as literacy' is a much-needed contribution to the discussions on literacy and world languages from our side of the world. So far, the discussions seem to have stemmed from Europe, the United States and, most recently, Asia. Latin America continues to be, as Friedrich and Berns (2003) argued in their edito-

rial in a special issue of *World Englishes*, a 'forgotten continent'. This framework, we argue, is part of our contribution to a new 'south-south scholarship' (Mora 2016a) that transcends and expands the literacy research tradition from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Through our attempts to develop this framework, we recognise that research on languages and literacies in Latin America has a lot to offer, from conceptual and practical standpoints (Mora 2014a, 2015a) to all the emergent debates about how urban spaces are transforming languages by using them to convey new meanings.

To implement this study, we relied on ethnography as the primary approach for our fieldwork (Blommaert and Dong 2010; Heath and Street 2008; Leeds-Hurwitz 2004; Ramírez and Mora 2014). This approach enabled our research team to look at language as both nuanced and social matter and invited us to approach the research enterprise as 'constant learner[s] – ever curious as to what's happening' (Heath and Street 2008, p. 30). The team of ethnographers consisted of teacher education students led by the first author. Drawing from elements of ethnography enabled us to turn student researchers' backgrounds into a strength (Mora 2015a). It has afforded the team both accountability vis-à-vis how we frame research and literacy and wonderful opportunities for insider research, a feature that ethnography always places at a premium.

The Literacies in Second Languages Project

This project was the maiden study from a research initiative that Raúl chartered at his home university known as the Literacies in Second Languages Project (LSLP; Mora 2015a). As a research initiative, LSLP inquires about literacies in English and other second languages that are appearing in urban, virtual and schooling spaces in Medellín, Colombia. At the time of writing, we have two other studies in progress about urban literacies in cultural spaces (Mora et al. 2016b) and the emergence of English as a communicative resource in the context of video games (Mora et al. 2016a). We are also moving towards the exploration of literacies in school settings.

In the 2 years (2013–2015) that this particular study lasted, the team underwent quite a few changes, an issue that is not unusual in research teams (Clift et al. 2006). Seven student researchers joined the project for different intervals, but only five conducted most of the fieldwork: the three co-authors of this chapter (Carla, Natalia and María Camila) and two other student researchers (Melissa Castaño and Nathalie Gómez) who left the project to pursue personal research endeavours. These five researchers played an active role in drafting the proposal and conducting fieldwork. Raúl served as a guide for the project, providing formal instruction about literacy and qualitative research methodology, and occasionally supporting fieldwork, but becoming more involved in the data analysis.

Physical Urban Spaces as Routes

From our interest in an ethnographic approach, we chose to base our approach on 'routes', partly inspired by Stuart Hall's idea of culture as 'roots and routes' (Willis et al. 2008). We chose the idea of the 'route' as an approach to understanding the culture of English literacies that we might find in these urban spaces. Our fieldwork focused on *physical spaces* (Edwards and Usher 2008), understood as those that linked practices to edifices and venues within the city. These are spaces that we can clearly distinguish and nominate, places whose location is well known and usually static. Although people are part of the spaces, they do not necessarily define a cultural model by virtue of their presence. Therefore, our interest in this study was how English appeared as a phenomenon in these locations and how it helped reshape these places.

Deciding on the routes went beyond nomination; we needed to consider why we were choosing them. Our choices combined affinity, personal interests and our conceptual foundations. In the earliest stages of our study, we asked all researchers to draft a rationale for their route choices (Mora et al. 2015). These drafts served the dual purpose of developing ownership of the routes and appropriating the conceptual framework (Clift et al. 2006; Grossman et al. 1999). Student researchers' affinities (Black 2009) with spaces and their associated language practices led to the identification of streetscapes, restaurants, shopping malls, bookshops and libraries as objects for exploration. We introduce below a composite vignette of our discussions of our choices, edited out of the initial drafts:

If we take at face value the idea that literacy practices are socially connected, it is very important to explore what really happens regarding languages in the city. Today, people do not learn languages just in schools. We want to show how literacy practices are situated in urban spaces that generate different kinds of texts and contexts. For instance, if we look at *advertising*, we realise that it is not limited to a certain group of individuals; it is 'there', visible to all of us, oftentimes spread to be close to and easily remembered by us. In the case of *restaurants*, it has become less of a novelty to find restaurants with names and full menus in English. When looking at *malls*, *bookshops and libraries*, we find spaces where a great deal of English language manifestations might show us how people are truly interacting with the language and what they might want to accomplish with it. Advertising, specifically in Medellín, is an important feature in all social spaces. Businesses are not the only ones using advertisements; we are also witnessing how advertising narrates events, recalls historical events, names places or recognises certain people. In the case of restaurants, we need to inquire about the emergence of English, issues of language mobility and people's use of texts. Reflecting on the use of English in malls, bookshops and libraries, we realised that English appears constantly in these spaces. People are using the language without instructor mediation or specific rules, relying instead on their own standards and interests. More specifically, libraries are becoming places of social interaction where small groups of people are gathering to share their interest in learning a language and chat with friends. By exploring each route,

we expect to better understand the reasons and rationales for companies, restaurants and stores using languages other than Spanish for their ads, menus and billboards.

To ensure that we collected data across the city, we took advantage of our local mass transit system, the Metro. Metro stations provided us access to a range of spaces within walking distance. We could walk to restaurants and observe streetscapes with their public texts, such as advertisements on our path. In the case of malls, there were at least five of them with a direct path to stations, with several others within walking distance or a short bus ride. Our routes covered, then, a considerable portion of Medellín's metropolitan area from north to south covering a range of socio-economic communities and providing a good first glimpse into how English literacies are shaping our city. To show the areas of the city, we share a map of Medellín featuring the Metro (blue line in the map) and the areas we covered (yellow squares) in Fig. 4.1.

Data Sources and Analysis

Our primary data sources include a set of over 140 photographs including advertisements, signs, shop windows in stores and malls and books found in local bookshops. Relying on ideas from visual literacy (Seglem and Witte 2009), as 'the ability to make meaning from information in the form of an image' (Rowsell et al. 2012, p. 444), we found that eschewing the ancillary data and just focusing on the photographs maximised the potential for analysis. Through the analysis of the photographs, we were able to explore the 'dynamic process of constructing meaning' and the creative and political features of looking at the city as a living entity that produces literacies.

We also managed to gain a better understanding of how our local language ecologies (Holloway 2012; Mora 2014b) have morphed over time and to keep track of this evolution as a social phenomenon (Metcalfe 2015). This sense of looking at the city as an evolving entity provided chances to look at the aesthetic dimension that complements the linguistic and semiotic dimensions of literacies (Gutiérrez 2015). Finally, from a pedagogical standpoint (Chiquito and Zapata 2016), the reliance on photographs was beneficial for the co-authors' preparation as teachers: 'Engagement with visual representation as a subjective and affective mode of inquiry opens us spaces for preservice teachers to begin to wrestle with the often ambiguous qualities that define teaching' (Sanders-Bustle 2003, p. 30).

Once we chose to focus on the photographs, we also made a conceptual shift in our analysis. Most of our previous work had looked at each route individually, where each researcher just reported on her own route and Raúl just helped revise and edit the findings. For this chapter, however, we decided to mobilise our conceptual framework and really analyse the city *as literacy*, meaning looking at the data more holistically and across all routes to find commonalities in literacy practices.

The first step of our analysis included revisiting the categories that we used to describe what the photographs showed us. This process involved application of the
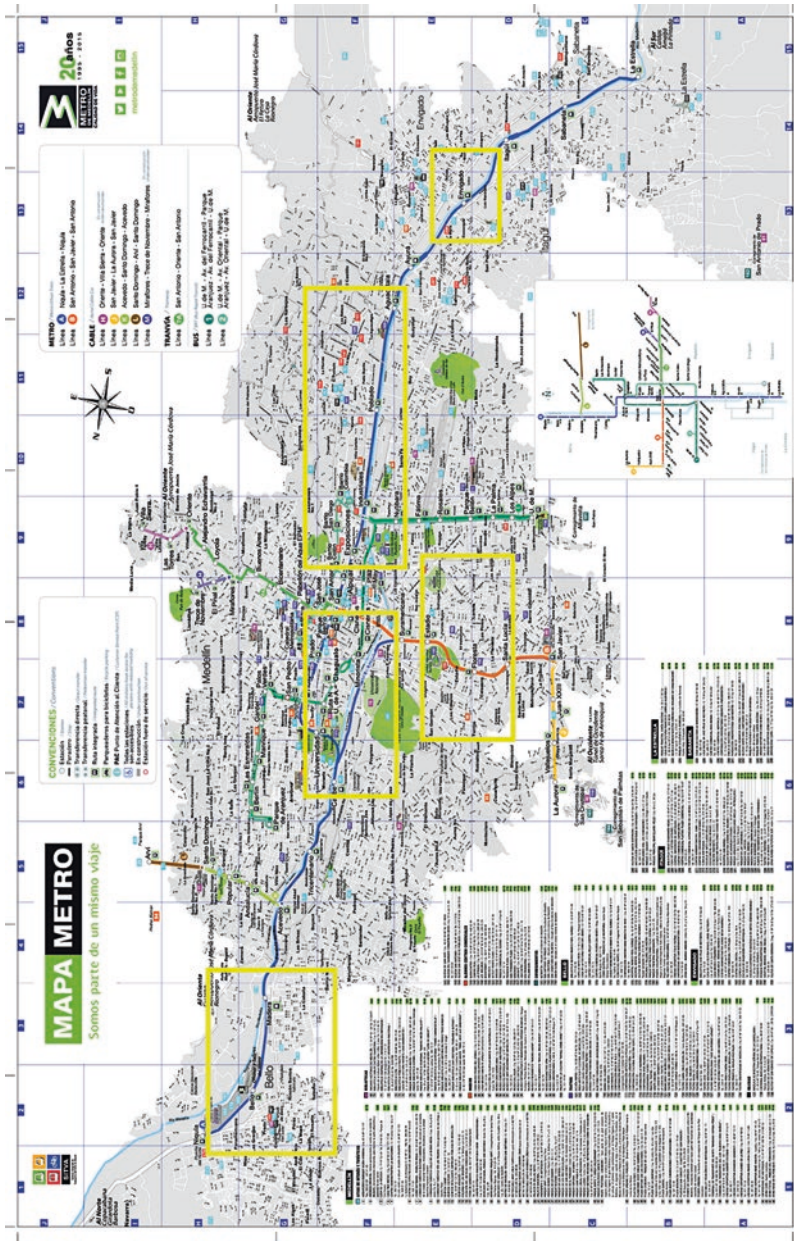
Fig. 4.1 Medellin Metro map showing fieldwork locations (Source: Empresa de Transporte Masivo del Valle de Aburrá, Limitada, Medellin, Colombia)

analytical lenses *multimodality*, *creativity* and *indexicality*. Once we had profiled the categories, we went back and revisited the data set. As we moved to a more holistic view of the data as part of the city, we needed to physically relocate it. We created three folders on Google Drive, accessible to all authors, and populated them with the files. The process of analysis involved individual, pair and group readings of the reorganised data sets. Each researcher wrote interpretive notes, which were uploaded to Google Drive for a collective reading. Everybody made comments on each other's interpretive notes before a final edit. The interpretive notes became the basis of the narratives that will introduce our overall findings.

In experimenting with multiple perspectives on the data, we have moved past the existing ideas about triangulation and embraced *poly*angulation. This approach moves past the traditional views of triangulation, to the recognition of the multiple realities present in the data collection and analysis processes (Mertler 2013; Mora et al. 2016d; Towns and Serpell 2004). This challenges the idea of research as a single analytical endeavour, which even Mertler, an advocate of polyangulation, appears to remain attached to, referring to how it 'Enables *the researcher* to try to get a better handle on what is happening in reality and to have greater confidence in research findings' (Mertler 2013, p. 12, emphasis added). Polyangulation highlights the multiple levels of diversity present in our study, beginning with the researchers themselves. Every researcher brings knowledge, life experiences and information that has strengthened our choices of routes, the data collected, and how we have made sense of it. The sum of these backgrounds and the dialogic peer relationships that were established justified our approach to analysis as a polyangulated endeavour. This has involved researchers developing the rapport needed to see themselves as *peers* and not just Raúl's 'research assistants'.

Medellín as Literacy: Creativity, Indexicality and Multimodality

In this section we will share our common findings about a city whose literacies (even as we wrote this chapter) remain in flux. Our composite narratives intertwine with our themes and a small sample of our images. These images, rather than mere artefacts, should provide a sense of the vicarious experience that involved walking across the city, taking the photos and looking at our hometown through a very different lens.

Creativity in English Across the City: Humour and Globalisation as Literacy Devices

As Velez-Rendon (2003) explained, some of the first uses of English in urban spaces in Colombia consisted of misspellings, misplaced apostrophes and potentially nonsensical messages. What we discovered was a broad diversity of language expressions in the city, in terms of the different places where the English language was present, as well as in the variety and complexity of messages available. Granted, the usual suspects were still there (names with apostrophes incorrectly included, misspelled messages, random words, etc.). However, across the three routes, we found messages with more elaborate communicative patterns. In this section, we will analyse some of those patterns as they relate to the use of *humour* as a communicative device, *motivation* as a theme across advertisements and shopping windows and messages changing in relation to *seasons*.

Our fieldwork found quite a few examples of the use of comedic devices in street texts, featuring sarcasm, jokes and the use of phonetic devices. We will illustrate the use of jokes and phonetic devices in the example of a street sign advertising one of the most popular local beer brands. The beer-shaped floral arrangement signifies that the sign appeared during the time of the Flower Fair, which takes place every August and which attracts a large influx of local and international tourists. Advertisements linked to this event were placed across the city, some located on or near bus stops (as was the case with the image below). The series of advertisements used the theme: *how to ask for….* (Fig. 4.2)

The goal of these ads is to provide a play between language and humour, relying on phonetics as a comedic device. These ads also highlight elements of folk humour; the *moon-don't-go* reference is, in fact, one of the oft-heard jokes in Medellín about how to teach English speakers the names of our local food in Spanish.

Humour, one can argue, usually entails an above-basic command of a language. In this case, the combination of English pronunciation and local humour makes for a powerful and effective message. In some cases, the pronunciation guide may be a source of comic relief, but in others, as in the case of 'Peel-Zen', it becomes a fairly accurate guide to teaching pronunciation (even if it is for commercial purposes). The use of humour and English as language resources also provides an entry point to discussions of local culture, customs and cuisine.

The appearance of language in cities can provide evidence of how globalisation processes are shaping those cities (Blommaert 2010). To make sense of how globalisation has begun to (re)shape the urban landscape, malls and advertisements provided interesting examples. Two salient instances appeared in brand names and in the composition of shopping mall windows. As we looked at the names of stores and clothing brands, we noticed the appearance of popular culture, other languages (including English) and personal narratives, as illustrated in the figure cluster below Fig. 4.3.

The brand name shown on the left reflects the use of Internet lingo (the well-known expression 'laughing out loud' or LOL) to name a clothing brand. LOL is

Fig. 4.2 Local beer
advertisement on a bus
stop in Medellín

Fig. 4.3 Brand names found at a local store in Medellín

one of the oldest and best-known Internet expressions, easily recognised by most
people who participate in social media. This is no doubt intended to help the brand
gain quick notoriety as it is likely that people have seen LOL elsewhere and will link
it to the new brand. The example on the right is quite curious. We found it at the
same store where we found the first brand. The clerk mentioned that the designer
was just looking for ways to say 'leather' in other languages and that she found this
word in Albanian (possibly via Google Translate). Albanian is surely one language
that we would not have expected to detect in the city, but the fact that this designer
resorted to lesser-known languages to advertise the brand shows a level of global
awareness that enriches the city.

   The next example is 'Kndy Girl', an advertisement encountered in a city mall
(Fig. 4.4).

Fig. 4.4 Logo for Kndy Girl store in Medellín

For this one, we had the opportunity to interview the store owner briefly. She explained that the choice of resorting to English to name her store in this way, besides the expanded possibilities that English afforded her for advertising, had a strong personal motivation:

> I've always liked candy and what-not, then, with an ex-boyfriend, we started saying, well, the sweet girl and what-have-you. But it sounded better like 'candy girl' and we started searching on that side and, since it's something very personal and then we wanted to reflect it on the brand. Then, we chose to make in English because it sounds so much better than in Spanish. Finally, we left it as 'Kndy Girl' ... Also, because I have a lot of tattoos with candy and, honestly, I am like cuter, sweeter, and it came up on social media and Whatsapp and all that, the nickname [which combines her real name with candy] kind of matched and then for the brand, we thought, well, it is [nickname's] brand, the sweet girl and that's why we named the brand 'Kndy Girl'. (interview, 14 March 2013)

Global patterns also influenced the timing of the appearance of advertisements. For instance, we noticed the emergence of Black Friday advertisements as illustrated in the image of a local optics store (see Fig. 4.5). Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving Day in the United States, yet Thanksgiving is not observed in Colombia.

February was all about the international commercial festival of Valentine's Day, and around May all references were to Mother's Day. Events also influenced the timing of advertisements; during June 2014 we noticed a great deal of references to *futbol*, apropos of the World Cup in Brazil.

Fig. 4.5 An optics store
offers Black Friday sales

Indexicality in Physical Spaces: Moments of Official (Mis)use and (Inadvertent) Profanity

As discussed, indexicality tackles the distinction between the official and the informal as features of language play. From this distinction, we discovered two salient literacy practice features in the surveyed physical spaces. The first feature was the presence of bilingual signs in different buildings in the city and the ways English appeared in these buildings. The other phenomenon we found was establishments and brand names relying on profanity (Mora 2014c). Both of these cases, we argue, provide unique ways to approach language play and authenticity.

There has been a decade-long drive to promote the use of English in Medellín, manifested in initiatives ranging from the appearance of bilingual signs in public buildings to recent efforts to encourage local folks not to be ashamed of their accent when speaking English. Bilingual advertisements have become more ubiquitous. Shopping malls, tourist sites, gas stations, public buildings and even college campuses now feature these messages. The increasing appearance of these messages shows the collective interest in developing a bilingual culture in the city and makes it increasingly difficult to argue that Spanish is the only language present here. The signs are evidence of the city reinventing itself as a more welcoming space to English-speaking visitors, investors and potential immigrants who might want to make Medellín their new home (Fig. 4.6).

Fig. 4.6 Multilingual sign outside a gas station near the airport

Fig. 4.7 Announcement outside a local establishment with misspelling

However, as much as our research team wanted to remain disinterested researchers, our background as English teachers always came into play. As we kept recording the messages, we began to notice not only their presence but also the composition of texts, sometimes even wondering 'who wrote this?' In the interest of spreading a bilingual culture, it seemed that quite a few mistakes and typos were appearing (Fig. 4.7).

It is not unusual to find such mistakes. After all, in the interest of using language as an appeal factor, store owners may resort to online translators or their basic knowledge of the language (as anecdotal information and some interviews attested). What was more worrisome was finding these mistakes in government buildings or

Fig. 4.8 Use of the F-word in advertising

college campuses. We found English expressions that ranged from literal transla-
tions to highly unfortunate interpretations (as in a building where they used the
word 'handicapped' for the accessible restroom). After all, these institutions pre-
sumably have the human and economic resources to provide quality translations for
their ads. Most universities, for instance, have language centres with highly compe-
tent speakers of English.

In the interest of developing an identity through a second language, there are
multiple moments of language play. Profanity is, more often than not, a useful entry
point to language, one that shows the ubiquitous nature of English today (Blommaert
2015). Before we begin to show the examples, it is important to point out, as Mora
(2009, 2016a) has argued, that we are not using profanity for mere shock value but
to document the ways language is used in semiotic context. During our fieldwork,
we encountered moments of humour, irony and sheer creativity. Finding profanity,
however, started as one of those serendipitous moments that characterise ethno-
graphic fieldwork. The two images below feature an example of the use of the
F-word as part of brands' imaging (Fig. 4.8).

In the case of the restaurant (on the left), further exploration showed that this
name appeared on their Facebook page and on the website shown in the image.
Encountering these two images, in addition to other ads that relied on expressions
which would be considered even more offensive, we wondered what made it pos-
sible to publicly display expressions in English which would never be countenanced
in Spanish. As Dickerson (2012) explained, indexicality also explores the need to
draw attention through language. Reactions from local language users are usually
humorous, with occasional giggles when seeing these messages. It is very different
when we have shared some of these findings at international conferences, when we
always introduce these findings with a trigger warning.

The examples, and the reactions to them across borders, show an interesting reality about language appropriation. The F-word is perhaps one of the most recognisable words in English. As such, it may give businesses immediate notoriety. Alternatively, since it is not uncommon for messages in English to go unnoticed, they may escape the attention of most while attracting the interest of people who are already sufficiently familiar with English to be 'in on the joke'. In this sense, the ubiquitous presence of English and the outsider status that it still may hold allows profanity to be sanctioned and accepted as humorous play. This also begs the question of how long names such as these might be so casually acceptable and whether language users will move from enjoying the novelty to beginning to be shocked by seeing restaurants and clothing brands resorting to foul language as part of their advertising strategy.

Multimodality: Visual Design Adding Value to English

The notion of multimodality has increased our comprehension of how people build messages by combining semiotic resources. These multimodal messages reflect different modes of expressions in ways that can be quite particular and individualised. We can notice the integration between resources such as images, colours and text which are linked with the intent and meaning of every message. If we look at the image below, for instance, there is a relation between the text and the picture. As one looks at the message, one can understand by following the arrow that the first picture corresponds to the word 'frozen'. By a process of following this visual link, there is likely to be no confusion about the meaning of 'müzli', despite the fact that the word is unconventionally spelled (Fig. 4.9).

The culture of food and restaurants lends itself quite readily to being represented through multimodal design, as in the case of the image below (Fig. 4.10).

We see here how the integration of different modes works to communicate information not only about a restaurant and its food but also about Mexico and its representative and cultural aspects. The use of the colours of the national flag, a characteristic font, the iconic cactus and the official language (Spanish) combines to signify 'Mexico', while the use of English fosters transcultural communication.

Finally, multimodality facilitates the expression of moods, feelings and affiliations, as in the case of this group of advertisements found on light posts (Fig. 4.11).

If we look at this set, we observe symbols that crystallise a mood. Some speak of courage, others of lifestyle, whereas others express a sense of affinity. For example, in the image in the middle, the pirate represents a fighting spirit; his gestures represent strength; the chains and anchor represent fears. Whether or not a viewer understands the English text 'fight your fears', it is still possible to interpret this sign on the basis of the visual semiotics. In this case, multimodality enhances the metaphorical function of city texts.

Fig. 4.9 Food
announcement at a local
mall

Fig. 4.10 Food truck nearby a city park

Fig. 4.11 Collage of signs on street light posts

Medellín and Colombia: In a New State of Literacy Flux?

The question 'Is there such a thing as a *monolingual* city?', although already resolved in Europe and Asia, is still under contention in our region, specifically in Colombia. The standards that are used to assess language practices still follow traditional measures such as the number of speakers who use languages other than Spanish with native or near-native proficiency. Our initial dilemma was how to contend that our hometown was not really monolingual. As we walked around the city, we realised that if we looked at signs and words as *isolated* events, yes, one could say that this city was monolingual. However, when we looked at the city as the sum of its parts (in this case, neighbourhoods), the view of languages in it changed. Languages *are* semiotic and communicative resources, even when only fragments of a language (such as English in this case) may be found in a particular street text.

Compared to previous descriptions (Velez-Rendon 2003), it is clear that English language use in the city has come a long way. Varying degrees of sophistication were evident, from messages that included glaring mistakes (perhaps reflecting the political push for 'bilingualism' moving ahead of competence) to those which skilfully deployed English to realise a clear communicative purpose. Names of establishments were moving beyond the obvious, and designers were experimenting with Internet lingo, unusual languages and different forms of textspeak (Drouin and Davis 2009). Messages incorporating English with meanings of motivation, transgression and defiance are becoming more present in the city, as users continue to increase their confidence in the use of English as a communicative resource.

While Medellín should no longer be described as monolingual, has the point been reached at which we can declare that the city is fully *bi-* or *multi*lingual? Not really. We are still far from environmental multilingualism going far beyond advertisements and signs (Collins and Slembrouck 2007) or where a localised English takes on a whole flavour of its own (De Roock 2016). English in the city still follows the traditional American/British patterns in its use, including the push towards either accent in language instruction. We are also yet to inquire about the presence of English-fuelled diasporas in the city. However, we cannot disregard the language shift that we have noticed. English is now present from north to south (if one were to follow the city across the Metro routes). The elements of complexity, transgression and creativity, while still more frequent in some areas of the city, are not *con-

fined to such areas. Some neighbourhoods may still be more likely to have more instances of English, but the kinds of messages we found were not necessarily different. Seasonal messages appeared in the malls in the north and the south. Inspirational messages were found in franchise stores in different areas of the city. Bilingual signs emerged in public and private educational institutions. Restaurants everywhere regularly featured bilingual menus, with and without spelling mistakes. The presence of other languages, including English, is both inescapable and enriching for the overall linguistic landscape of our region.

Medellín, while not yet multilingual, has begun a transition process with no turning back akin to that of other cities around the world. We are describing Medellín, therefore, as a *polylanguaged* city where many languages are becoming, both officially and informally, part of the language ecosystem. The use of English (among other languages) in names, ads, menus, profane messages and food trucks and the growing availability of books in English, in different genres such as technical books, comics and novels, are no longer isolated events. The presence of these languages is the result of a widening phenomenon combining institutional efforts and personal choices. It is an organic evolution of the collective interest of a city that intends to open itself to the world. This research indeed responded organically to that interest in transforming Medellín into a world city.

The increasing uptake of a non-local language (in this case English) is sometimes examined from the perspective of linguistic *interference*, that is, as unsettling and threatening the status of the original dominant language. Rather than adopt this view, we chose to focus on *interplay*, on languages coming together to enrich the local scenery and contribute to the complexity of messages. We discovered that languages in the city *coexist*, rather than interfere with each other. We found ads in English and Spanish next to each other, sometimes as translations of each other, sometimes merely adjacent. Spanish across the existing ads did not deteriorate, nor did it disappear because there were more ads in English. The city appears willing and able to accommodate multiple languages, finding places for all of them to play together and shine. The city keeps reconfiguring itself in light of the existing resources. As multimodal theory would explain, the presence of multiple semiotic modes allows messages to be increasingly more complex as individual resources add more layers of meaning.

In this sense, we have begun to look at languages in the city as a site for the development of aesthetic sensitivities. We are beginning to question and propose what a pedagogy of the city (Freire 1993), or rather this pedagogy of the *city as literacy* (Mora et al. 2016c), could look like. We recognise that, when looking at the city as a multimodal, metrolingual and polylanguaged affair, where languages are resources in motion and where all languages become individual modes that create more complex messages, none of the languages present there are 'foreign' anymore (Mora 2015a). They cannot be 'foreign', in the conventional definition of foreign languages, because the city and its dwellers are appropriating them as personal resources. Languages are 'additional' (Mora 2013) resources at the city's disposal. Even linguistic mistakes prove the resourceful nature of language users today.

English and other languages are no longer exogenous to our local language ecologies, with new configurations taking shape before our eyes. Language policies and curricula need to reflect this reality rather than continuing to assume the need to 'import' English by bringing in native speakers and sending people abroad for immersion. We need to promote more grassroot efforts to appropriate languages in the city, look more carefully at the language interplays in our borderlands and question how these configurations will operate when we also look at indigenous and Afro-Colombian languages and populations. As we move into our next stages of research, looking at cultural spaces (Mora et al. 2016b), the world of gaming (Mora et al. 2016a) and new language communities in our city, we will continue exploring these issues.

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Chapter 5
Who Is a City for? Reflections on Children's Narrative- and Design-Led Explorations

Angelique Edmonds

Young People's Presence and Participation in the City

In the late twentieth century, differing positions on the child's place and role in society informed markedly different approaches to the exploration of childhood and childhood environments (Freeman and Tranter 2011). As well as being shaped by their social world, children are shaped by their physical world: the places and spaces in which they grow up. This spatial world can be highly influential. The intelligence of children is said to be influenced by their experiences in the environment, particularly in the first 8 years of their life (Marcus and Francis 1998). Place matters, because place, like society, shapes and influences behaviours, the spirit, sociability, opportunities, play, health, independence, physical and mental wellbeing and even happiness. Increasingly, place is beginning to be acknowledged as an important dimension impacting on children's development and social learning (Ailwood 2000; Ansell 2009).

In modern times, the city has been thought of as an adult environment; indeed one of the impacts of the reform of child labour and the introduction of mass education was that children were no longer seen as belonging on city streets (Benjamin 2002). However, even in contemporary times, children do more in the city than recreate and be educated. They use the whole city. And yet, the public domain has become an area of contestation for children as their relationship to public space is questioned (Valentine 1996).

Children have become increasingly relegated to 'child spaces' in the city and seen as increasingly unwelcome in parts of the city—for example, newly commercialised spaces (shopping malls) as well as places traditionally used for play. Their presence on the street, in public spaces and in natural spaces has become a source

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of disquiet; indeed children's visibility in many urban areas is conspicuous by its absence (Freeman and Tranter 2011).

When studying children's relationship to places within the city, it is vitally important that adult conceptions of place are considered alongside those of children and not in a relation of dominance (Christie 2013; Holloway and Valentine 2000). Colin Ward revived an earlier view of the child as urban citizen with his publication *The Child in the City* in which he wrote:

> I want a city where children live in the same world I do … [where if] the claim of children to share the city is admitted, the whole environment has to be designed and shaped with their needs in mind. (1979, p. 204)

This challenges adult control of city environments and requires adults to acknowledge ways in which such spaces contribute to 'the construction of inequalities, possible moments of fracture and possible pressure points for change' (Christie 2013, p. 778). Despite this, as Chatterjee (2005, 2006) observes, there is no direct link between the place concepts of city planners and those of children. Children's place concepts are different from those of adults and from those of physical planners and policy makers, she notes. Children's rights include the right to participate in decision-making on matters that affect them directly. However, there is as yet limited evidence that children's voices are directly impacting on urban planning decisions (Landsdown 2005).

Children are interested in how they, their home, their street and their neighbourhood fit into wider society (Uprichard 2008). Yet, only if they have access to this wider society as participants can they learn how their community works and their place within it, what is safe and what is risky, whom to trust and not trust, what is usual and unusual, how to anticipate events and how to deal with the new and unfamiliar as they occur. Experiences in place provide context, allowing children to make connections between their selves and the world they share with others. Place impacts on how children's social relationships are formed, thus influencing opportunities for engaging in their futures (Henthorn 2013; Gleeson and Sipe 2006).

Relegation of children to 'child spaces', consequent upon their removal from the streets and neighbourhoods, is particularly evident in the construction and management of play spaces (Shakell et al. 2008). The modern conception of risk-adverse safety requirements for playgrounds and the tendency to overprogram space is resulting in boring play equipment in playgrounds and a decline in the quality of public spaces for children and is limiting the spontaneous play of children (Whitzman and Mizrach 2009). Stevens (2007) observes that this 'domestication' of play characterises a decline in outdoor exploratory play for children (see also Freeman 1996). Risk-averse responses to children's participation can impede the development of autonomy and independent decision-making. These skills include making judgements about what is safe, time management, developing social responsibility and caring for others, especially the young and more vulnerable in the group (Gill 2012). Their removal frees adults in the city (other than parents) from a sense of responsibility for socialising children and young people in their communities (Gleeson and Sipe 2006). Risk-averse behaviour (which often underlies these removal practices)

is challenged by a view that sees children as competent social actors who not only react to social and environmental circumstances but also use their own agency and autonomy to shape them (Comber et al. 2006).

These differing and diverse concerns have been brought together in the child-friendly cities literature (Cunningham et al. 1996; Driskell 2002; Elsley 2004; Kearns and Collins 2003). It adopts a broad approach to children's urban relations that includes health, transport, play, design, participation, social engagement, environmental interactions and the move towards globalisation. The concept of child friendliness is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which mandates active participation of children in civic life and promotes local systems of good governance committed to children's rights (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2004). The term 'child-friendly cities' was coined as part of a UNICEF document entitled *Children's rights and habitat*, which states:

> The needs of children and youth, particularly with regards to their living environment, have to be taken fully into account. Special attention needs to be paid to the participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns and neighbourhoods; this is in order to secure the living conditions of children and of youth and to make use of their insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment. (UNICEF 1996, p. 16)

The 54 articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are particularly important as they provide the basis on which rights are built. Implicit in the convention is a clear understanding that children's environmental, social and participation rights should be acknowledged and supported. Children need to be recognised as the experts on their own environments, and their voices should be listened to and acted upon in the design and planning of community facilities and spaces (Howard 2006). This can be difficult to achieve, as it necessitates finding ways to support children to enact their agency (Landsdown 2005). The child-friendly cities research seeks not only to understand spatial relationships but to use this knowledge to redress inequities, restore children's rights and work towards the enhanced wellbeing of children in the urban realm.

Kelly (2012) reminds us that 'the way we build and organise our cities can help or hinder social connection' (p. 3). This 'way' of building refers not only to the formal structure of the city but the manner or systems through which we arrive at that structure (Edmonds 2013b). Gibson's (1979, p. 127) notion of 'affordance' aims to reveal what a place *offers* and what it *provides* or *furnishes*. Freeman and Tranter also discuss the concept of affordances as a 'useful way of understanding children's views of the world and how this is different from adults' views' (2011 p. 31). Thus for an adult, a set of stairs provides the affordance of getting from one level of a building to another. For children, the same set of stairs might provide a range of additional affordances, including a place to sit and watch others or a place to practise using their skateboards. Another example could be the use of fences. When adults build fences, their main affordance is as boundaries to separate spaces and differentiate them according to ownership or purpose. Children, however, may see them as aids to climbing or as barriers to being able to see adjacent spaces.

Participatory processes for children need to be capable of tapping into the child's view of the affordances of places. They also need to ensure that social inclusion is not simply an aim we aspire to but is embodied in the process of creating places. Yet when it comes to children's participation in their cities, it has been suggested that their horizons, rather than expanding, are shrinking (Gill 2007). It is with a commitment to expanding children's city horizons and facilitating their authentic engagement that the projects to be reported in this chapter were conceived. In the remainder of the chapter, I will describe these projects, first A City for Whoo, followed by, briefly, My Story, My City.

A City for Whoo

A City for Whoo was created as an experiential walking trail for 10–14-year-olds in Adelaide, a capital city in Australia. The experience was designed to facilitate children exploring and discovering how city spaces are created and for whom. The project premiered in the 2015 Come Out Festival, a biennial arts festival for children (now titled Dream Big). Four classes of students participated. The first was from the Adelaide Secondary School of English (ASSoE), a culturally diverse school which runs a 12-month program for those who have recently arrived in the country as either refugees or migrants. This was the first group to participate on the festival's opening day. The first group participated in the trail only, as they were also involved in a performance and there was insufficient time to do the workshop as well. Over the following 3 days, two primary schools participated, with one school sending two classes.

The curated trail through the city took child participants through carefully crafted place-based activities and brought them into contact with a range of city users who shared personal narratives of their relationship with, and use of, the city. The project embraced the city as an extended classroom, allowing experiential learning to unfold through discovery, exploration and interaction in contexts that brought insights alive in fun and memorable ways. Each student was given a specially designed City for Whoo workbook which guided them through the places the tour visited and invited their responses to questions designed to prompt their engagement and reflection upon the attributes, uses or characteristics of the place (Fig. 5.1).

The trail visited eight sites during 90 min of the walking tour, and the workshop which followed was 75 mi. The sites were selected as a deliberate mix of public, semipublic and private places, so we could discuss access, ownership and characteristic differences of the places. The sites were also deliberately selected to provide a range of scales (intimate and vast) across both outdoor and indoor settings (Fig. 5.2).

Following the tour, a creative workshop provided an opportunity to reflect upon the tour experience and explore the question 'who is the city for?', further extending the participants' understanding of how urban places are designed. The workshops consisted of three main activities. First children voted on whether overall they liked or disliked each of the places on the trail. Second, groups discussed the reasons for

Adelaide railway station

Look around at the people at the station…

Circle the people you can see at the train station

Transport interchanges are always busy places, some people waiting and some hurrying to catch train or onward journey.

Do you think this space has provided good areas for waiting?

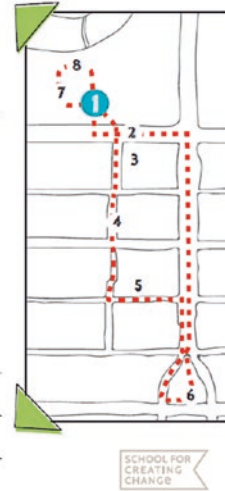Yes   No

Where would you wait here? Why?

SCHOOL FOR CREATING CHANGE
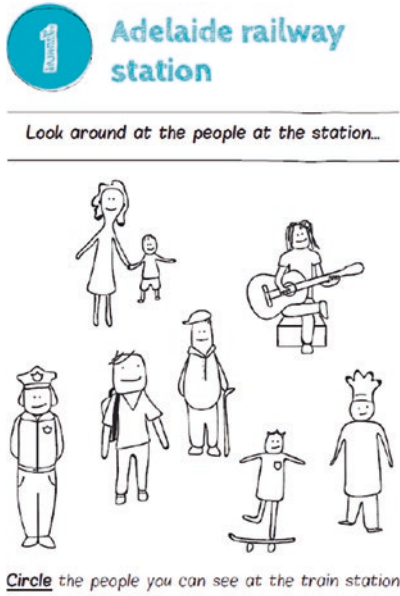
Fig. 5.1 Page from City for Whoo workbook

Fig. 5.2 Children filling in workbooks whilst waiting for a tram

their voting choices. Earlier I highlighted that children and adults may have different views concerning the affordances of city spaces. Voting and discussing what they liked and didn't like at each place were intended to reveal children's perceptions of what each place currently afforded them. Using red (like) and black (dislike) stickers, each student was offered two votes for places they liked most and two votes for places they liked least. Following the voting, we counted up the responses and discussed the reasons for their choices. We subsequently discussed that not all places are created equal; some are deliberately designed as connectors (to facilitate through traffic), and others as destinations, and that some places operate as both. Following that discussion, in groups of three, the students were given an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for how each place could be improved. Their notes in their workbooks formed the basis of the workshop group discussions regarding how they had responded both individually and collectively to the places visited. The notes from the workbooks were transcribed by festival staff onto workshop sheets posted on walls around the room. This ensured that students could take their workbooks home as a keepsake.

City for Whoo thus followed the action-reflection-action sequence of participatory action research (Wright 2011). The *action* of walking in the city and responding to questions was followed by a workshop which collated the responses and engaged in *reflective* discussion on what the results could tell us as a group about how the group had collectively responded to the characteristics, elements and aspects of the different places we visited. This was followed by another phase of *action* in which students imagined how the places could be improved. The suggested improvements were informed by reflection upon both their own individual impressions and the discussion of the collective impressions of the places. Furthermore the last phase of *action* was also informed by an activation of their perception of affordances.

Table 5.1 summarises the results of the voting.

Streets: The Least Popular

Across the eight sites visited, only two streets were included. Despite these streets being significantly different, both were ranked as the least popular places. North Terrace is a wide street with six lanes of traffic separated by a tramline in the middle. Prompted by the questions in the workbook, during the North Terrace visit, we discussed what proportion of the street space had been provided to cars, trams, cyclists and pedestrians. Reasons children gave for disliking North Terrace included 'too busy', 'noisy', 'too much rubbish', 'too crowded', 'cramped', 'not enough space', 'too many strangers', 'not much to do there', 'not much shade' and 'too sunny', 'grey place', 'lots of cement' and 'car fumes'.

Table 5.1 Sites visited and children's votes

Trail visit	Indoor	Outdoor	Public	Semi-public	Private	Intimate scale	Med. scale	Vast/open scale	Liked	Disliked	% improvements play related
Adelaide Railway Station									0	24	63
North Terrace									2	35	40
Urbanest (student housing)									15	11	47
Leigh St									6	29	40
Woods Bagot (architecture practice office)									34	8	66
Victoria Square									13	11	65
Intercontinental Hotel									52	6	52
Riverbank									10	6	49

Later in the trail when we visited Leigh St, a fully pedestrianised street where car access is limited to deliveries for businesses only and through traffic is not permitted, we visited the exercise again. Reasons for disliking this street included 'boring', 'no music', 'nowhere to play', 'not enough seating', 'nothing eye catching', 'have to pay to sit down', 'nowhere to rest' and 'too narrow'. However, children also recognised its amenities, some voting it as most liked owing to it being calm, friendly, 'smells nice', 'not dangerous', small and safe. It was also praised for being 'car free [which] helps the environment'.

Whilst one street was much more obviously designed for pedestrians and full of amenities, children had a similar view of what needed to be improved in both cases—opportunities for play. In both cases, they also highlighted the need for spots to sit and relax in the shade and the provision of drinking water, suggestions which reflect Adelaide's hot, dry climate. Environmental concerns were also reflected in the call for 'more nature' and 'less smoke' (North Terrace), whilst additional recreation opportunities were indicated in suggestions for 'free Wi-Fi' and 'a chill-out area' in Leigh Street. When it came to streets, they did not expect only to play there; they also saw opportunities to improve amenities for waiting, relaxing, pausing and making the place itself more aesthetically pleasing. This confirms the observation that a street 'constitutes an important cultural space for young people, and a space that they imbue with their own meaning' (Freeman 2006, p. 74).

Large-Scale Outdoor Places

Victoria Square is a large, somewhat formal space in the centre of the city grid. It is the central square of five which were part of the original nineteenth-century city plan and survive to the present day. The square is surrounded by high-rise buildings and is the largest open space in the city's square mile. A tram runs through it taking commuters to workplaces, the central food market and the cultural precinct. One of the workbook activities invited children to imagine how they would use the space if they lived nearby in the city centre. Responses included 'play soccer', 'chasey', 'rugby', 'wrestling', 'play tennis', 'play with my friend', 'play sport', 'relax' and 'picnic'. Whilst children evidently perceive the square as a site where play is already possible, very few of these activities are in evidence on the average day.

The Torrens Riverbank provides a contrasting informal expanse of green space flanking the river on both sides. It has recently received significant investment to improve the public realm amenity, particularly for walking and cycling pathways along the edge of the riverbank. Children's responses indicated appreciation for the space and natural environment, which was described as 'calm and more relaxing, because it's bigger than everything else'. However, there were concerns about safety with the proximity of water and also fears of aggression from the water birds which include black swans and pelicans, large species if you happen to be a child. This chimes with what Vitiello and Willcocks (2008) found in the UK when discussing people's varied responses to everyday urban places; they report: 'In all the green spaces visited, people looked for signs that made them feel safe' (p. 61).

Despite both being outdoor spaces which already provide many opportunities for children's participation, the students saw much scope for improvement. As with the streets, the most popular suggested improvement was play amenities, particularly in Victoria Square, where this accounted for 65% of the responses regarding needed improvements. Specific ideas included 'build a playground', 'build more sandpits', 'football goals', 'basketball court', 'footy oval', 'tennis court', 'build a park including rides for little kids', 'make an activity centre for kids and teens' and 'add a shop that rents toys to play'. As Walsh (2006) suggests, public spaces should invite children to play, not simply give them permission. Whilst they could see opportunities for play in these outdoor spaces, there was little infrastructure or landscaping that 'invited' them to play there. The children's responses to the green spaces were consistent with the need to feel welcome via a variety of activities which are play focused.

Most Popular

The two most popular sites were indoor private and semipublic places. The InterContinental Hotel received 52 votes, and a private architectural office (Woods Bagot) received 34 votes. Interestingly the other indoor semipublic/private space was student housing, which was voted third, but this was significantly less popular

Fig. 5.3 Children appreciating a hotel interior

with only 15 votes. The positive response to these spaces could be owing to the hosted nature of the experience. At each of these sites, we were greeted by hosts who were expecting us and who conducted a short tour of the premises, explaining their function and purpose. The two most popular sites also embody strong design values and investment in the experience of their interior spaces. At both places students were animated and engaged, asking questions and exploring.

At the InterContinental Hotel, the workbook invited children to reflect on 'How did this space make you feel when you walked in?' Their enthusiastic responses indicated the special nature of the experience: 'like I won the lottery a million and one times', 'rich', 'posh' and 'spoiled'. The children experienced a lift in their status, almost to the point of equality with adults: 'important—like I was a celebrity'. It was a chance to experience what it might be like to have independent economic capital, an experience which had a strong affective quality: 'it felt so different like I couldn't believe my eyes' (Fig. 5.3).

The workbook went on to ask: 'What did you see or feel which gave you clues for how to behave?' The intent was to reveal that the foyer of the hotel is semipublic, which means anyone is welcome to enter and the trail sought to instil the understanding that one can develop the confidence to read the signals of a place to determine what behaviour is expected. The discernible themes of student observations from which they took their behavioural cues were that the space was 'clean, quiet, [and] tidy'. They noted that users of the space were 'relaxed and calm, well dressed,

Fig. 5.4 Students interacting with an architect

display[ing] high manner, [and] waiting quietly'. It was significant that children felt a sense of 'welcome' and 'belonging' in this space, which indicates the importance of extending membership to children and explicitly showing hospitality towards them. The quality of the space itself—'spacious, silent and calm' and 'the sound of running water was peaceful'—made a strong impression. This supports the contention of Carla Rinaldi (2006, p. 82) that 'physical space can be defined as a language … Though its code is not always explicit and recognisable, we perceive and interpret it from an early age'.

The Woods Bagot office was located on the eighth floor of a city building accessed by an automated lift bank. To enter, a visitor must enter the desired floor on a keypad and be directed to one of several lifts which are then preprogrammed to visit the desired floor. Students found this process exciting and spoke in loud animated voices during the lift ride. When the lift opened to a quiet office space, this behaviour was instantly curtailed. During the ensuing tour of the open-space office, the process of designing a building and importance of the urban fabric context were explained (Fig. 5.4).

The popularity of this space was influenced by children's understanding of its purpose. They highlighted that it was a 'workspace' with 'designs for the city' displayed in the form of 'models' with 'tiny people used on the models'. They also enjoyed 'calling the lift', 'being up so high' and the 'view'. Once again, however, they could see unrealised potential for recreation and interaction. Suggested improvements included a 'playground', 'arts and crafts room', 'space for the public to get more involved in ideas and making their own designs' and 'more hands-on activities'. Indeed this site was the subject of the highest proportion of suggestions to enable play. Whilst this result might seem surprising initially for a private office, it appears that the students' imaginations were engaged with activities taking place there and they wanted to take part. It is not surprising that, in response to being welcomed and immersed in an environment of creativity, the children responded by wanting to be creatively involved themselves.

## *City for Whoo Outcomes in Relation to Other City Engagement Projects*

Growing Up in Cities was a 10-year project from UNESCO, described as 'an international effort to understand young people's own perspectives on the urban environment' (Chawla and Malone 2003, p. 118). This project found that factors contributing to the success of cities from children's perspectives included social integration, a variety of interesting settings, safety and freedom of movement, peer meeting places, cohesive community identity and green areas. Factors detracting from city places as perceived by children included social exclusion, boredom, risks of harassment and crime, racial or ethnic tension, heavy traffic, litter and lack of basic services. We see many of these issues reflected in the responses of City for Whoo participants. Children clearly want cities to be interesting, safe, inclusive and well managed.

The method of action-reflection-action which the City for Whoo trail and workshop followed was fundamentally grounded in the starting position of experiencing places first hand, walking through the city, using and engaging with the city and engaging with others who use the city. This made it possible to unpack a conversation about who the city is for and why it has places with different functions. During the reflective part of the workshop, we then discussed that the different functions of places account for why they are designed differently and often appropriated by differing groups in unexpected ways. We also invited the students to reflect upon how they felt in different places and why. Finally, after discussing the group responses, we invited the students to engage their imagination, pretend they were designers and activate their agency over these places, to re-create and shape them and make them their own by suggesting improvements. By taking the students physically to each place, observing its attributes and traits and then reflecting and discussing, City for Whoo introduced students to the power of place in understanding the built environment and ensured they were introduced to an inclusive narrative of their place within the city.

My Story, My City

This next project was initiated in July 2015 in collaboration with Professor Joanne Cys of the EU Centre for Mobilities, Migrations and Cultural Transformations. As coleaders of an EU work package on policy and outreach, we were tasked with planning a community workshop exploring the notion of welcome. We planned to invite community members and the staff of government and nongovernment agencies which support the settlement of recent arrivals in Australia. We wanted to ensure the conversation was intergenerational and therefore felt that engaging children as participants was critical. Rather than simply inviting them to attend, we created an opportunity for a project in the lead-up to the event so that the

Fig. 5.5 A student's
drawing depicting her
aspiration for the future
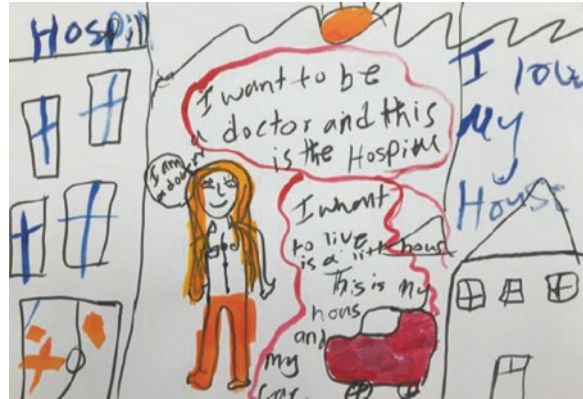
children could contribute actively by presenting their project work. This is a technique the author has used in previous work that involved engaging children and young people in community events discussing place and city design (see Edmonds 2012, 2013a, b).

We revisited ASSoE, one of the schools that had participated in City for Whoo (see above) and enquired whether they would be interested in working with us. We invited acclaimed artist Peter Drew to participate as an artist in residence. Drew is responsible for a campaign of posters which have appeared all over public walls in Australia bearing the message REAL AUSTRALIANS SAY WELCOME. These posters have had a significant impact on the public conversation about migrants and refugees and our common response as humans to the suffering and needs of others. He has been nominated as Australian of the Year for the success of this and other projects and for being a catalyst for change.

Drew assisted us to design a 6-week program of activities for a class of students from the school. The focus was for students to develop and showcase their creative and narrative abilities and also to engage with new forms of artistic expression. During a series of workshops at their school, Drew and the author worked alongside the students as they created drawings and paintings of their fondest memories from their homeland and their dearest aspirations for their future in Australia. Their drawings present compelling stories expressing a variety of histories and hopes for their futures (Fig. 5.5).

Using the drawings and sound recordings of the students' stories, Drew created a short film. We also hired a mobile 'projector bike' (essentially a video projector mounted on a bicycle). One early spring evening, the students and their families took an evening excursion to the city where the film, containing their drawings and aurally recorded stories, was projected onto the walls of buildings. Students took turns (and great glee) riding the projector bike between locations. The intention was to offer them an opportunity to metaphorically 'tag' the city, if only temporarily, and make their mark upon this new city as their own through the projected inscription of their stories and drawings on the fabric of this new city, now their home (Fig. 5.6).

Fig. 5.6 Students viewing the video projected on a city wall

Not all students from the class were able to attend the evening excursion, and their class teacher reported:

> The four who were unable to attend felt quite sad about missing out, especially the following morning when the classroom was abuzz with lingering excitement. Just being in and a part of the city at night was a new experience for them. (Rydon, personal communication)

It was a powerful evening that the students subsequently reflected upon in a writing exercise in class. Their reflections expressed that their participation in this project affected them significantly, as experiencing the city at night and sharing their stories made them feel welcome and special.

The evening projection excursion was also filmed, which enabled the artist to create a subsequent final film incorporating both the original drawings and stories as well as footage of the projections and student responses. As Drew is an acclaimed artist with a significant online following, when he posted this short video online, it was viewed more than 9500 times in the first 48 h. In mid-September 2015 the Hawke EU Centre hosted the Welcome Workshop attended by Peter Drew, the students and teachers from ASSoE, 50 other recently arrived migrants and staff of organisations working to support their settlement. The artist and the students presented the video of their work, and all in attendance applauded the project. It is clear from the student reflections that this experience of being honoured at the Welcome Workshop was significant to them, as they interpreted it as endorsement of their stories' relevance and interest and many indicated that this helped them to feel welcome in this city.

Conclusion: Learning Cities and Social Sustainability

As these projects demonstrate, social sustainability is about ensuring the sustenance of the diverse social relations that exist in healthy communities. Within the built environment, this means creating the physical, cultural and social places that

support people's wellbeing and encourage a sense of community. Achieving and maintaining the longevity of a place involve a process of engagement with the people who inhabit those places (Palich and Edmonds 2013). Inclusive intergenerational engagement is a key component of this. The projects shared in this chapter were initiated to engage children in conversations not so much *about* the city but *with* it. The city was experienced, not intellectually at a distance but as a physical conversation, first hand, using the city itself as an extended classroom. Cities can be intimidating places for young people, perhaps especially for recent arrivals. These projects demonstrate the value of intergenerational dialogue about our relations with place and are a reminder of the responsibility adults have to initiate and open opportunities for such dialogue. Children can help all of us build what Horelli (1998) calls 'a network of places with meaningful activities where young and old can experience a sense of belonging whether individually or collectively' (p. 225). There are many further improvements we can work towards to make our cities more child friendly. These include, but are not limited to, ensuring built environment education is included in the school curriculum; fostering networks between local government, local schools and local businesses; creating platforms to amplify young voices; systematising inclusive participation; and encouraging young innovators. Sennett (2012) reports that in a talk at Columbia University, in contextualising inequality suffered by young people, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum remarked that.

> a capability sets a standard not just for what human beings can do but also for how society may fail to nourish them. Inequality constricts the capacities of children; they are endowed to relate more fully, to co-operate more fully than institutions allow. (Sennett 2012, p. 147).

The projects shared in this chapter aimed to create opportunities for children to relate more fully to their city and understand it as a place for them.

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Chapter 6
Signs of the City: Metropolis Speaking

Art-Inspired Youth and Diversity in Four European Cities

Stefan Horn

Introduction

This chapter introduces and reflects upon the urban youth arts project Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking.[1] The project was a practical demonstration of interdisciplinary urban experience of how studying the city can be an educational tool for youth as well as a remarkable research field for artists and researchers. The question posed in this chapter and in the project is how is it possible to learn and produce urban art through visual expression? It directs attention to the connections between an artistic approach, photographic methods and urban learning experiences. Therefore, subcultural activists like graffiti artists met with professional photographers dealing with high-end urban perspectives and conceptual artistic approaches, for example, trying to figure out the perspective of homeless people in inner-city London, and coming into contact and visual communication with deaf-mute learners in Berlin working with pinhole cameras.

Urban experience and the creative process are more than a random walk through the city with a camera, the simple act of being a researcher in one's own environment. The project offered both a methodical and goal-oriented introduction to hands-on work with new media, as well as insight into an emerging field of research through the encounter with the city. By producing a high-profile artistic output the young participants gained considerable experience in developing their personal and

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professional skills. The work entailed sharpening their individual perspectives on the world. Identity construction was an important backdrop as they developed a clearer understanding of language, expression and semiotic systems of signs. Digital photography offers a wide range of possibilities for the conscious scrutiny of one's own environment. The camera creates distance between one's personal space and the object under examination while at the same time producing in the photographer a creative perspective. Simply put, what emerges is an estranged point of view towards otherwise commonplace objects. The digital camera creates space. The classic form of photography is combined with the speed and dynamics of new media. A new sense of memory emerges, reading an image like a page in one's own psychic landscape.

The Emergence of Urban Dialogues

Since 1998 the urban arts association urban dialogues has been experimenting with urban spaces in the city of Berlin, searching for interesting sites for temporary and site-specific art projects. The point of departure was the public art project urban dialogues outside in 1998. The project addressed the final moments of the reconstruction of central Berlin around the Hackesche Market in the form of an artistic visual and performative intervention. The idea of exploring a particular area, within its contemporary usage as a spatial system, within its own history and through its silently slumbering visions, has been repeated in various areas in Berlin through a multitude of artistic approaches. The artistic principle of urban dialogues is to bring aesthetic sensitivity to the rapid changes of place and perspective within the city landscape. Since 2002 urban dialogues has worked within social regeneration programs in urban crisis zones, with an increasing focus on integrating youth and young adults in the production of art and culture. The artistic projects of urban dialogues began in the centre of Berlin as a scrutiny of the dramatically changing environment and then developed into a multilayered and complex form of research applying artistic methods in urban areas. In recent years the project has developed an international focus, exploring and discovering the means to seek out the complex differences and similarities of European cities.

In autumn 2003, urban dialogues carried out a pilot project called Archive of Signs—An Inventory of a Metropolis. Three visual artists dealing with photographic images based on a conceptual artistic approach and three professional photographers worked with seven vulnerable and disadvantaged young adults from social training centres. Together they explored the jungle of signs of Berlin to make a comprehensive synopsis and inventory of their urban environment. Archiving the signs of the city, they jointly sought meaning in the immediate world of the surrounding urban chaos. All participants immersed themselves in the metropolitan microcosm in an urban expedition to discover the immediate world of signs from the new vantage point of explorers. The result was over 2000 digital images archived

by the 13 photographers in the web-blog.[2] Aside from the hands-on practical experience with artistic and new media production, the project was an essential step for young people seeking to find ways to position themselves as unique local identities within global power relationships. The pedagogic side effect of learning tolerance and participating in cultural discourse was created by the open and playful form of selecting their 'Pic of the Day'. Each participant presented and described their selected image and uploaded it in the web-blog on the basis of co-agreed criteria and categories for archiving the different signs. The young participants thus learnt to reflect upon their environment, developing a sensitive and aesthetic eye for the urban visual landscape, and through this experience created a semiotic inventory of the signs and categories of the Berlin metropolis. For 1 month in early 2004, the finished works were presented to the wider public in the form of an exhibition. In accordance with the artistic approach of urban dialogues, we did not use a closed space exhibition area. With the support of the Berlin Transport Company, the underground station Jannowitzbrücke was transformed into an exhibition space for the signs and images of Berlin. The Archive of Signs exhibition turned the station space into a temporary cultural installation. Nearly half a million passers-by engaged *en passant* with the photographs and collages exhibited in this public space.

Signs of the City

Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking formed the next step in the idea of a collaborative rediscovery of urban space by youth and artists. This 15-month youth art project engaged with the signs of the European city and researched four metropolises and their different cultural imprints.

London is still the centre of Europe's biggest conurbation. With its multicultural flair and a rich social fabric made up of a multitude of languages and customs, the heterogeneity of London attracts and fascinates visitors and inhabitants and at the same time offers continuous challenges to the city dwellers who live together in proximity and high density. In the early 2000s, Barcelona was the most prosperous city in Western Europe, a pivotal point between Catalan and Spanish particularities. It is still a city in which the transformation from an industry and trade-based city to a modern metropolis built on services and tourism is particularly noticeable. Berlin was forced to reinvent itself after the fall of the Wall in 1989. In the past it was considered a peaceful urban island; now it is an increasingly attractive and vibrant new capital. It is still integrating two different social value and spatial systems. And last, but certainly not the least, Sofia is the capital city of one of the youngest members of the European Union. Sofia is rapidly evolving as a melting pot and destination for many people from the regions of Bulgaria in search of work and prosperity, and as such it is exemplary of many urban centres in Southeast Europe.

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[2] http://www.archiv-der-zeichen.de

Understanding My Image

Employing digital cameras and GPS receivers, young urban city dwellers from different backgrounds, some of them disadvantaged and others privileged, aged 12–25 explored the sign systems of their cities and documented their urban life. Between November 2007 and October 2008, nearly 300 young participants from Berlin, Barcelona, London and Sofia investigated their urban environment photographically, guided and accompanied by 30 professional visual artists and professional photographers in over 30 workshops. The workshops were coordinated by Watermans in London, Artibarri in collaboration with Hangar in Barcelona, the Atelier for Free Associations in Sofia and urban dialogues in collaboration with the Next Interkulturelle Projekte in Berlin. The workshops created a multifaceted view of the four cities: an interior view of urban public space from the perspective of the young city dwellers. Rather than collecting coincidental snapshots, however, this visual research was carried out on the basis of the conceptual blueprints and creative learning techniques developed by the different artists and outlined below in broad terms.

A core objective of the project was to impart skills in the handling of images, such as their collection, description and interpretation. Seeing and perceiving the world are for the most part automatic processes operated by our sensory systems. Within the first few months of life, the child develops the faculty for sight, learns how to distinguish between light and dark and then begins to understand how to literally grasp objects spatially. One cannot not see (except in cases of blindness, of course). On closer scrutiny, however, this ability to see is a rather ambivalent affair: what we perceive is already semantically marked and noticed, and as a consequence it needs to be understood and interpreted in its context. Today's world is more than ever dominated by images, and they exert an overwhelming presence. We are socialised through images; they imprint themselves on our memory; they epitomise significant moments of our personal and collective history in a media-based world. In this context, it is a paradox that a corresponding set of skills to manage and deal with images is not consistently taught. Our education systems show us how to make the best use of words; they desire to transform the infant[3] into a verbally competent person who is literate in writing and reading texts. This kind of instruction and learning takes place in the course of school and college education. Yet the language of signs is not given equal attention. How can we learn to use images meaningfully, to understand and also, perhaps, to be wary of them? In the tradition of the iconic turn,[4] Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking sought to incite young people to engage closely with images and photographs and to scrutinise and interrogate them:

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[3] Latin *infans*: 'one who does not (yet) speak'.

[4] The idea of the iconic turn is based on the fact that images today are more present than ever. Photography, mass media and computer technology have increased the impact of images on culture, society and science. See Mitchell (1986).

What perspective has been chosen? What elements are prevalent in the image? What does the producer of the image want to express?

We read books, words, letters and sentences and do not have difficulty accepting that these forms of inscription and communication are sources of meaning. Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking strived to train the participants to (re)turn their attention to a more primal language, before literature separated itself from nature and space. Youth culture today, through modern media, PC games, social media and television, has become more and more aligned to a visual language, a rapid processions of images. But the images only speak; they do not listen. As we archive these adamant signs of the city, we are doing nothing less than reclaiming the meanings of the signs; manipulating them just as they have already been manipulated; framing them anew, just as they have already been framed; and constructing meanings, just as their meanings have already been constructed.

Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking consciously deployed the high-speed medium of digital photography, which usually creates an excess of images: an outright pictorial congestion. All too often, the experience of digital photography ends with the moment of photographic exposure. Often, the images are not even consciously looked at afterwards. They moulder and decay on USB sticks and hard drives. The digital image, in comparison to analogue photography, risks becoming radically devalued. Arguably, however, if we combine techniques of observing, describing and interpreting images, we convey to young people how to grasp and comprehend images. This process has often, and rather infelicitously, been called 'visual alphabetisation'. 'Visual competence' would perhaps be a more precise term. Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking explored these questions through an active and critical engagement with visual signs and images. Attaining visual competence is not exclusively reserved for art historians; everybody should have the opportunity to further their visual literacy.

Understanding My City

The city as a cultural achievement of humanity is made up of a myriad of segments and stories. In cities, millions of individuals live with or rather next to each other: they represent a conglomerate of diverse partial interests and personal needs. They encounter each other permanently, in abstract form and *en passant*. They chafe on the underground as well as in the car, in theatres as much as in supermarkets. They share water, electricity and transport systems. From the three million inhabitants of Berlin, I may know around a thousand by name; I believe I am on familiar terms with around three hundred. I probably really know only 30.

Through its photographic explorations, Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking strove to make the participants aware of their everyday usage of the urban environment. It prompted them to ask: What does my city look like? What kind of image of my city would I want to show to others (my workshop colleagues, my arts instructor, my family and friends)? What is it I want to tell them? How can I 'read' my city

and capture what I have perceived in a photograph? This exercise in translation—translating an internal engagement with the city into an externalised image—constituted the core competence of the participating artists. Through this act of translation and on the basis of their professional experience, they supported the ideas of the participants and the significance of their images, as well as their photographic practice.

This practice created an internal and yet publicly accessible view of the city. It represented a way of rediscovering the city through the still images of urban photography created by a young generation of city dwellers, who remained unable to relinquish the city as their main habitat. The city is their 'destiny', offering many opportunities and also at the same time harbouring challenges and even disadvantages. Therefore one of the main tasks faced by the participating artists was how to bring this complexity of the metropolis to the foreground and in so doing make it an object of discussion. The variety of methodical approaches offered in the different workshops provided participants with cultural competencies, such that they not only learnt to read the city and its images but moreover gained valuable experience in how to reconfigure their own images using a number of creative skills: editing the visual landscape, producing personal narratives of place or expanding their personal geographies by exploring new areas of the city.

My Image in Urban Space

Today the digital image file contains a whole range of detailed information; often it has little or nothing to do with the actual image composed by the photographer in the moment of exposure. By way of a so-called Exif file (exchangeable image file format), the observer can glean additional information from an image, such as details of focal distance, camera model, date of exposure, shutter speed, camera aperture, photosensitivity and colour profile. This data is defined prior to the exposure of an image: the Exif file is a kind of 'making of' that documents the generation of the digital image.

By deploying geo-position technology, photography may be enriched with very interesting additional information—namely, the place where the picture was taken. During the early 2000s, participants took so-called GPS loggers on their photographic journeys, which allowed them to track their movements. Afterwards, the geo-positional data produced by these devices could be added to any individual picture by means of specialised software. This image could then be opened in combination with a freely available online cartography service, such as Google Maps. What in the first instance may seem like a redundant technical feature adds, on closer inspection, a whole new dimension to urban digital photography. Nowadays every smartphone has the ability to fix the geolocation automatically. Within a youth arts project in particular, this opens up a range of playful possibilities. The image is anchored and feeds back to the city, to the street corner and to the place of its origin. Digital photography is infused with a new kind of physical experience, in which

place and time are conjoined. But there is more: with the help of Google Maps or other online cartography tools, the city can also be turned into a surface. The city can become a sort of 'message board', composed of news and announcements. As I move through the city, I become the felt tip pen, the quill or pencil, and use the virtual view of the city to imprint my message.

The semiotic system of signs is a necessary inner structure of the urban community. This sign system regulates and also gives communal meanings to our everyday life. The system is a visual urban phenomenon holding a particular fascination. The language of the city is a contemporary form of communication with its own dynamics. Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking by no means sought to instruct the young participants in linguistic semiotics or provide them with abstract definitions of how signs are produced and constituted. Rather, it took as its starting point a much simpler idea: that a sign represents something, it stands for something else.

Some of the workshops looked into how sign systems, which we find all over our cities, both create and bestow meaning. Pictograms and symbols, logos and emblems, but also the more subversive signs of a city such as graffiti and tags, stickers and cut-outs, can be read as the 'visual grammar' of a city. They became the real objects of examination in Signs of the City.

Many of the countless messages and signs that surround the city dweller indirectly contain instructions on how to act; they do not represent an ideal communicative situation that would allow for dialogue or feedback from the receiver. Communication only takes place when the receiver can also become sender and if he or she can respond. In the private or domestic spheres, this one-sided messaging continues via radio and TV.

The graffiti and street art culture in contemporary big cities are often understood as a protest against this unilateral and thus deformed relationship between the public and mass media, in which more people receive messages than are able or allowed to send them. But it is particularly when engaging with the topic of graffiti, the (seemingly) subversive signs of the city, that young people are generally happy to take on basic principles of communication and to pay attention to the complexity of urban sign systems. However, marketing specialists have been quick to turn the originally subversive nature of graffiti into the near perfect advertising platform. To confront and read the many-sided sign systems of the city gives young people the very hands-on opportunity to discover and learn about communication models, which may be of great use to them as they seek to become ever more skilled at deciphering the world.

The Website

The results of all workshops were immediately published on the online image database www.citipix.net. All images, and the accompanying workshops and authors, can be searched using the tagging system that was implemented in the backend of the database system and therefore was part of the learning process. Furthermore,

guest visitors can playfully interact with the photographs by selecting and grouping five individual images into an image stripe. These interactions can then be saved onto the site. Through these features, the site seeks to offer a visual and playful level of communication that does not rely on any particular language.

The platform is first and foremost a database which allows users to compare and relate to images from the project. But it should not be confused with common Web 2.0 applications like Facebook, which mainly provide language-based communication tools for members of a community. In a way, the Citipix database is a forerunner to the famous social network Instagram which is much more attractive to people aged 12–20 than Facebook is today. Both platforms are focused on communication through images rather than words (Fig. 6.1).

A Network As an Artwork

The individual project elements of Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking generated a border-crossing interplay linking and engaging renowned contemporary art institutions, media training centres, youth art and leisure organisations and a leading academic institute for social research. Supporting the leadership of urban dialogues in Berlin were Watermans and the Centre for Urban and Community Research in London and Hangar in Barcelona. In Berlin, the project was carried out in cooperation with Next Interkulturelle Projekte and the House of World Cultures. All project participants were joined and interconnected at different levels to constitute a nodal point of innovative technology, conceptual art and socially responsible, creative education. The interdisciplinary project created a highly complex fabric of relationships and interdependencies, which may have perplexed the outside viewer—yet as such reflected if anything the complexity of 'real life' in our globalised world.

By networking the four European metropolises, and within the constraints of a limited timeframe, the project thus created a panoramic view both of the cultural diversity of the participating cities and of European commonalities. Less an exchange process between different cities, it aimed more to generate a joint archive—a view on 'self' and 'other' within and beyond one's own cityscape.

Four virtually simultaneous exhibitions in the four participating cities in autumn 2008 opened the artistic results of the project to public display. Through a wide range of formats and curatorial designs, they demonstrated the diversity of artistic approaches and the different perceptions of the young participants. The 15-month-long project Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking culminated in an interdisciplinary conference entitled Signs of the European City, hosted by the House of World Cultures, Berlin in October 2008. Furthermore, two 1-day seminars were held in London and in Sofia, each organised in cooperation with and hosted by the local Goethe Institutes. All three events reflected on the implications and results of this European youth arts project. The overall project was evaluated by Allison Rooke and Michael Keith from the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths College, University of London. In February 2009, the publication *Signs*
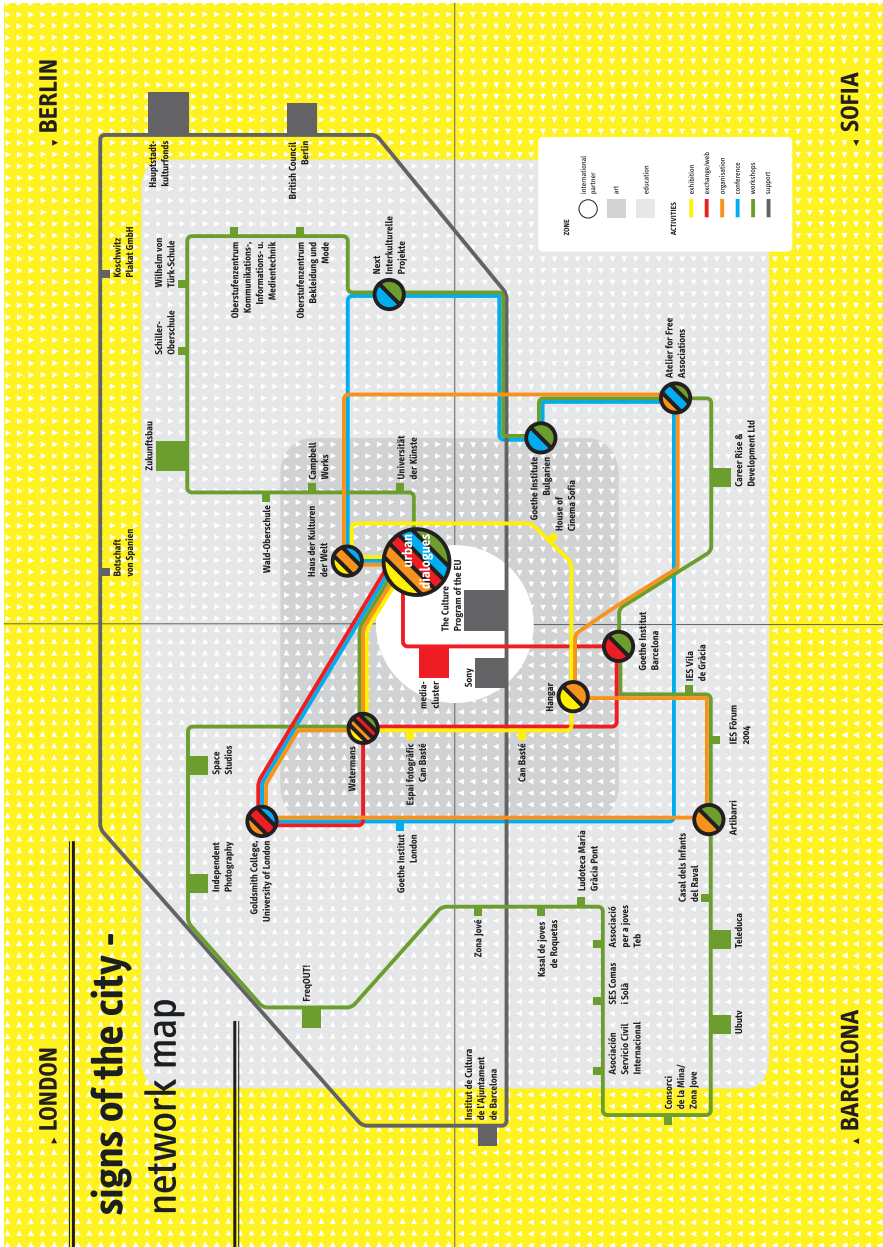
Fig. 6.1 Signs of the city network map

Fig. 6.2 One of the signs
of the city

of the City—Metropolis Speaking was launched. It included the centre's evaluation
report (Rooke 2009) (Fig. 6.2).

Diversity

In early October 2007, two thirds of all participating artists in the four cities met in
the House of World Cultures in Berlin for an Arts and Education Lab. It was an open
discussion on the content, methodologies and aims of the workshops that were to be
carried out throughout the coming year. It soon became apparent that the conditions
for creating youth and participatory arts projects were radically different in the four
cities. Furthermore, the range of experiences and backgrounds of the participating
artists did not lend themselves to standardisation. On the contrary, the very appeal
of this project was that it allowed a range of approaches to be put into practice. The
four selected workshops outlined briefly below provide an insight into this method-
ological diversity which, in turn, offered ways of learning and producing art through
visual expression.

All artists participating in the project were asked to develop ideas and concepts
that would allow, enhance and make visible the points of view held by young par-
ticipants on their urban environment. The resulting images served as a point of
departure for a discourse that took place both within the youth project and outside
in their everyday life. The participants could thus both enhance their visual compe-
tence and further develop their skills regarding the 'readability' of the city.

Walking, Talking and Photographing

The London conceptual artist Melissa Bliss worked with young homeless people in Westminster, central London. She met the participants in the morning at a welfare centre which serves as a meeting point for the homeless. They then spent 1 day wandering through the city, discovering their point of view on the city in which they lived and initiating a discussion amongst themselves about the urban environment. The act of walking as a group—when most of them are used to walking through the streets autonomously—gave a feeling of collective enterprise. Just flowing through the streets and talking amongst themselves brought out different stories, thoughts and emotions. They went to places they had never been before as a way of opening up the city. They took photographs to try to express these thoughts with mobile phone cameras. The average London mix of participants—with Portuguese, South African, Columbian, Caribbean and Lebanese as well as British roots—offered different points of view on the city. At the same time, their perspectives as homeless young people were very different to those of civil servants, office workers or tourists moving through the same streets.

A Map of Signs

The Berlin-based photographer and graphic designer Martin Ruge worked once a week with students from a sixth form college specialising in communication and media technologies and developed a map of Berlin out of signs, logos and symbols found in the city. With the help of GPS loggers and an online cartography service, the participants were able to map the places and sites where the individual photographs were taken. They thus created a small archive of emblems, street art, traffic signage and other icons. Ruge used 'signs' in a narrow sense, limiting it to the 'mere sign', labels and pictograms. As a professional designer, he likes to reduce things radically to a bare concise point in terms of line, form and colour. And he was quite surprised that the participants, to a large extent, followed his working approach to cut and remove signs from their contexts, highlighting their shape and composition. Discussing Alison Rooke's (2009) evaluation of Ruge's workshop, Horn and colleagues report:

> It is an example of how the concept central to the project, exploring the sign systems of the European city, can be interrogated and worked within a vocational training concept, bringing together artistic practise, technology and graphic design. Ruge's workshop also explores the sign systems of Berlin as a way of deciphering space and its meaning in an archaeological way: excavating signs, as traces of other times and spheres, removing them from their found context through close-up photography, categorising with GPS and examining the sign and its relationship to the place in which it was found. In some ways this concerns creating a certain order in the chaos of signs experienced by all city dwellers (Horn et al. 2009, p. 50).

Intercultural Dialogue

Campbell Works, an artists' duo from North-East London, spent 1 week working with deaf-mute students from the Wilhelm-von-Türk secondary school in Potsdam (near Berlin). They used pinhole cameras and a mobile darkroom in a public space to produce results which, spectacularly reminiscent of the early days of photography, were later digitalised. In the 5-day workshop, the young participants were taken on a journey through the history of photography. They also took part in a doubled intercultural dialogue: one between deaf students and hearing artists and one between British artists and German participants. Every day, the group creatively negotiated questions of communication, interpretation and interaction. Within those 5 days, they built their individual pinhole cameras, took photos with them, developed them right on the spot and finally uploaded the digitalised images onto the web platform. Beside these photographic skills, they helped to build the mobile darkroom and produced negatives that they used to create multilayered positive photographs which demonstrate the oldest way of manipulating and retouching pictures. In a comprehensive learning manner, they additionally learnt an alternative mode of expression to the written or spoken or signed language. Leaving their classroom and working in the urban field was a big challenge for them, but they took this risk. The change of place and perspective is one of the basic instruments artists can use when working with young students. The students became empowered as they learnt a range of skills not easily acquired within a traditional classroom.

Signs of the Inner Landscape

For 8 weeks, the Munich-based photographer Andréas Lang investigated the former industrial area of Poble Nou in Barcelona, once called the 'Mediterranean Manchester', with a group of young Barcelona city dwellers. The quarter, a veritable jigsaw puzzle of old and new, allowed the group to observe the transformations and concurrent displacement and regeneration processes taking place in post-industrial urban environments—from Jean Nouvel's creation of a new urban symbol to the remnants of a former factory building. The artist sought to encourage the young participants (between 14 and 16 years of age) in their endeavour to discover and discuss these transformation processes and to photographically document their own views. The results were 'inner landscapes' expressing the artistic engagement of the young people with their own neighbourhood.

The Exchange Program LAB2: 'See You in Barcelona'

The so-called LAB2, a 5-day meeting of 25 young participants from the four cities, who were accompanied by ten artists, took place in October 2008 in Barcelona. The last four workshops of the overall project Signs of the City took place within this framework. Together, the young people from the different cities explored the city of Barcelona and sought to work out the differences and similarities between this city and the other three cities from which they came. Despite all the possibilities provided by modern-day communication technologies, the immediacy of human encounters remains of central importance to communication and interaction. No other form of communication or dialogue is comparable to the power of physical encounters. The experiences of this nearly week-long exchange program confirmed this assumption.

The aim of the Barcelona LAB2 encounter was to gather photographers and artists to explore city life and to advance their photographic skills. It was focused on a multilevel dialogue about differences and commonalities in the participating cities. It was based on a common interest and passion to share cross-city and cross-country experiences and perspectives. The images produced during the gathering in Barcelona were an occasion for deeper reflection and discussion about city life from the participants' point of view: How do I see the previously unknown city of Barcelona? What confirms my expectations and what is surprising? What are the differences to my own city? How can I exemplify these differences? Are there also commonalities? Would I like to live in one of the other cities?

A group of 15 selected young photographers from previous workshops in London, Berlin and Sofia took part in this exchange program. They met different school classes and a group of young immigrants in Barcelona to share ideas and to share knowledge and skills about photographic research in urban spaces. All of them had already attended a workshop in their own country before departing for Barcelona. These young urban photographers were guided by nine artists from the different cities, who provided assistance and ensured that they were able to complete the different research workshops. The evaluation team from the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths College, University of London and the coordinator of the leading organisation urban dialogues also attended the 5-day gathering. Beside the workshop sessions, participants were offered the opportunity to explore the city, individually and in teams, upload their photographic findings online (research sessions), meet each other and connect and share experience (round tables). To begin with, participants were mixed into four workshop groups, guided by supporting artists and engaged in different activities. Towards the end, a closing session allowed the participants to form a view on the outcomes and process of this transnational encounter.

Discussion: Educational Processes and Reflection

I would like to present an example in which photography opened up a space of expression that words alone could not serve. It also explains how visual competence is mostly underestimated in comparison to verbal skills.

David was a participant in the pilot project in autumn 2003. He was sent by a juvenile welfare service organisation. The two social workers asked us to keep a particular lookout for David. He was considered mentally slow and might get lost in the course of the search for the signs of the city. David had severe difficulties in articulating and expressing himself. Simple formulations cost him a great deal of effort, and he had to be repeatedly motivated to take part in the group discussions. Each day his hands had new wounds and he trembled with every movement.

David was the typical outsider of the group and was the butt of aggression from other group members. Even the social workers were hesitant about his involvement. So how does one give a young man a camera, his whole body trembling like leaves in autumn, and then explain how important it is to keep the body still when taking a snap? David's photos seemed to be always in motion. Nevertheless, it became clear to us that David enjoyed participating in our workshop.

He seemed increasingly fascinated by how he could discover the city with the camera and by his own developing capacity to express his observations through pictures. Slowly he attained a new standing within the group.

David began to talk about the picture shown in Fig. 6.3 with a certain tension in his voice, entering into details, deconstructing the image and producing in the process a lecture on the history of Berlin. He discovered gunshot damage along the facade, remains of World War II, the remainder of an old flyer on the firewall, and he explained to the other participants why there were so many of these firewalls in Berlin: many of the houses were exposed to the war.

David was not as slow as his linguistic abilities may have intimated. He simply did not know how to articulate what his eyes saw. He seemed to inhabit a world

Fig. 6.3 One of David's photographs

dominated by the visual, and this did not stop him from being able to make connections between different meanings. Through the daily discussions about the visual and through the exercise of describing photographs with words, the participants in the group discovered a new David, who gained self-confidence from day to day, and accepted him as part of the group. Through visual communication and the ensuing description of the imagery, David took a 'detour' in his journey back to language and articulation.

Signs of the City sought to work with artists and young people to gain an indepth understanding of the city as an arena for cultural phenomena, learning and experience and to explore this through artistic methods. It had clear educational goals which included giving the young participants a variety of interdisciplinary skills: social, visual, technical, interpersonal and communicative. The educational approach of the project was directly connected with the nature of photography. In order to incorporate such a multitude of skills, it is necessary to make use of tools that are as diverse and far reaching as the stated goals. Susan Sontag grasps something of this in one of her essays:

> In Plato's Cave photography is seen as such a tool. In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing. Finally, the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads as an anthology of images. (1979, p. 3).

By participating in the project, the participants not only acquired the skills to produce an abstract anthology through the use of photography, but, through the use of the worldwide web and the technical skills involved in downloading their own images in a vast forum and within selected categories, they were directly involved in the production of a seemingly substantial view of their entire living environment.

In her project evaluation, Alison Rooke wrote:

> The uploaded photographs show us young people's experience of their neighborhood, the significance of certain places, and the journeys young people have taken as a part of the project. For example, in Barcelona the young people from Roquetas took a trip to the beach and put themselves in the picture—of the city—as a group. This was the first time they had made this short, but significant trip. Homeless young men in London explored parts of the city that they were usually prohibited from lingering in. In Barcelona, young migrant children went out in the street with expensive cameras disrupting local shopkeepers' negative preconceptions of this group. In Berlin young people returned to places that were significant when they were children, reliving journeys and crossing boundaries between east and west that are no longer physically apparent. Clearly the photographs produced here are so much more than signs or a 'visual inventory' of the city. They are evidence of moments, spatial interventions and temporary disruptions to some of the narrower definitions of what it is to be a citizen in a European city. (Rooke 2009, p. 166).

The project's impact on the participants was realised in large and small, but none the less significant, ways. For example, working with disadvantaged young people in Barcelona and giving them cameras to hold and take away for a few days demonstrated a level of trust and respect they had not experienced before. In Berlin, a

group of long-term unemployed people were successful in learning to work as a group and in curating and producing an exhibition of their work.

For many young people coming from a disadvantaged background, not only in Berlin, capacity building and solving personal issues of identity within one's own city environment are at the heart of social and urban regeneration. Quoting Sontag once again, 'to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power' (1979, p. 4). Once youth come to a sense of how powerful these media tools are, and learn to what extent they can be utilised to give them a direct voice in the jungle of the cacophonic cries of the city, they rise to peer level with the artists and begin producing their very own material.

Precisely for this reason one of the most important aspects of the project is to demonstrate the route of the photograph from snapshot to one of many categories in a worldwide archive and finally to the 'hallowed halls' of high art in local presentations in the underground and art galleries. 'Photographs ... help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure' (Sontag 1979, p. 9). For disadvantaged youth, the possibility of showing friends, neighbours and potential employers their work on the internet and in the cultural life of the city is empowering. This empowerment must be channelled and given a clear semiotic focus if visual discriminative powers and media competency are to be maintained.

There is a serious educational challenge in the pretence of capturing signs of the city. Telling someone to shoot random snaps can quickly result in an overload of images that, try as one may, will not tell a narrative of the city that fits into one of the categories but rather shows the uncritical movement of the eye, a natural voyeurism where the tool speaks louder than the thought. How can we avoid the 'mental pollution' or the production of 'image junkies' to use Sontag's words? How can we turn this most powerful tool of image making into a grammatical, at times poetic, tool of empowerment, instead of a semi-aggressive, intruding gadget for the pleasure-seeking eye? The process of the fieldwork was devised in order to hone in on those images that tell of the life of the city. Our gaze must of necessity wander away from people and focus on what is not being looked at, perspectives usually taken for granted.

Conclusion: An Artistic Approach to Social Sculpture

A fundamental artistic principle in the art association urban dialogues and the work it has completed in projects such as Signs of the City—Metropolis Speaking is bringing together local photographic research and intervention with a global change of perspective and the basis for an aesthetic sensitisation. The idea of investigating a certain area as a spatial system with regard to its present use, its history and the dormant visions the city dweller may sense during the research has been repeated in different areas in Berlin and the other cities in the project with a wide variety of artistic approaches.

This local context-based orientation is the basic principle of 'public art'. The goal is not only to transport art into the daily lives of city inhabitants but to seek to develop and express social phenomena to the wider public. Marius Babias, a Berlin-based art scientist, has argued that this entails a transformation of the social into aesthetic material (Babias and Könneke 1998).

Urban dialogues oppose the tendency simply to use artists as a reassuring force in the amelioration of social damage. With economic pressure and an increase in disintegration, there is an accompanying rise in the loss of meaning for whole social groups, youth or adults. Artists begin to function as a social buffer cushioning the effects and slowing erosion within almost hermetically sealed clusters of 'new poverty' in the urban inner city or its estates. We must be wary and guard against the danger, as Viennese art theoretician Stella Rollig says, 'that art functions as an accomplice of neo-liberal politics, preaching communalism in order to shift the responsibility for action from the state to local art projects' (1998, p. 19).

The artistic approach correlates with the work of the French photographer Eugène Atget and his work in the streets of Paris at the beginning of the last century (Krase 2001). His work represented a milestone in photo-aesthetic realism, emphasising 'surface information' and the use of the camera as a tool for collecting data in 'a pictorial and archaeological' archive. Atget's 'viewing experience', as well as methodically integrating the perspective of young people, is at the heart of the idea of urban dialogues: bringing together artists and youth at peer level and letting them produce an exhibition for the wider public.

In a modern world in which society increasingly splinters into special interest groups, with individuals attending to their own viewpoints and perspectives, and responsible primarily for their own wellbeing, the dimensions of the urban dialogues project seem almost absurd. And nevertheless, it is more necessary than ever. The idea of a social and community-based project that at the same time invites and develops the individual's inner and outer free space was wonderfully displayed to the public through the development of a communal understanding and a joint language of urban signs.

This aesthetic sensitisation was perhaps the ultimate goal of the young participants in the project: to pass on the fascination of handling a digital camera and collecting a mass of pictures. In the first instance, the pictures were captured almost arbitrarily, but then in the course of the project as their aesthetic consciousness grew, they emancipated themselves and created narrative categories through the medium of the digital image. Which places would I like to investigate? Which categories do I archive? How do I evaluate the pictures and create their archive on the internet and my web-blog? These questions could be answered by the young people alone, and the tasks they set themselves made them more and more self-reliant and self-sufficient.

For young people who stand on the edge of society and feel their disadvantage subtly as well as bluntly every day, an exhibition of their photographic work brings an uncommon satisfaction. They are in the spotlight. They are part of our society.

Esse est. percipi (to be is to be perceived). (George Berkeley).

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Chapter 7
Walking Through Spiritual Neighbourhoods: A Photo Essay

Terence Heng

How do individuals make sense of and learn to engage in spiritual spaces and places? This visual essay recounts the activities, rituals and everyday lives of individuals operating and worshipping with *sintua* (spirit altars) as they go about celebrating various events in their religious calendar. The photographs document and explore the ways in which they drape their own conceptions of the spirit world, or sacred space, over the mundane and profane everyday spaces of the city. I will argue that such actions show us the part that religion and ritual play in learning about urban spaces (Fig. 7.1).

The making of sacred space has been well studied amongst scholars and is often thought of as occurring through the process of hierophany (Eliade 1961). Scholars who have studied such processes include Woods (2013), who examined house churches and sacred networks in Sri Lanka, and della Dora (2009), who considered the material culture of sacred space, focusing on the transportation of sacred objects across political and cultural boundaries and how such objects contributed to conceptions of sacredness. Kong's work on sacred space in Singapore often touches on the *politics* involved in making such places (Kong 2001), as religious space (i.e. space set aside for the building of religious structures and institutions) is tightly controlled and regulated by the state. In my own work, I argue that sacred space in some situations can revolve around the comportment and prominence of the body (Chidester and Linenthal 1995), where the social status of an individual channelling the divine presence of a god supersedes the need for 'official' sacred spaces (Heng 2016).

This visual essay is based within this context of the body and its Cartesian movements. Over the last 4 years, I have photographed and studied the myriad spaces of Chinese religious practice in Singapore. From everyday neighbourhoods celebrating the Hungry Ghost Festival to exhumations and remembrance rites in Bukit

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Fig. 7.1 Procession carrying a *sintua* (spirit altar)

Brown Cemetery to the intimate homes of spirit mediums, much of my work centres on the ways in which individuals make sense of their everyday spaces by making spiritual places (Heng 2014, 2015; Heng and Hui 2015). In particular, I have considered the practices of adherents to what is known amongst scholars as 'Chinese religion'. Chinese religion is a syncretic amalgamation of folk religion, Taoism and Buddhism, where adherents worship deities and perform rituals from all three sources (Dean 1995; DeBernardi 2012; Lee 1986). Because of this bricolage of practices, Chinese religious practices differ from place to place and oftentimes draw inspiration from each other, especially with increasing flows of information through the Internet and social media.

In Singapore, Chinese religion adherents organise themselves around three broad forms of groupings. At the micro and individual level, adherents practise rituals as part of their everyday life—observing major festivals throughout the year (Qing Ming 清明 tomb-sweeping, the Hungry Ghost Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.) and may visit a temple regularly to pray for help or blessings. On a collective level, adherents may self-organise into smaller groups centred on *tang-ki* (Mandarin equivalent *tongz* 童乩) worship (Chan 2006)—where a *tang-ki*, or spirit medium, is the spiritual leader and centre of the group (DeBernardi 2012). *Tang-ki* are individuals who enter into a trance and are said to be possessed by deities whom they have been chosen by or have agreements with (Chan 2006; Heng 2016). These are often known as *sintua* (mandarin equivalent *shen tang* 神堂 spirit altars) and commonly operate out of unofficial or informal structures like homes and industrial units (Heng 2016). Finally, adherents may also be part of a larger, more structured temple which has its own physical premises and permanent place of worship.

It would be impossible to summarise all the different ways in which sacred space is made by Chinese religion adherents (including but not limited to *tang-ki* and their *sintua*) within a single visual essay, but there are similarities in the way collectives of adherents understand and traverse their physical surroundings through rituals that incorporate travelling, walking and processing. This can occur in two related ways. The first is what is popularly termed *yew keng* (mandarin equivalent *you jin* 游境), which implies a form of tourism. *Yew keng* involves traversing urban spaces in a procession, often to visit other *sintua* and temples in order to maintain spiritual and political relationships. Devotees travel in large groups throughout the city to pay respects at *sintua* and temples within their social network. *Yew keng* thus becomes a way for these groups to map their networks and influence over mundane social, political or geographical boundaries developed by the state or other institutions in the form of sacred bonds and spiritual connections.

The second way, which will be the focus of this visual essay, is sometimes confused with *yew keng* and is sometimes referred to as *yew kampong* or to tour the village (*kampong* is the Malay word for village). More appropriately referenced as *xun jing* (巡境) or *chu xun* (出巡), which means to tour and is commonly associated with ancient Chinese imperial inspections, this ritual involves adherents walking around the boundaries of the territory that a *tang-ki's* deity is responsible for. The deity may either tour these boundaries by possessing a *tang-ki* or remain in material form as a *kimsin* (idol or statue) that is placed in a *kio* (palanquin) and carried around. Sometimes both may occur simultaneously.

Such movements bring to mind doing sensory ethnography (Pink 2009) where, rather than the strict collection of data through multiple sensoriality, participation in such processions becomes about the *experience* and the recording of *multiple experiences*. Pink argues that one way of seeing sensory ethnography is not about particular methods of data collection but rather being 'open to the multiple ways of knowing and to the exploration of and reflection on new routes to knowledge' (Pink 2009, p. 8). Discerning the spiritual nature of space in Chinese religion is both vague and certain at the same time—in some ways adherents know and are told of the presence of spirits and spiritual forces as they walk through physical spaces, but at the same time, they create and feel such presences through their movement and interactions with each other, with physical manifestations of deities and with their other senses.

As I photographed and observed these rituals, I saw how belief intermingled with sensorial experience and physical movement. It was not uncommon to see individuals of all ages participating, even those with mobility problems—to them this procession was part of their connection to their spiritual worlds. As each group traversed their neighbourhood, I saw how their rituals continued to make and mark seemingly mundane spaces as sacred.

The two series of photographs I have chosen to show in this essay are meant to create a sense of contrast with each other. Both of these walks express different aspects of Chinese religious spatial practices—the obvious and obtrusive and the silent and subversive (Heng 2015). The first documents one of the oldest Monkey God temples in Singapore as adherents embark on a daytime procession through the

neighbourhood, complete with a band of musicians ensuring that as many people take notice of them as possible. This spirituality is performative and expressive. In contrast, the second series of photographs shows a fledgling *sintua* conducting rituals as part of its first large-scale celebrations—a night-time *xun jing* which, while visually prominent, is almost silent and sombre, quiet and contemplative.

Walking Tiong Bahru: *Qi Tian Gong* 齐天宫 (Temple)

As part of their annual celebrations, the devotees of *Qi Tian Gong*, a temple in central Singapore, bring their deities on a tour of the neighbourhood. Located in Tiong Bahru and nearly 100 years old, *Qi Tian Gong* is one of the oldest temples in Singapore dedicated to *Sun Wukong* or the Monkey God. The images shown here are meant to contrast the formation of a spiritual walk against a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood. Tiong Bahru consists of pre-Second World War government housing, built by the British colonial government (the Singapore Improvement Trust), and it is now a conservation area. In recent years it has proved extremely popular with the creative industries and expatriate community, thus undergoing significant gentrification in the form of cafes, bars and bookshops. As the devotees of *Qi Tian Gong* walk the area, such gentrification is temporarily suppressed, bringing forth memories of an older Singapore (Fig. 7.2).

Fig. 7.2 A deity on tour

Fig. 7.3 Carrying the deity

'This monkey god is very powerful—look at his cloak, he has become a Buddha already', claims Jeffrey (not pictured), a spirit medium attending the event and pointing out the importance of this idol seated on a *kio* (Mandarin equivalent *Jiao*轿) or palanquin (Fig. 7.3).

Sun Wukong is carried around the neighbourhood to inspect and police his boundaries (Fig. 7.4).

Whilst diverse, the demographic of the procession is noticeably older than those patronising the gentrifying neighbourhood on the weekends (Fig. 7.5).

The procession weaves its way through the neighbourhood, past residential blocks, cafes, eateries and other gentrified establishments. It culminates in a mass burning of *kim zua* (literally gold paper or hell money—monetary effigies for the netherworld) and petitions to heaven in a corner of Tiong Bahru (Fig. 7.6).

A devotee cleanses the burning area using a *huat soh*—a snake-headed whip. The grey hoarding in front fences off a part of Tiong Bahru for development into luxury high-rise apartments (Fig. 7.7).

Devotees burn offerings and gifts, along with their petitions (Fig. 7.8).

The procession ends with a ritual encirclement of the burning *kim zua* (Fig. 7.9).

The temple used to host a spirit medium, who retired in recent years. Without a human host for the Monkey God, the responsibility for human manifestation falls upon a member of the lion and dragon dance troupe who appears as a cartoon-like mascot.

Fig. 7.4 Citizens join the procession

Fig. 7.5 The procession from a distance

Fig. 7.6 A cleansing ceremony

Fig. 7.7 Fire ceremony

Fig. 7.8 Circling ritual

Fig. 7.9 Contemporary version of the Monkey God

Inspecting the Boundaries: *Bao De Gong* 寶德宮 (*Sintua*)

In contrast to this established and historical temple, I also followed a much younger and fledgling social group of adherents belonging to a *sintua* named *Bao De Gong*. Only 2 years old, the *sintua* is led by Nick, a 31-year-old *tang-ki* (considered very young by *tang-ki* standards) who operates from within a state-subsidised flat in the western part of Singapore. I have been photographing Nick ever since the time he began this *sintua*, from its opening rituals to salvation rites on the beach. Early this year, I was invited to observe and photograph his *sintua's xun jing*—which involved an hour's trek around the surrounding neighbourhood at night. Enthroned in a *kio* and brought on the procession was *Cheng Huang* (城隍), the city god, whose main role is to protect both the physical and spiritual inhabitants within a particular geographical boundary.

Below we see the *sintua* staging a *Da Re Zhi* (Big Celebration) for the first time. Renting the town square, they set up a large tent complete with temporary altars in the style of a temple. Nick is pictured here entering into a trance to become *Di Ya Pek*—'second uncle'—a netherworld deity often associated with enforcing law and order in the netherworld and escorting recently departed souls to the netherworld (Figs. 7.10 and 7.11).

Protected by a ritual umbrella, Nick as *Di Ya Pek* pays respects before the altar of other deities before setting out with his devotees (Fig. 7.12).

The procession reaches a large road junction, and the route changes completely. *Di Ya Pek*, now in control of Nick's consciousness, commands the group of sixty or

Fig. 7.10 A *tang-ki* enters a trance

Fig. 7.11 Preparing for the procession

Fig. 7.12 Following the procession

Fig. 7.13 Followers climbing a hill

so adherents and a *kio* to change direction and follow a different path—at all times he assesses and considers the spiritual interactions around him, and his choice reflects the need to go to a certain area to do spiritual work. One does not argue with a God (Fig. 7.13).

Devotees forge up an incline designed to prevent automobiles and vehicles from accessing a public reservoir. The reservoir is a serene place at night, a favourite haunt for migrant labourers seeking a quiet place to rest and socialise (Fig. 7.14).

Against the backdrop of the reservoir, *Di Ya Pek* utters indiscernible incantations at points along the walk. He stops wherever he senses a need for his intervention—sometimes pointing to particular objects like tree stumps to instruct his followers to perform rituals there (Fig. 7.15).

At certain points of the walk, devotees burn small amounts of *kim zua* and set candles to demarcate the boundaries of their procession. In a large open field, the procession stops for *Di Ya Pek* to speak to Cheng Huang. Later, when out of a trance, Nick explains that this field was near a spot where someone had committed suicide and that his deity was perhaps offering the soul a place in the *sintua* (Fig. 7.16).

A boy stands at a zebra crossing, caught up in the procession as it returns to the town square. The procession is both prominent and hidden, obvious yet unobtrusive. Given the time of night, the group made little to no sound as they walked determinedly to their destination.

Fig. 7.14 Spiritual intervention along the route

Fig. 7.15 Burning ceremony

Fig. 7.16 Returning from the reservoir

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Part II
Urban Pedagogies

Chapter 8
Urban Pedagogy and the Need to Develop City Skills

Stephen Dobson

Legacy and Personal Traces

From my grandfather, I inherited a set of neckties and a biscuit tin of black and white photographs that I believe were taken in the 1960s. The former provided me with a tie suitable for all occasions, a sense of belonging and a personal identity. The latter comprise two groups: first, images of parks and wildlife, perhaps even the same park, and, second, cityscapes of London showing people, streets and buildings. Using the cityscape images, my investigative method has been to wander the London streets tracking down the exact places where they were 'snapped' (e.g. Fig. 8.1) and finding out to what extent these locations have changed or disappeared in the cause of corporate or municipal redevelopment (e.g. Fig. 8.2). I juxtaposed the past with the present, which highlighted an experience of change and continuity. In the process my personal identity became embedded in experiences that transcend place, space and time to connect with shared, collective histories of London where my grandfather lived.

Another project intimately connected with this personal inquiry, and the main goal of this chapter, is to develop and exemplify urban pedagogy as a field of theoretical reflection and practice for a wider group of users. The kind of questions posed are: who is the learner and what kinds of pedagogy, knowledge and skills are created when traditional education in the classroom intervenes, bridges and joins with the urban space of belonging? This breaks down binaries of the inside and the outside. It is also very much a moral endeavour, as is all education, seeking to elucidate and educate what is good and safe pedagogy, as opposed to bad, threatening and unsafe pedagogy, in different urban spaces and places. To foreshadow a point to be made later, urban spaces can be sensed in different ways, with sunset and

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Fig. 8.1 Royal Exchange ca. 1960s, Threadneedle Street, London (photographer: Joe Kent, grandfather)

daybreak as key markers of when a space might be experienced as both safe and insecure and for a moment at least transcending the dichotomy.

It is not uncommon for educational policymakers to claim legitimacy for their work by connecting it with the desire to enhance literacy and learning outcomes through the acquisition of basic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and competence with computers and STEM.[1] Topics such as these, with a key focus on didactic challenges (knowledge of the subject and how to teach it), constitute for many of the central kernel of education in the classroom context. Also to be included are classroom interaction and leading/managing the learning environment between peers and teacher–pupil relations, dealing with bullying and rebellious behaviour, and what might be understood more generally as establishing the learning culture with its basis in the norms through which pupils learn (Ecclestone 2009). But this is a somewhat narrow understanding of education with a focus upon institutionalised, rule-governed forms of interaction and learning. Much learning takes place in unplanned meetings and arenas, where the curriculum is less formalised. It is aggressively semiotic in character, full of diverse meaning-carrying elements and glaringly cut open to reveal at every juncture negotiation between participants (Dobson et al. 2006). Could it not be asserted, and this is the basic proposition of this chapter, that to live in an urban environment requires the development of

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[1] STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Fig. 8.2 Royal Exchange 2017, London (Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikime-dia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0c/London_Royal_Exchange_01.jpg)

fundamental city skills as the boundaries between inside (the classroom) and out-side (experiencing urban space) are transcended?

What these city skills might be and how they might constitute the framework of a future urban pedagogy is the topic of this chapter.[2] It must be remembered that the population of cities is continually growing, and, connected with this, urban living becomes a central component in the everyday experience of children through to and continuing in adulthood. At this point it is also important to define skills and what they mean in the context of this chapter. Educationalists identify skills as part of a wider concept of competence or capabilities alongside and interacting with knowl-edge and attitudes (Lie 1997, pp. 33–35). Accordingly, skills are a form of compe-tence, and it must be noted that competence is not necessarily fixed but is a capability that can be adjusted to the demands and opportunities of the context. Thus understood, it is near impossible to discuss skills without also including knowledge and attitudes, and in particular a moral attitude as to what is good/safe and bad/threatening/unsafe and how this might transcend the simple binary of good meets bad. Foreshadowing what will come later in this chapter, different urban spaces are flexible at different times of the day, secure in the day and potentially

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[2] An earlier version of this essay was published in *London Review of Education*, *4*(2), 99–114 (2006).

insecure by night, with sunset and daybreak as markers of an experience whereby space might transcend the dichotomy and simultaneously have both sensibilities.

Connected with the goal of outlining a future-directed urban pedagogy for all ages, both within and outside the classroom and schooling, is the epistemological desire to avoid proposing a single, all-encompassing paradigm for urban pedagogy. Instead, in the spirit of Lakatos (1970, pp. 132–133), my intention is to propose a research programme of inquiry for all, and not just for academics, that is inclusive of many possible projects and stakeholders and capable of developing city skills in and through urban pedagogy. A research and inquiry programme entails a hard core of assertions, a protective belt of auxiliary, less strongly held assertions, a positive heuristic (suggesting paths of research to pursue) and a negative heuristic (telling us what paths of research to avoid). This concept of a research programme originates in a debate about the construction of natural science knowledge, but it is used in the context of this chapter to refer to what might constitute not merely the knowledge base or curriculum of urban pedagogy but also its skills, practices and accompanying sets of norms and moral attitudes. Retaining the term 'research' in the term 'research programme' is intentional and indicates that those participating in urban pedagogy—whoever they might be—are to be invited to research and inquire and co-construct their own knowledge, skills and attitudes with respect to the urban as a field of theoretical reflection and practice. Education has a long history of learning through inquiry, play and discovery and of connection to experience and the emotions. Rousseau (1953) in his famous book *The Confessions* highlighted the emotional and sensual foundation of knowledge.

Two alternative research and inquiry programmes might have been proposed. Firstly, I might have explored the urban environment as a socioecological entity. This was the approach adopted by Wirth (1964) in his classic study of the 'city as a way of life' and resembles the core assertion of today's Mistra Urban Futures (mistraurbanfutures.org) in Sweden and the Center for Urban Pedagogy (welcometocup.org) in New York, where concerns about design and the environment are uppermost. The focus in both these centres ties closely with other environmental concerns on a global and local level.

A second programme of research and inquiry for urban pedagogy has been proposed by Jones (1997) in London. Central to his view is the relationship between the school and the community. If the latter is dysfunctional, something highly contentious and not in line with the argument of this book, the school becomes a surrogate family. If the school is dysfunctional in the sense of not being able to support or motivate learning, then learning in the community becomes central. He drew attention to the experiments in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s when children learning zoology would do it at the zoo, those learning drama would do it at the local theatre and so on (Wilson 2004). Learning in the community can also take place through the religious faith schools organised by different ethnic groups at the weekends. The existence of such schools might reflect how 'peripheral groups seldom have access to significant institutions in a manner sufficient to bring about a reallocation of power and resources, including those related to education' (Jones 1992, p. 210). With respect to the balance of pedagogy between school and community, Jones

(1997) argues that newly qualified teachers should remain aware of these different options while concentrating their daily efforts in the state-funded and formal school system. In other words, the school as an urban institution remains central.

The research and inquiry proposed in this chapter depart from the two mentioned above in the following way: Wirth and Jones both strengthen the binary of a world out there in the urban as opposed to some inside, safe and secluded school/home. Instead of this binary, my proposition is that *experience* is the bridging concept that transcends both. This is not to dispute the importance of either of these spaces; rather it changes the dominance and constellation of them, such that *experience*, and specifically *urban experience*, is considered paramount. Accordingly, the core assertion (Lakatos 1970) probed in this chapter, and so too in several of the other chapters in this book, is the following: Living and learning to live in an urban context entail an awareness and understanding of *urban experience* and what this means for developing city skills.

Accordingly, the goal is to explore how a research programme (Lakatos 1970) based upon this assertion might provide a framework for urban pedagogy and the development of city skills, knowledge and moral attitudes. Those participating in such a pedagogy might be children, youth or adults. While the specific details of the knowledge and moral attitudes of this programme and accompanying learning outcomes will be the subject of a subsequent essay inspired by a collection edited by SooHoo (2004) and the work of City Cite (www.citycite.vic.edu.au) in Melbourne, Australia, I will present some indications of how this proposal might be realised. My proposition is that it is possible to take a personal experience, mediated through city walks and equipped with my grandfather's photographs, and to widen it to develop the potential of a shared, collective project that defines a framework for urban pedagogy and skill development. The skills in mind are understood to entail theoretical reflection and practice and are inclusive of knowledge and (moral) attitudes.

How Might the City Be Conceptualised?

For the sake of argument, let us limit this conceptualisation to the work of a few well-known urban theorists and a couple of academic journals. In his early work, Harvey (1973) understood the city as a place where the logic of capitalist production, reproduction, circulation and exchange was played out to spatially map different classes. In his later work (1989a, b), he paid greater attention to the cultural dimension of this logic but still within a framework dominated by the capitalist logic of flexible accumulation and its spatial representation in the city.

In his later work, Castells (1996) envisages a slightly different function for the city. It is the site where the *space of flows*, supporting a flow of communication, meets the *space of places*, where people belong in a corporeal sense. This enabled him to highlight the role of changing communication patterns among inhabitants as they come to terms with these different flows. Bauman (2003) in *City of Fears, City*

of Hopes has developed the ideas of both Harvey and Castells to focus on how, in an age of what he calls liquid modernity, urban inhabitants are more sceptical and fearful of face-to-face interaction. Moreover, he argues people have a preference for cultivating 'islands of similarity and sameness' (p. 30) among those of a similar socio-economic background. Segregated residential patterns emerge.

Bauman proposes that planners should create spaces where people can have more shared experiences, to develop shared horizons based upon face-to-face interaction: 'propagation of open, inviting and hospitable public spaces which all categories of urban residents would be tempted to regularly attend and knowingly/willingly share' (2003, p. 34).

These urban theorists, to varying degrees, talk directly about urban experience and its changing character. But what still remains, and this is to some extent also the case with more recent work on emotion and spatial urban belonging by Jones and Jackson (2014), is a reflection on the relevance of urban experience itself for educationalists. How, for example, might the spaces of which Bauman talks be created and how might people be schooled into desiring, managing and changing such experiences? To take an example, Berman (2006) has been critical of private sector property developers who make 'deals' with New York politicians and planners in a desire to refashion and rebuild Times Square, such that less reputable (pornographic) establishments are squeezed out. What city skills, including knowledge, can and should (a moral attitude) we learn from such examples?

In academic journals, such as *Urban Education* and *Education and Urban Society*, the kind of topics examined is typically the social segregation of pupils in different schools, social exclusion, cultural diversity and gender. However, while these topics are undoubtedly to do with living in urban areas and attending schools, the focus is not upon urban experience and city skills per se. Instead, the concern is what happens in urban schools and how the schools might work towards a policy induced and theoretically and empirically supported reduction in different forms of socio-economic inequality.

Experience and Pedagogy

In making urban experience the core of a research and inquiry programme on urban pedagogy, the ambition is to remain close to what educationalists have called the experience of 'learning by doing'. This has been associated with the well-known early twentieth-century educationalist and public intellectual John Dewey (2009/1916), who stated: 'if knowledge comes from the impressions made upon us by natural objects, it is impossible to procure knowledge without the use of objects which impress the mind' (pp. 217–218). A number of points can be made about the character of urban experience in an urban pedagogy, in addition to the fact that it is mediated through the corporeal body and our senses:

- Simmel (1950) highlighted an experience that still rings true in depicting urban experience today, namely, the difference between urban and rural experience. In

the latter a person is more likely to meet familiar faces, the pace of life is slower, and the number and intensity of stimuli are less. He also talked of the need for the urban dweller to use cognitive strategies to protect their inner, more vulnerable emotional self from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan stimuli which might be considered at times threatening, unpredictable and unsafe.

- To increase one's understanding of urban experience in a learning-by-doing manner is to embark upon a project of *bildung* (identity self-formation). This entails an overcoming of self as new urban experiences confront and confound old ones (Dobson et al. 2006). For some children, and adolescents in particular, this results in identities which are more fragile and vulnerable than safe and secure (Ball et al. 2000).
- Urban experiences can take place in informal arenas. When this is the case, pedagogy is moved from the formal, institutionalised space of the classroom, with fixed and stable teacher–pupil roles, to the street and the community expressed in the informal life of the street, where there are potentially many shifting significant and fluid others. Of course, this binary opposition also dissolves with informal experiences in schools, in breaktime and in cities on special set pieces, such as national days of celebration with public processions.

When an urban experience entails the above, we are talking about a pedagogy of experience, what is called in Norwegian *erfaringspedagogikk*. This is what writers such as Kolb (1984), Wallace (1999) and Schon (1987) have called experiential learning based upon making observations during activity, which are in turn reflected upon and integrated into abstract conceptual schema as a source of knowledge.

Jameson (1988, p. 353) provides an example of this experience-generated knowledge with his concept of cognitive mapping and its connection to identity formation (*bildung*). Cognitive mapping for Jameson (1988, p. 353) builds upon a notion presented in Lynch's (1960) classic book *The Image of the City* and aims to imagine not only the experience of urban space but how this is connected with socio-economic, class based and global experiences of exploitation, Jameson's term. His proposal entails a 'pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system' (1984, p. 92). The goal is therefore clear: to make sure 'we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle' (1984, p. 92). But how he means to do this in and through urban special experience converted into knowledge, other than through cognitive maps, is unclear.

To summarise, the theories above contend that the relationship between cognition and experience in an urban context is a central source of skills, knowledge and attitudes. They constitute the inner circle in the model inspired by Lakatos; its hard core of assertions is higher pace, more stimuli, informality and *bildung*. To take an example of *bildung* and identity self-formation, searching on foot for the location of my grandfather's images, together with my son, has provided ample time to cognitively reflect and theorise upon the meaning of these images in the context of my own life and the history of my family as urban dwellers. This has also furthered my personal development of city skills to research and also navigate cities on a daily basis.

Protective Belt Assertions

Around the core assertion of urban experience as the subject matter of urban pedagogy, I propose a number of protective belt assertions (Lakatos 1970). They rest upon the core assertion of urban experience but are less strongly held in the sense that they can be modified and even abandoned without bringing into question the legitimacy or role of the core assertion. The criterion for selection is that these factors enrich an understanding of urban experience and the nature of city skills.

The Flâneur and Flâneuse

To saunter, stroll, wander, promenade and to be a flâneur—these are the terms describing the walker who has time on his/her hands. This is not the commuter in a rush or the child running for the school bus. For Benjamin (1983), the flâneur plants his feet one after the other in order to let the seed of uncharted and unexpected experiences grow in an unhurried fashion: 'The style of the flâneur who goes botanizing on the asphalt …' (p. 36).

The walker in the city is able to plant and reap experiences from an activity which is still natural for residents of mega cities such as New York or Shanghai. They are less likely to own a car than those residing in the suburbs. They are more likely to walk and make use of public transport. The walker is able to recapture and re-experience space surrendered to planners, architects, the owners of capital and forms of transport such as the car, tram and train.

This was the intention of the International Situationalists, and among them Debord, known for his *Society of the Spectacle* (1977), who talked of drift (*dérive* in French): the unplanned walk, locomotion without a goal, where one just follows one's feelings to map the psychogeography of a place and how it feels. For example, one might explore how the same urban location can move at different times in the day between a sense of threat and security. Sunset and sunrise are often markers of a change in sensibility when threat and security might be experienced simultaneously. Situationist psychogeography can be defined as 'the specific effects of the geographical environment … on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (anon, quoted in Sadler 1998: 92). There are examples of walks that are more planned, as described by Swedish researchers who have conducted such walks shadowing children (Cele 2010) or inhabitants of neighbourhoods who walk with planners/builders thorough urban space (De Laval 2010).

The flâneuse? Benjamin, with his concept of the flâneur, might have reproduced the male culture of the nineteenth century, where the only public role allowed for the sauntering woman was as a prostitute or as an embellishment on the sleeve of her wealthy husband (Wolff 1989). Through the masculine gaze, women risk being consigned to the status of objects and becoming less able to experience being a flâneuse without fear for their own safety. Feminist readers will look for a more

substantial engagement with these ideas and positions. Issues of safety for instance are highly relevant and produce gendered urban experiences that are quite different for women and men. In terms of learning cities, females have to learn how to negotiate and avoid danger in a way that is different for males (Elkin 2016).

Fear and urban experience raise the question of how the city is imagined (Westwood and Williams 1997). Pile (2005), inspired by psychoanalysis, also draws heavily upon Benjamin's concept of phantasmagoria to highlight the procession of images passing before the urban dweller. These images can take on the character of a dream experience and can be the source of 'wishes and desires, anxieties and fears' (p. 96). In other words, the images we have of the city can influence how we experience it both consciously and unconsciously.

Also pertinent to the topic of fear and moving through urban space is the experience of groups who loiter on corners or move collectively on foot, creating and occupying mobile territories in the process. But street corner society, also the title of a classic sociological text by Whyte (1955), contains a certain experiential virtue that is akin to the experience of the news reporter who idly waits for the chance happening. While the loiterer or mobile group may be present and the reporter is initially not, they are both prepared. As Benjamin (1999) noted: 'News service and idleness. Feuilletonist, reporter, photographer constitute a graduation in which waiting around, the "Get ready" succeeded by the "Shot" becomes ever more important *vis-á-vis* other activities' (p. 802).

The idle, the reporter and the mobile group or gang are all waiting in a virtuous sense for an undefined and to some extent open and unlimited form of experience. It is not fixed and preconfigured, as in other activities, such as work, sports or other norm-governed leisure pursuits. The goal has yet to arrive and with it a desire to direct towards completion.

Educating the Senses

Young children with parents or older siblings learn to look and not talk to strangers on public transport. They learn how to use their senses and not disclose their inner feelings and emotions; Simmel's advice (1950) to urban dwellers was to act in a cold, calculating manner towards others.

Other senses must be educated, including the acoustic, olfactory, tactile and gustatory. For example, certain sounds, we learn, are background sounds, such as the muffled repetitive beat of London at night or early in the morning (Bull and Back 2003). To take another example, McLaren (2000) has talked of the manner in which rap music functions as an experience of the urban: 'Rap unmakes feelings of security and safety in middle-class homes and neighborhoods. It indexes areas of concrete rage and generalized despair' (p. 243). For some, rap functions as part of a negative heuristic, something to be disciplined, controlled and avoided wherever possible. For others, it is part of a positive heuristic, something to be embraced 'by bursting

Fig. 8.3 The aftermath of a fire in London, precise location and date unknown (grandfather's collection)

through the representational space of whiteness and by advancing political solidarity in the form of an imagined community of struggle' (McLaren 2000, p. 250).

Educating the senses draws upon the romantic tradition of *bildung* found in the works of Enlightenment writers such as Schiller (1794) in Germany and Rousseau (1953) in France: I felt before I thought. An example from my grandfather's photograph collection demonstrates the concern with the sensual. Figure 8.3 depicts people congregating around the ruins of a building after a fire. A viewer can almost smell the burnt carbon in the air. It reawakens what must have been a poignant memory for a generation that of bombs being dropped on London in the Second World War. Today, it echoes with our fear of terrorism that might arise at any moment in any place.

Signs, Codes and Commodity Culture

Urban experience and city skills are embedded in and at the same time draw upon sets of signs that are organised into socially meaningful sets of codes that are to be read like a line of text in a book or newspaper. But the reading and literacy skill implied reaches beyond the written to the character, an experience of city reality itself. What is a sign? A simple and well-known definition considers signs to be composed of signifiers, signifieds and referents (Gundersen and Dobson 1996, p. 5). To take an example, the popular Body Shop logo is a signifier. The signified are the

meanings of body products and commodities for beauty and wellbeing that have not been tested upon animals. The referent is the chain of Body Shop stores found in many international cities and the actual physical commodities sold. Signs and social codes such as these have to be learnt and read, and such literacy is important in the development and practice of an urban pedagogy of specific city skills. This is especially important when, as Berman (2006) has pointed out, urban experience can be characterised by 'semiotic overflow' and a 'superabundance of signs' (pp. xxi, 7).

The codes in which signs are embedded are not homogenous and uniformly distributed among urban dwellers. They vary according to socio-economic class, gender, race and ethnicity and age. Bernstein, the well-known educationalist and sociolinguist, was aware of this and sought to understand the code-based character of learning. And while his focus was predominantly upon the classroom and the socio-economic background of pupils, his conceptualisation of codes can be extended and indeed recontextualised to incorporate reflection upon urban experiences outside of the school. He coined the term elaborated codes and their opposite, restricted codes. For Bernstein (1986) the former, more typical of pupils of middle-class parents, referred to a form of communication that utilised a range of 'syntactic alternatives, which speakers take up in the organization of speech' (p. 474). The latter, restricted codes, were more contextual and fixed and characteristic of working-class pupils. Bourdieu (2004, p. 17) was also interested in the coded character of interaction, specifically cultural capital as a code governing pedagogic activity, societal recognition and access to power. But they both underplayed, or perhaps even lacked, Benjamin's insight into the fact that codes in urban space can change with each new generation, in a dialectical process of opposition, where the breaking down and lack of salience of one code and the imposition of its successor can be a violent and turbulent affair (Dobson 2002, p. 4). This means that, if pedagogy is to have more than a descriptive task limited to exposing and confirming existing codes in society, it must additionally have a political and emancipatory project: the breaking and making of new codes in an urban environment that reaches beyond the boundaries of the classroom and established processes of stratification according to class, gender, race and ethnicity and age. The work of Freire (2000) is a case in point as he constantly sought to recode the manner in which knowledge of our surroundings and culture is solidified by class and history and the interests of those with power.

Benjamin, in addition to the points already made about his interest in the flâneur, was also sensitive to the intoxication of commodities and their socially and materially engendered codes:

> [the flâneur] shares the situation of the commodity. He is not aware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him and it permeates him blissfully like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the flâneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers. (Benjamin 1983, p. 55)

In such a manner, Benjamin found a way of describing and also experiencing the secular opium of urban dwellers and the intoxication they had learnt to enjoy. Signs
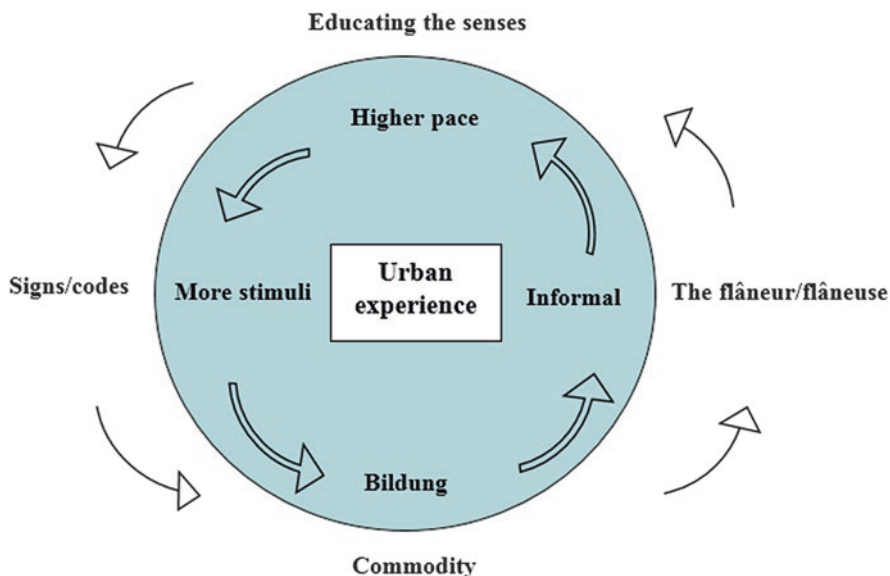
Fig. 8.4 Core and protective assertions in urban pedagogy

are coded through processes of commodification, not merely acquiring exchange, use and exhibition value but also becoming the source of sensual experiences of intoxication.

The implications are that those dwelling and moving through urban space must learn to read and interpret the meaning of signs and the manner in which they are socially (re-)coded according to different stratifying processes (e.g. race, gender and ethnicity). The diagram below represents this process, where certain processes are relatively constant and those outside are more flexible in the role and influence they might play (Fig. 8.4).

In terms of epistemology, urban experience draws upon a number of sources of disciplinary knowledge: sociology, aesthetics (educating the senses), media studies (signs/codes), education and psychology (psychogeography). What is created is a form of interdisciplinary knowledge that seeks to understand the many-faceted elements constituting urban experience and city skills.

An Example: The Urban Pedagogy of Iain Sinclair

Sinclair has undertaken several walking projects, where he learns as he investigates and communicates his experiences. After completing one walk around the M25 London orbital, he wrote the following passage:

> The harder the rain comes down, the faster we stride. We're erasing everything we investigated on the original walk. The smoke from the burning stack at the London Waste facility in Edmonton is distinguished from river mist, spray from the elevated carriageway. The sky has dropped. (Sinclair 2002, p. 452)

The stinging acerbity of his writing style has been noted as he struggles to find signifiers to express his politicised interpretations (*signifieds*):

> The A13 shuffle through East London is like the credits sequence of the Mafia soap, *The Sopranos*; side-of-the-eye perspective, bridges, illegitimate businesses about to be overwhelmed by the big combos. Black smoke and blue smoke. Waste disposal. A well-chewed cigar … To drift through low cloud, through the harp strings of the suspension bridge, is to become a quotation; to see yourself from outside. (Sinclair 2002, p. 40)

Sinclair's books, a mixture of text and photographic image, are carefully crafted and edited reflections of his learning experiences as a flâneur.

In another of Sinclair's walks depicted in his celebrated *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997), his goal was to provide a record and understanding of the hidden mythical, psychic geography of London. Rather than public survey cartography, he sought to create maps that connected people to mythical places and events. He defined the walking plan as follows:

> The notion was to cut a crude V into the sprawl of the city, to vandalise dormant energies by an act of ambulant sign making. To walk out from Hackney to Greenwich Hill, and back along the River Lea to Chingford Mount, recoding and retrieving the message on walls, lampposts, doorjambs: the spites and spasms of an increasingly deranged populace. (Sinclair 1997, p. 1)

The signifiers he mapped included graffiti, shop signs and pub signs. Graffiti, to take an example, often parodies the social codes of capitalism by advertising meanings (*signifieds*) for consumption and also on occasions includes viewers in the parody. Thus an example of graffiti found in Dalston, 'we're behaving like insects' (p. 15), signifies how the collective 'we' are all mass consumers following each other in our purchases and, not the least, in our walking habits.

Sinclair's work aligns with the International Situationalists, as evidenced by his use of the terms 'flâneur' and 'psychogeography' (1997, p. 85). For him, to walk always represents an opportunity to experience *bildung*. His definition of the flâneur is 'a stubborn creature, less interested in texture and fabric, eavesdropping on philosophical conversation pieces, than in noticing everything' (p. 4). On occasions Sinclair regards the flâneur as a stalker (p. 75).

As an illustration of his method, consider how on one walk he stumbled across the funeral of one of the Kray brothers. The local support for these London gangsters, notorious in the 1960s, was evident in the tributes and the length of the funeral procession—the East End had its 'reputation to uphold' (p. 69). Sinclair identified a connection between the pit bull dog traditions of the East End and the dog breeding dreams of Ronnie Kray. He closes this account of the funeral by noting how even drug pushers in BMWs made the journey to touch the Kray gravestone. The connection between living/mortal and dead/immortal was enacted.

In Sinclair's practice of urban pedagogy, the core assertion of urban experience is learnt and understood in terms of the life of the streets and the community. It is beyond the formal sphere of the school, experiencing the pace and stimuli of urban life. Protective assertions are also present: Sinclair, the flâneur, stopping to eat local food (usually a full English breakfast) early on all the walks is indicative of the manner in which he educates his senses (taste). In the work of Sinclair, it is however the reading of signs, looking for their political and mythical meanings and social coding, which remains uppermost. In his open critique of governments and commodity capitalism, his view of codes and signifieds is always political. Stated concisely, his pedagogy of urban experience is a learning of the politics of representation.

How to Realise Urban Pedagogy and City Skill Development

In debates on informal pedagogy, it is not unusual to encounter the view (Phoenix 2004) that youth identities are constructed in an informal manner (e.g. in school breaktimes or in the playground). Nevertheless, the setting is the school and what takes place there. What is ignored is the informal pedagogy taking place outside of the formal school institution. The argument in this chapter for urban pedagogy and city skills has sought to bridge and extend the focus to those spaces outside the school.

Jones (1997) considered the community as an experience outside of the school. But, as noted, he continued to regard the school as the most important site for education. In opposition to him, the community, as expressed and experienced in the life of the street, remains central to my conception of urban pedagogy. It is here that the educational efforts for such a pedagogy might be directed and where a curriculum for city skills might take shape. This is not to discount the classroom; rather educational experiences of the street can be drawn upon in the classroom prior to and after urban experiences.

In moving to such an arena, identity formation (*bildung*) is less fixed and controlled by the formal teacher–pupil relations of the school. The role of peer groups, respected community elders and the media-mediated views of style and consumption occupies a key role. The answer to the question 'who does the educating in an urban pedagogy?' is that it is not necessarily the teacher in the classroom. Likewise, the answer to the question 'who are the pupils in such a pedagogy?' is not necessarily those of normal school age. They can be adults. However, some caution must be taken with respect to the age of younger participants. The activity of the flâneur should not be allowed for those too young to wander the city on their own. This means that youth in their mid to late teens would represent the younger age bracket for such participation, and they might walk in pairs or small groups, rather than alone. Of course, accompanied by adults, younger participants might be permitted. Such a Eurocentric or western conception might deny children citizenship and the right to express their own views on, for example, participation in urban pedagogy. These rights are defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover,

it also ignores that many children are actually working on the streets in so-called 'Third World' countries.

Following the lead of Ball et al. (2000, p. 23), urban pedagogy might also emphasise the role of the family as it exerts an influence on the socialised frames of perception and thought of adolescents and children. This would make the family an important source of educational influence, such that family members might also become teachers of how the urban can be experienced.

Flemming Røgilds in his series of books on Danish youth in an urban environment, in particular *Det Utsatte* (*The marginalised*, 2004), describes and accounts for the manner in which peer group interaction is fundamental to identity formation. For him, urban pedagogy is more to do with peer group influences than the family. Thus, for many of the immigrant youth he follows in Copenhagen, adults—whether teachers, parents or community elders—are not considered to be the prime models for identity formation. Whether we call these peer groups forms of sub-groups, or even gangs, must not detract from the key point that peers can be primary agents for identity formation in the kind of urban pedagogy proposed in this chapter. This is an argument that applies to many youth who would not claim an immigrant background. For Røgilds, immigrant youth takes part in what he calls border pedagogy—a term taken from the US educationalist Giroux (1994)—as they build identities in the border zone of negotiation and struggle between Danish and immigrant identities.

Some classroom teachers will be sceptical about letting their pupils roam the streets, and this will represent one of the main criticisms of my proposal. But to be hesitant about increasing pupils' awareness of different forms of urban experience is to neglect the everyday context and challenges that many pupils face. This ignores the fact that education is already taking place outside of schools. For instance, children engage in citizen science by exploring natural environments and using the Internet to communicate with other young natural scientists.

As a prelude to actively seeking urban experiences, teachers might run workshop sessions in the classroom where pupils are encouraged to talk about their urban experiences, of the senses they use, of memorable stories and most importantly the sense of moral consciousness required as they make judgements about good and safe, as opposed to bad and threatening and unsafe, and how these can change according to the time of day and choice of urban space. Different elements of the circular diagram presented earlier might be focused upon in turn. In other words, a knowledge base or curriculum can be developed, and an attitude of openness, co-construction and dialogue can be cultivated but also including a moral awareness of judgements connected with personal and shared safety and threats.

This underlines how not all urban experiences should be considered worthy, and in the workshops, the less desirable and dangerous ones can be discussed and ruled out. With this mind, the journeys into urban arenas outside of the school can be planned and directed by the presence and guidance of an adult teacher. This might result in a certain loss of random and unplanned drift (*dérive*). In the true spirit of the International Situationalists, this might be reserved for students who are

approaching adulthood. However, even in such cases, the students could use GPS trackers for their own safety and security at all times.

One way of documenting urban experience is to let pupils/students work on their own joint projects. The chapter by Horn in this book is a case in point. It is possible to reflect on the different emotional senses and urban stimuli, the projects can be multimodal, composed of text, images, sounds, tastes and surfaces that can be touched. This might entail everything from images taken on mobiles to the recreation of small 'tasters' of food sampled on the journeys into the urban (sound, tactile, visual, olfactory and gustatory) landscape (see the chapter by Rhys-Taylor in this book).

Participants in urban pedagogy could be encouraged to organise and reflect, both descriptively and theoretically, upon their urban experiences. Much of this reflection can be interdisciplinary in character, drawing together knowledge and skills from different fields, such as architecture and the history of construction; education and literacy defined widely in terms of how different cultural signs are constructed, embedded and understood; the sociology and psychology of urban inhabitants, living conditions, personal health and safety issues; and the science of policing, discipline and order. Moreover, participants could be given the opportunity to work upon their soft skills, in particular those connected with working in groups, and to select (urban) issues and problems according to interests in the tradition of inquiry- and problem-based education. Work under development, accumulated in portfolios, and final products could be summarised in verbal presentations given by individuals and groups in different settings, inside and outside the school/classroom, and assessed.

Concluding Remarks

In the interdisciplinary research and inquiry programme proposed above, participants are to be encouraged to actively research and reflect upon urban experiences and in so doing develop their city skills. Urban experience as a core assertion in urban pedagogy rests upon the following: the higher pace of life in the urban sphere, more stimuli, the informal and *bildung*. Around this core four less crucial assertions were added as a protective ring: signs/codes, involvement with commodities, the flâneur/flâneuse and an education of the senses. These assertions can be researched through theoretical reflection and practice guided by a negative heuristic (suggesting what not to pursue) and a positive heuristic (suggesting what to pursue) (Fig. 8.5).

In the research and inquiry programme proposed in this chapter, it might be contended that some of the protective belt assertions proposed could in fact be included in the list of core assertions. For example, is it not the case that the flâneur/flâneuse should be part of this core? Not necessarily, the urban can be experienced from the car or the tram. So, the flâneur/flâneuse does not have to be part of the core. Similarly, while the experience of commodities is not necessarily a core assertion because non-commodity experiences are possible in the urban arena, it is harder to argue that

Fig. 8.5 Western Union offices in the 1960s, London, where my grandfather possibly worked (venue not confirmed)

signifiers, codes and an education of the senses should not be part of the core. This is especially the case when *bildung*, with its focus on the formation of identify, seems to involve educating the senses and learning to understand and interpret the codes.

Moreover, it might be argued that socio-economic class might be a protective belt assertion, since the experience of the urban changes according to class. This would concur with the work of Ball et al. (2000), who highlight the differential, divisive and unequal manner in which the urban is experienced. For some social groups, the city is experienced as a place of danger more than security, even though this relationship as noted can change from sunrise to sundown and back again to sunrise. Benjamin (1983, p. 117) also identified the importance of social class for experience: *erlebnis* (repetitive experience, 'passed through and lost') is typical of the working class in factories as they work, and it is less likely to be *erfahrung* (collectively shared, historical experience that is recalled as meaningful and unique). Arguments might also be made to include other stratifying processes as protective belt assertions, such as gender (e.g. flâneuse), age and race and ethnicity.

Irrespective of whether new elements are added to the protective belt or even moved into the core assertion, a focus upon urban experience would still stand as a key defining element in urban pedagogy and the learning of city skills, as contended in this chapter.

This does not preclude others co-constructing different research and inquiry programmes and curricula for an urban pedagogy. Instead of drawing upon experience as the key concept of theoretical reflection and practice, the focus might be on the urban as an ecological or sustainable site. The point is not therefore that different research programmes should fight for hegemony and for inclusion or exclusion; instead a tolerance for diversity should be encouraged.

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Chapter 9
Commercial Ethnography: What Are Education Researchers Doing in the Mall?

Check for updates

Sue Nichols

Introduction

> We try and steer away from that in all that we do. We don't tend to have any Disney™ products or any of that sort of stuff. We don't have any books that are that sort of commercial, like really promoted type stuff.

These words were spoken by a kindergarten teacher when asked whether consumer culture could be an appropriate subject for learning in early childhood education. Her views represent the consensus amongst early childhood practitioners on the necessity of education environments being maintained as learning-centred havens separate from a commercialised outside word (Nichols and Snowden 2015).

There is a strong movement in opposition to what is seen as the commercialisation of children's lives. This is reflected in the titles of books like *This Little Kiddy Went to Market: The Corporate Capture of Childhood* (Beder 2009) and *Consuming Kids: Protecting Our Children from the Onslaught of Marketing and Advertising* (Lynn 2004). Opening the pages of Beder's (2009) book, we read that consumer culture is to blame for children in affluent countries being 'materialistic, overweight, stressed, depressed and self-destructive' (p. 223). Like fellow advocate Lynn (2004), she argues that children are being shaped from birth into habits of lifelong consumption and that, by the time they reach school, much of the damage has been done.

Activism by groups like the Campaign for Commercial-Free Education reinforces the message that commercialism and education are mutually exclusive and antagonistic. Citing this group's framework, Beder (2009) contrasts what she terms the commercial agenda with the education agenda. The commercial agenda is described as product/brand focused, positioning people as passive and fragmentary

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in its construction of knowledge. The education agenda is student-centred, active, critical and thematically based. This model relies on both education and commerce being defined in particular ways which idealise education on the one hand and demonise commerce on the other.

Theorists from the left have provided further ammunition for this critique of consumer culture. Lefebvre (2009) argues that consumption in modern societies is a bleak process in which individuals are repeatedly satiated and emptied, trapped on a treadmill which drives continuous production and wastage. Significantly, Lefebvre (2009) sees adolescents as archetypal consumers:

> Adolescents today want to consume now, at once, and such a market has been duly and effectively exploited. Thus young people tend to lead a marginal everyday life, their own yet unchanged, opposed to that of their elders yet in all ways identical to it … what they consume, both negatively and massively, are the adult objects that surround them with their material existence and their signs. This situation fosters deep and multiple frustrations (p. 91).

In addition to teenagers, women are depicted as participants in a consumer fantasy world, particularly through their consumption of magazines, in which 'experience and make-believe merge in a manner conducive to the reader's utter bewilderment' (Lefebvre 2009, pp. 84–85).

These arguments imply a relationship between consumption and human development in which maturity is associated with a rational understanding of the true distinction between needs and wants. Children are seen as requiring protection from the commercial world owing to their presumed inability to exercise rational judgement. However, progress towards maturity is seen to be continually in danger of being thwarted by the forces of the market, meaning that some groups (adolescents and women) are in danger of never reaching it. From this perspective, how can commercial environments be fit places for respectable educational researchers to conduct their investigations? As a way of beginning to address this question, I will describe an interaction observed during fieldwork for a study on early learning (Nichols et al. 2012). In this paper, I will be arguing that commercial environments and activity systems are important contexts in which children learn how to participate and negotiate within social relations of consumption.

An Encounter in Kmart

> An older and a younger woman, a girl of about 7 and a toddler boy in a shopping trolley were in the aisle featuring 'transformer' type toys. The girl looked at a display of Bionicals™ that was featured at the end of the aisle before selecting one and taking it to her mother. She asked how much it was and her mother said 'The scanner is there. Have a look'. A scanner is located at child height at the end of this row. The girl swiped the toy and came back to say 'Seventeen dollars. Is that good?' Her mum said 'Quite good'. But shortly after, she selected a different Bionicals™ toy from the shelf and asked her daughter to take the other one back.

These field notes were taken during a 3-year transnational project investigating the circulation of goods, practices and ideas concerning the subject 'early learning' (Nichols et al. 2012). I will describe the project more fully later in the chapter. First though, how are we to understand this interaction?

It may be seen to substantiate concerns about the training of children into habits of consumption. The layout of the store, grouping all the toys together in one section, facilitates shoppers quickly identifying and moving to goods targeted at children. The packaging of the toys in boxes with transparent windows allowing a clear view of the contents enables children to recognise that they contain figures associated with a children's media production.

There are other possible ways of looking at this scene. The shopper in this case was not a lone child but a family group. There were interactions between family members as part of the activity of shopping. Regardless of claims of children's 'pester power', the older child's toy selection was not acted on. Instead, the mother made the choice of purchase. Also, this aisle was gender themed, with products, colours and signs clearly signalling boys as consumers. Yet a girl was participating in consumption by making selections, determining price and asking her mother about the suitability of the cost. In order to understand scenes like this one from the perspective of learning, we need to expand our view of consumption beyond the proposition that children are powerless dupes of a manipulative marketplace.

Conceptualising Children's Consumption

Consumption can be understood as a set of practices that operate simultaneously in the realms of materiality and meaning. What links these practices is that they involve some form of acquisition of a good, whether material or virtual, that the consumer did not have prior to undertaking the practice of consumption. Mick et al. (2004) propose a semiotic framework for understanding consumption in terms of what they refer to as *potentialising* and *actualising* processes. To potentialise is to attribute to a thing or experience the status of a consumption object, that is, something worthy of being consumed. A prime example of potentialising is advertising which works by selecting 'key meanings residing in cultural categories' and 'transfer[ing] the meanings to consumer goods' (Mick et al. 2004, p. 4). Marking objects with signs associated with popular media characters is one common means by which goods for children are invested with consumption potential. To actualise means to participate in the practices of acquisition and use of the consumption object. This may mean purchasing the object but could equally mean borrowing it, swapping it for something else or making something that can substitute for the object.

Young children's play practices offer them opportunities to potentialise and actualise consumption. Wohlwend (2009b), in an exploration of young children's orientation to technology, describes how a kindergarten child created a mobile phone out of a piece of paper. He had cut the paper to size and drawn on it an array of numerals.

Then he used the device as if it were a mobile phone: 'he held the opened paper flat in the palm of his hand, raised his hand to his ear, talked into the paper for a few seconds, then snapped it shut with one hand, and tucked it into his pocket' (Wohlwend 2009b, p. 125). The child had actualised an object which he was not in a position to purchase, using his ability to produce a paper approximation and to invest this with meaning through his behaviour.

Consumption practices are undertaken in social and material contexts. For children, the social contexts of consumption frequently involve relationships with adult carers. Indeed, as Epp and Price (2008) argue, consumption practices are integral to the development of family identity. These researchers are critical of the individualistic model of consumption that dominates not only advertising strategies but scholarly treatments of consumption. By studying families' consumption practices, they show how meanings are made about family in general and about particular family identities. Consumption is interwoven into family narratives, which make links between past, present and future. An example of this is the way in which key milestones in family life, such as anniversaries, which are linked to gift giving, meal sharing or joint recreational activities, are both remembered and anticipated in family stories.

Shankar (2006) also emphasises the significance of narrating to consumption. In studying the family identities of migrant South Asian communities in the United States, she observes that consumption is about more than the object. It is interwoven with the production of representations of the object in talk and in visual documentation such as photographs. So, for instance, if a family purchases a new car, they will create representations of this car and of the way they use it as owners, perhaps by sharing images on social media. She explains that 'people not only form relationships with objects they own, but also with objectifications—verbal and visual representations—of objects they borrow, rent, or imagine' (2006, p. 293).

This is particularly relevant to young children who, while having a limited capacity to purchase most kinds of consumer objects independently, arguably have a greater capacity than adults to employ their representational skills through imagination and play and thus to consume vicariously as well as actually. Indeed, in middle-class households particularly, children are expected to use and rewarded for using their imaginations (Ogata 2008).

Finally, all consumption practices including the material and the representational take place in spaces. Indeed, the design of spaces is a crucial aspect of the way consumer organisations arrange for 'being there and buying there' (Mick et al. 2004, p. 4). Spaces of consumption are often differentiated in ways that make clear the ways in which children and adults are expected to orient their participation. Social historian Daniel Cook (2003) has studied the history of department stores and charts the development of specific areas for children. He cites a trade article from 1920 in which a store owner described how he set up his store not just to cater for children but to target children by age and gender:

> I established a number of small swings and put in other contrivances that children delight in. I further made arrangements for the older boys. With the purchase of $10 or more I gave a subscription to the American Boy [magazine]. (Anon 1920, p. 89, cited in Cook 2003, p. 154).

Indeed, the development of modern shopping spaces and practices has been inextricably interwoven with the development of the middle-class family and its suburban way of life. Urban planning historian Gillette (1985) reports that early suburban shopping centres were often placed alongside schools and included services for mothers and children such as playgrounds and nurseries. Safety was emphasised, particularly through the separation of vehicle traffic and pedestrian pathways, making the suburban shopping option more attractive to suburban women than travelling into crowded city centres.

Thus consumption has been interwoven with the constitution of the child as citizen, as developing and as gendered. Indeed, as Ellen Seiter (1993) has shown, children's manufacturers and toy retailers were amongst the earliest and most enthusiastic translators of developmental psychology theories into practical and spatial materialisation.

This view of child consumption as involving both material and representational practices within social relations and in social spaces informs the analysis that follows. The remainder of the chapter presents findings from two kinds of research focused on children's participation in consumption. The first involves ethnographic observation but without consulting children directly about their understandings and activities. The second takes a child participatory approach in an attempt to learn from children about the meanings of consumption in their lives.

Children's Consumption in Space: Ethnographic Observation

The impetus for entering into commercial spaces as educational researchers initially came about as a result of investigating how the subject of early learning has been taken up by parents and those organisations who claim to provide relevant goods and services. Over 3 years and across three sites, a team of researchers tracked early learning resources through domestic, civic and commercial spaces (Nichols et al. 2012, 2009; Nichols and Rainbird 2013). A follow-up study, focused more specifically on digital resources, added a fourth site in a regional town. Following ethics approval, the team employed observation, visual documentation, mapping and the use of satellite images to trace the location of resources and also potentials for access, for instance via private car or public transport. For instance, we viewed Google Earth images of a shopping mall to track its geographic links with community services such as the library and health clinic and to trace possible pathways into and between these sites.

The focus of this project, as with the participatory studies mentioned later in this chapter, was on children in the prior-to-school stage. However it should be noted that participant groups in consumption practices are frequently multi-age, including school-age siblings. The following discussion will focus on two activity systems of particular relevance to the consideration of children as consumers. One of these is an example of a consumption activity targeted at children—shopping for

toys—while the second is an activity in which children participate even though they are not explicitly the primary targets—financial transactions.

Shopping for Toys

If there is one category of commercial product that appears to be aimed squarely at children, it is toys. Toys are associated with play, and play is considered to be the natural social world of childhood. We undertook much observation in a range of commercial outlets where toys were sold and observed that shopping for toys was not the child-focused activity that many would expect. Rather, participating in this practice involved children learning that their interests were interwoven with those of others. The following exchange was observed in the toy section of a variety store:

> One mum is talking to her child about what the child wants for her birthday. The mum says 'Point things out, then mummy will find the best price'. The child reaches for a box of toys, and the mother asks 'Have you got any like that?' The daughter says, 'I like that. I like that'. The mother follows with 'Do you have anything else [you want] because other people will want to know what you want'. She then prompts a continuation of the search: 'Ok, let's have a look and see what else is around. C'mon. What's down this aisle?'

This exchange is a reminder that shopping for birthday presents is a major purpose of visiting variety stores like Kmart. Birthdays, it is clear, are not for the child alone; they are family occasions that give others an opportunity to select and present gifts. A convention in many families is for a present to be a surprise. On the other hand, the giver has to be reasonably sure that the present will be well received. As we see from this example, the parent's task is to involve the child (to ensure gifts will be well received) and yet to prevent the child from making the final selection (to ensure the gifts are surprises). The parent then communicates with family members regarding the range of potential presents and ensures that price points are appropriate to the family's resources.

Birthday presents are supposed to be new additions to the recipient's stock of possessions. Thus the parent asks 'Have you got any like that?' The child hears 'like that' and responds with an expression of preference: 'I like that. I like that'. This seemingly spontaneous expression from the child is evidence that she is learning how to participate in the practice of shopping by expressing a preference. She is learning that being a gift recipient is a social, as well as a commercial, transaction.

Indeed we saw very few examples of a child's bid to purchase being satisfied by a parent without negotiation. This was regardless of whether the outlet was high-end or discount. Rather, children's expectations were continually being shaped within social relations in which adults exercised the powers of excursion director and purseholder. Many times a child's bid—expressed in terms of a tug on the hand, a gesture to a display or a 'mum look!'—was ignored by a parent who kept on walking right past the attraction.

A toy store can function as a destination when adults want to keep children occupied. In the specialist toy store Toys R Us, we saw many family groups enter and leave without making any purchase. In this vast warehouse of floor-to-ceiling toys, children were learning how to browse. Browsing entails running one's attention across a collection of items, registering certain of their features and making quick and somewhat casual evaluations. While children are occupied in this manner, adults are relieved of the burden of entertaining them. These notes were taken during a 2015 visit to Toys R Us:

> An older woman accompanying two young girls is walking slowly, pushing a shopping trolley with one hand and holding her mobile phone with the other. One of the children points to a toy and vocalises. Without taking the phone away from her ear, the woman says 'Do you want that? Shall we put it on the Christmas list?' The child nods. The woman says into the phone 'There's a lot of things on the Christmas list'. She sounds amused. She does not write anything on a list. Ten minutes later, she is still slowly circulating around the store and still on the phone. There are no toys in the trolley.

This is a multilayered interaction which can be interpreted differently depending on whether one takes the child's or the adult's perspective. From the child's perspective, she is participating in acts of preference signalling and of delayed gratification, in which Christmas acts as the imagined moment at which wishes will be fulfilled. The adult, on the other hand, strategically uses the performance of wish registering through hailing an absent 'Christmas list' which acts to channel children's desires away from immediate purchase. The women's amused comment to her conversation partner about there being a 'lot of things on the Christmas list' suggests that this is a frequently adopted tactic.

The spatial design of large toy stores such as this one plays into both child and adult agendas. The time taken to complete a circuit of the store is time that the adult does not have to spend actively entertaining children and, in this case, through the device of a mobile phone, she is able to continue socialising with an adult peer. For the children, the circuit of the store gives them an overview of the large and diverse marketplace of commercial toys and other products for children. Thus their choices (whether acted on or not) take on greater significance as products of thoughtful selection. The benefit for the store is less in the immediate purchases that accrue from each visit than in establishing itself as a destination for adults and children in which their immersion in a world of consumer goods is normalised.

It is possibly in recognition of this that some parents in the project emphatically rejected these kinds of consumer environments. Indeed one mother stated she would 'not set foot in' any large commercial toy store and instead conducted her shopping in small independent stores in upmarket suburban 'villages'. However, as Seiter (1993) points out in her analysis of toy shopping, manufacturers of elite educational toys also use marketing strategies such as the use of natural materials and subtle colours to signal their difference from mass-produced products. Parents who make different choices are still consumers and, in involving their children in judging the ifference between 'good' and 'bad' toys, are involving them in consumption practices.

Fig. 9.1 Inside a bank, similar to a home office

Participation in Financial Transactions

Children frequently accompany parents when they are doing financial transactions in banks and at wall-mounted cash-dispensing devices. Automatic teller machines (ATMs) are at the eye level of an average 5-year-old child. They have touch screens and commands. There is a patterned sequence of responses triggered by the actions of the user and a predictable outcome. All this makes them rather similar to some kinds of toys. Some banks have installed simple devices called credit checkers that are like wall-mounted apps with a single function. There is nothing stopping a child from using a device like this. Office-like stations at which customers can do online banking are also being set up inside banks. For middle-class children, this might create a semiotic aggregate similar to a study space at home or to a parent's work space (Fig. 9.1).

Although financial facilities like these are not designed for the use of children, there are few spatial or social barriers to children's participation in their use, and they are clearly of interest to children. The following illustrative research encounter was noted after a visit to a mall in a regional town:

> As I was using the ATM to withdraw some cash, a young mother was using the adjacent machine. Her little girl moved closer to me and was watching my actions with some interest. Her older brother realised this was transgressive and spoke her name to draw her attention back. But she wasn't dissuaded and continued to watch, pointing and telling me helpfully 'That's where the money comes out'. Having broken the ice in this way, she asked my name and told me hers.

This child was keen to position herself as an expert user and to share her knowledge with a fellow consumer. She had not yet learned the convention of privatising financial transactions; however, her older brother clearly had done so and attempted to intervene. These two children both acted on the understanding they had gained through their peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 2002) in the practice of accessing money at a public facility.

Barcode scanners are another digital device frequently encountered in shops. They are often installed at checkouts but may also be located inside the store for the purpose of checking prices when these are not displayed on shelves. Increasingly, human checkout operators are being replaced by self-check stations at which shoppers use a touch screen and scanner to input their purchases and a credit card to pay. Children are often present at these actions and participate in various degrees. The following observation was noted at Gumtree Plaza on a 2015 field trip. Two family groups were using the self-checkers:

> A mother approaches pushing a trolley. Inside the trolley is a child of about five. A baby is sitting in the baby seat facing towards the mum. When the child sees his mother taking items from the trolley to scan, he begins to hand items to her, waiting while each one is scanned to hand her the next one. The mother accepts this assistance for a few items. Then she says 'I'll just do these ones first' and gets a handful of children's clothes from the pusher to scan. The child stops handing items to her.
>
> Meanwhile a young mum with two walking boys approaches the opposite scanner. She begins to scan items. The smaller child tries to hand her a roll of gift wrapping paper. She yells 'No! I don't want wrapping paper'. He backs off and looks upset. After a few seconds, he begins to use the roll of paper as a cricket bat, practising strokes. Noticing this, the older boy attempts to intervene which prompts the younger child to hit him with the 'bat'. The mother stops her scanning to discipline the child. At her arrival, the older boy walks back to the self-checker, picks up a book from the trolley and passes it under the scanner.

In both cases, children are attempting to participate in the scanning practice with varying degrees of success. It appears that the age of the child is being taken into account by parents in negotiating participation. In the first case, the baby is not involved at all whereas the older child's bid to participate by handing items for scanning is accepted for a while. The child demonstrates an understanding of the rhythm of the practice by handing each item just after his mother has scanned the previous one. He also demonstrates an understanding of power relations by ceasing to participate as soon as his mother indicates that she will take over unaided, even though this is expressed in rather indirect language.

In the second case, the younger child is attempting to participate in the selection of goods to be purchased. This offer is firmly rejected by the parent. As he is not included in the scanning practice, the child draws on his experience of play to find something meaningful to do temporarily with the roll of paper. When this play turns into a play fight, the mother intervenes. Noting her absence from the scanner, the older child takes over until his mother returns.

Notable also in is the way that the shopping trolley, as a mobile container, both restricts and enables children as participants. The child sitting in the trolley is in a good position to observe what his mother is doing and has access to the goods so that he can hand them to her. The children in the second group are not so contained, which

creates a challenge for the mother in managing their participation. We see here how the older sibling seamlessly coordinates with his mother to manage the younger child's behaviour and then to continue the scanning when the parent takes over as primary disciplinarian. These observations support the conceptualisation of child consumption advanced earlier. Children's participation takes place within social relations in which power is negotiated. The materiality of spaces and the embodied nature of consumption practices are integral to the experience of the child as consumer.

Engaging Children's Perspectives

In this section of the chapter, I draw from two projects that employed child participatory methods and which yielded insights into young children's understandings and practices related to participation in consumer culture. The first, 'We Love Old Things', took place in three kindergartens and used drama methods to engage children in sharing and talking about objects of personal significance (Nichols and Snowden 2015). As part of this, researchers explored with the children how they came to be owners of these objects and themes related to consumption emerged. The second, 'Children as Citizens', involved kindergarten children in two sites as informants on their views about participation in decision-making. At one site located in a regional town, citizenship was explored through place-based learning involving activities such as excursions, map making and model town making. In interviews with the children about these activities, the significance of commercial spaces and consumption experiences became evident. Across the two projects, 55 children were interviewed singly, in pairs or in groups of three. The discussion below will focus on two significant themes.

A Big Bed for a Big Girl

A fact of life for children, and one which is highly salient to their consumption experience, is that they are constantly growing and getting older in a way that is highly visible and often commented on by others. This growth necessitates the regular discarding of possessions that are no longer suitable as they are too small or too juvenile for the child's present state of being. Children's embodied and cognitive experience of change means that there is a strong sense of temporality in their orientation to consumption. They are aware, for instance, that birthdays mark the attainment of another year of age and that these are occasions for parents and family members to purchase and give presents.

For Lachlan, an object received as a gift at his most recent birthday had already acquired the status of 'old' and thus marked the passage of time between then and now:

Lachlan:	Um, I have an old scoop and when it was my birthday I got 'em.
Researcher:	Right. So are you saying that it's old because you've had it for a while?
Lachlan:	Yeah, I've had it for 59 days.

Narrating the duration of one's possessions can be understood as an act of constituting oneself as a being in time (Ricouer 1980). In a similar vein, Emma referred to herself in the past tense when explaining that she had passed on her bed to her brother: 'I had a big bed when I was a big girl. But Jordy [brother] he's got a little bed'. Children's grasp of linguistic conventions like tense can be tentative at this age, and this may be reflected in Emma's use of the past tense to refer to herself as a 'big girl'. It also suggests, though, that narrating oneself as *having been* is an important part of recognising oneself as a temporal subject.

The passage of a bed from Emma to her little brother illustrates that a child's sense of temporality is often relational. Time brings the acquisition of things by some that are relinquished by others. We also see this in Sam's explanation of how he came to be the owner of a set of four metal matchbox-style cars:

Sam: Those are my old, old daddy's cars. My daddy's cars.
Researcher: Did you say this car belonged to your daddy?
Sam: And the other cars belong to my daddy too.
Researcher: Right. So how long has your daddy had these cars?
Sam: He had it when he was a little boy. He was little, and I have them.

The cars represent for Sam his father's past as a child; being a little boy means having these little cars. The link between Sam's father's past and Sam's present is materialised in Sam's current possession of the cars. When Sam looks into the future, he does not imagine himself as still possessing these toy cars. Clearly, his father had relinquished them, which suggests to Sam that they are not an adult kind of possession:

Researcher: So what are you going to do with these cars?
Sam: I'm going to keep them.
Researcher: You're going to keep them until you're a grown-up?
Sam: No.
Researcher: No?
Sam: Will chuck them out.

The inevitability of having to relinquish or 'grow out of' possessions seemed to be compensated for, to some extent, by the prospect of acquiring new possessions. Like many children, Celine's special object was her teddy. However, while she was clearly attached to her toy, she anticipated having to detach from it in the future:

Researcher: And what are you going to do with your teddy when you're a big girl?
Celine: My mum's gonna chuck it out.
Researcher: How will you feel about that? Is that fine?
Celine: Hmm.
Researcher: And are you going to have different things then?
Celine: I might have an iPod and a DS.

Celine imagines the future acquisition of digital devices as interrelated with the loss of her childhood toy. Her mother appears in the narrative as an agentic figure with the power to determine what possessions Celine will keep. In the process, her mother is instrumental in determining when Celine will transition from infant to childhood, a change of status which is signalled through her possessions.

Sticky Bombs at the Gun Shop

The observational research referred to earlier in this chapter had shown that shopping is a negotiated activity in which adults maintain control, shaping children's participation with more or less agency depending on the adult's agenda. The child interviews confirmed that young children's experience of shopping is as much about realising the limits of their choices as it is about acquiring what they wish to have.

Milly, May and Amy were interviewed together. The three girls were discussing Christmas presents they had received in the context of being asked what they would like their kindergarten to purchase:

Milly: I wanted a pretty Snow White, and Santa got it for me.
Teacher: You wanted a pretty Snow White, and Santa already got that for you. Wow, you'll have to think of something else to get for kindy then.
May: I want a toy that has an elf, and it has a singing thing that you take … [unclear] is Elsa.
Researcher: Right, that sounds like a lot of fun.
May: Because I seen it, and it was too much money.
Researcher: It was too much money; well sometimes things are a bit too much money, aren't they?
Amy: If you go to the cheap shop.
Researcher: Yeah?
Amy: Everything's really cheap.

These children express a range of relations to consumption. Milly has been encouraged to subscribe to the Santa narrative in which a mythical character bestows children with gifts at Christmas. May, however, appears to be aware that Christmas presents are purchased from shops and given by parents. She makes a link between her parents' financial capability and the decision not to purchase her preferred gift. Amy seems to understand that shops exist in a market and offer different price points. All of these children experience agency as consumers, whether it be in expressing a want, being party to a dialogue about choices and resources or developing knowledge of consumer options in the marketplace. However all are also participating within social relations in which an adult is shaping and limiting their agency. As well, both child and adult in a family are constrained and enabled by their own resources and the affordances of local spaces (none of these children spoke of shopping online).

It is important to recognise that shopping functions both as a practical experience and as a form of imaginary for children. Further, these different meanings of shopping are associated with different forms of agency and carry different potentials for learning and development. As imaginary shoppers, children are able to create scenarios in which outcomes are more in line their wishes. In the interviews, some children evoked the experience of shopping as a means to imaginatively gain access to things they were denied in actuality. In Tyrone's case, this was a pet dog:

Tyrone: My mum doesn't buy dogs because we're at a new house and no-one won't allow us.
Researcher: Oh, so you would really like to have a dog?

Tyrone:	But [at] our old house, mum doesn't even give us a dog too.
Researcher:	Your mum doesn't give you a dog, so I guess you've probably tried to ask for one?
Tyrone:	Yeah I did.

In this passage, Tyrone was not only reporting that he could not have a dog but was considering and evaluating his mother's reasons. Tyrone reflected back on the fact that he was not allowed to have a dog in his previous house, which might have suggested to him that it was actually his mum rather than the current landlord who was exercising power in banning his ownership of a pet. However, Tyrone went on to imaginatively narrate a situation in which he, as a consumer, could purchase a dog:

Tyrone:	I'd, I'd go in the dog shop.
Researcher:	You would go in the dog shop and get a dog and then you'd have one?
Tyrone:	Yeah and I'd get some, some pillows and—
Researcher:	Things to make the dog comfortable?
Tyrone:	Yeah and I'll give the dog a blanket too. And I'll like a cat too, but the dog and the cat might fight.
Researcher:	They might and then what?
Tyrone:	Feed them both.

Tyrone's town is home to a very large pet shop which is located in a prominent position on the main highway. On a bus tour of the town, related to the kindergarten's place-based learning programme, the children had passed this shop. It is not known whether Tyrone had ever been inside; however, he seemed to be aware that such an outlet provided not only pets but pet care products such as bedding. Tyrone's imaginary scenario of consumption was associated not just with the idea of possession but with the identity of pet owner, entailing responsibility to provide shelter and food. In his consumption narrative, we gain insight into a young boy's investment in an idea of himself as nurturing, careful and problem-solving.

For Kane and Keith, the prohibited possession took the form of guns. Their co-constructed scenario made sense in a kindergarten context where any form of gun play is disallowed. Yet, in this town with its rural hinterland, recreational hunting as well as professional use of guns in farming is part of community life. At the time of writing, two gun shops supplied local people with their shooting equipment. The children had been asked to draw maps of the town and include their favourite places. The two boys had collaborated in producing very similar maps, each including a gun shop, clearly labelled. However, when the researcher invited Kane to talk about this feature, he clammed up, despite having been quite talkative so far:

Researcher:	So you were saying, 'Look at my gun shop'. So this is a picture—can you explain this to me, because I wasn't there when you drew it. Can you tell me all about this picture?
Kane:	Oh ….
Researcher:	Oh, you don't want to tell me? That's alright. But then I might have to guess. So okay, I'm going to start guessing. Are these windows?
Kane:	No, they're bombs—sticky bombs.
Researcher:	Sticky bombs. And does that mean they're going to blow up?
Kane:	Yeah.

Kane's reticence might have been related to his awareness of the prohibited nature of the topic. Indeed, at one point in the interview, the kindergarten teacher expressed the view that she would 'feel a bit scared living in a place with guns and bombs' and tried to turn the topic to sports. With some further encouragement from the researcher, Kane became more verbal in describing the place the two boys had created on their maps. It became clear that the gun shop was one element in a dramatic imaginary domain:

Researcher:	So is this your town that you would like to live in?
Kane:	Yes.
Researcher:	Yes. What's so great about living in this town?
Kane:	It's a bomb place.
Researcher:	And that would be exciting?
Kane:	And it's all smashed up.
Researcher:	And it's all smashed up? So it's a bit like being in a movie?
Kane:	Yes.

This somewhat apocalyptic scenario was reminiscent of a setting for a movie or digital game. It soon transpired that gaming was an element in the two boys' shared experience and was being woven into their narrative. They both mentioned a game called 'Splatoon' which is a digital version of paintballing, in which opponents are 'splatted' with paint and then 'die'. This game was also banned at their kindergarten, and even hearing about it was evidently making the kindergarten teacher uncomfortable, judging from her frowns.

While the boys' bomb-ravaged town was clearly an imaginary space, their talk also made reference to actual ownership of toy weapons. Keith said he was 'allowed to have fake guns and fake bullets' and that he 'used to have nerf guns, but we lost them'. Nerf guns, also called blasters, shoot foam darts and are widely available in popular stores like Target. So, real as well as imagined consumption worked together to enable Kane and Keith to take up the practice and identity of combatants in weapons-oriented play scenarios.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by referring to the resistance within early childhood education to engaging with children as participants in consumer culture. There are exceptions, for instance the work of Jackie Marsh and Pat Thomson (2001) in developing 'literacy boxes' that include toys as well as books. Ethnographic work with children has also shown the complex way in which they routinely weave elements from popular culture, peer culture, everyday life and school culture into written and spoken texts (Dyson 1993, 1997; Wohlwend 2009a, b). However, for the most part, this work has failed to gain mainstream acceptance. The belief that children need to be protected from consumer culture remains strong.

This chapter has taken up an alternative view of children's consumption that locates it within social relations that involve continual negotiation between desires

and resources. Through participating in these negotiations, children learn a lot more than simply to want what marketers and retailers hope they will want. Indeed, children learn how to operate within the limits of their power, using not only their practical capabilities but their creative and representational skills to enter into the role of consumer, in all its dimensions.

From this perspective, if we want to understand children as learners, we should also be interested in them as consumers. Making room for the exploration of consumer culture within the early childhood curriculum and learning activities is justified. If this is to be done, however, it needs to be within a framework that is open, flexible and responsive to children's diverse experiences rather than driven by a moral agenda which excludes certain kinds of experiences. This could involve critiquing normative models of development which represent rational choice making as a characteristic of maturity and position children as unable to distinguish between needs and wants. It might involve recognising that adults, as well as children, negotiate consumption in the context of limited resources and have recourse to imagination and play as forms of vicarious participation.

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Chapter 10
Learning Around Iconic Buildings: Maps of Experience in the Making

Gabriele Budach

Introduction

In this chapter I look at place-based learning and how it unfolds around engagement with iconic buildings. The analysis is based on observations involving children and adults whom I met through a 6-year-long ethnographic research project in a bilingual German-Italian primary school programme in Frankfurt, Germany. My initial focus during data collection (2003–2008) was on traditional literacy practices involving reading and writing in more than one language. The focus gradually shifted towards a broader view of learning and an engagement with space using a geo-semiotic perspective (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Scollon and Scollon 2003; Nichols 2011; Lou 2014) as I examined how classroom-based learning connected with the wider physical and geographical space that made up the social and emotional world of the children and their families. I went back to my data and noticed a variety of activities in which children and adults interacted with the built environment of the city.

I noticed that iconic buildings, such as the Tower of Pisa, featured as a recurrent theme in the children's productions. This confirmed that buildings played an important role in how children identified and connected with the material world surrounding them. On closer examination, it became apparent that important social meanings emerged from these encounters. At first, it seemed that the children's productions echoed meanings that the adult world attributes to iconic buildings. However, the observed data also revealed other voices and interests than those promoted by leading agents of nation-states or institutions of corporate capitalism. Therefore, looking more closely at how people—children and adults—engage with material culture and iconic buildings seemed a worthwhile and interesting undertaking.

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In this context, I understand 'engagement' as a multimodal interaction (Kress 2013, p. 130) which emerges from the encounters of humans with, in this case, structures of the built environment. These encounters involve seeing, talking, listening, walking or handling things or, in other words, different modes of participation and expression. The multimodal aspect and nature of the engagement is very important here, because, as I will show, the distinctive affordances of different modes will have an important impact on how social meaning is being created and what kinds of meanings emerge.

What I am going to explore here is how the *engagement* of individuals with iconic buildings can disrupt dominant meanings, such as those circulated by tourist industries and toy manufacturers. I am interested in discovering what other meanings emerge when people engage with the same iconic buildings but when they do so in different ways and with different intentions. I am interested in discovering, for instance, what meanings can be derived from alternative readings of history or from creative play that unfolds around factory-designed representations of history. More generally, I am interested in understanding how engaging with iconic buildings— either as life-size objects or in toy format—can open up new and different ways of seeing, experiencing and mapping history through personal experience. This perspective can also be a methodological tool that can give voice to people whose history has been erased.

Two sites of engagement are under examination. First is a guided tour through the city of Frankfurt during which parents, teachers and researchers were led by a tour guide who highlighted the (unrecognised) contribution of Italians to the city's development and wellbeing. Second is a bilingual project which involved primary school children drawing from their engagement with the world of commercially produced toys, as a background for creating their own interpretations of time, place, space and history in action. The children were asked to reflect on, and draw, things that reminded them of Italy in the city of Frankfurt. This activity was followed by an interview which aimed to explore these connections with place in more depth.

Looking from a social semiotic perspective, the observed encounters can be interpreted as learning, since Kress (2013) describes all learning as 'meaning-*making* in processes of interaction as communication' (p. 130). In relation to learning environments, he argues: 'All environments of communication are also environments of learning … any aspect of daily life, any aspect or feature can, potentially, be construed as a *prompt* for interpretation' (Kress 2013, pp. 121–122).

The chapter also adds to previous studies on the role of objects and language in human interaction (Budach et al. 2015). It highlights the value of such a perspective for studies in sociolinguistics and education (Pahl and Rowsell 2003) and encourages us, researchers and pedagogues, to recognise engagement with objects as a pedagogical resource that favours experiential learning and the exploration of modal affordances to design learning content. This is important, finally, as it can help people to develop new capacities of seeing, doing and understanding a world that is complex and multifold and where uniform, simplistic answers are often insufficient and sometimes dangerous.

Iconic Buildings in Narratives of Belonging

Iconic, in general, refers to events, people and/or objects that are famous within the fields in question (e.g. fashion or sport) and have special symbolic/aesthetic significance attached to them. Icons are famous not simply for being famous, as is the case for various forms of celebrity, but famous for possessing specific symbolic/aesthetic qualities (Sklair 2010). Iconic buildings—such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Sydney Opera House, the Tower Bridge in London or the Brandenburg Portal in Berlin—mark the identity of a place, a city, its people, a nation or a certain way of life. As images of these landmarks are being circulated widely, iconic buildings also often have a high brand value for local and global tourist industries (Riza et al. 2012). However, what counts as an icon and for whom may vary considerably among different groups of people, and what is seen as a representation of a particular set of values or way of life may be contested. This chapter aims to show that complex and nuanced social meanings are constructed around iconic buildings that can unfold in activities of different types.

The chapter focuses on two iconic buildings which appeared in the data as sites around which complex social meanings unfolded: the city hall in Frankfurt, called the 'Römer' [the Roman], and the Colosseum in Rome. Both can be considered public icons based on Sklair's (2005) distinction between professional icons that have value for specialist audiences (such as architects) and public icons that have local, national or global value for general audiences. Moreover, they are historical icons in contrast to contemporary icons as their history goes back many centuries (Sklair 2005, p. 485). Exploring meaning-making around these buildings can show the role buildings can play in constructing narratives of local histories that are told from different perspectives. In this project, I have been interested in the perspective of cultural minorities. Beyond the meanings that they take on as embedded parts of local infrastructure, icons can also play a role in the negotiation of trans-local identities and perceptions of space.

The Römer as Icon

The Römer is without a doubt Frankfurt's most famous building. It is at the top of the list of landmarks on a tourist map publicised by the tourism office of the city of Frankfurt (Fig. 10.1). It also figures prominently on postcards, the cover of tourist guides, and the logos of the city, local community organisations and sports clubs, and it is widely recognised by tourists and potential visitors to the city. In line with Dovey's (1999) statement, this seems to confirm that, 'Like corporations without logos, cities without icons are not in the market' (p. 158).

Fig. 10.1 Tourist map published by the city of Frankfurt (http://www.orangesmile.com/common/img_city_maps/frankfurt-am-main-map-0.jpg)

The city's website includes the following statement about the building's history and social meaning:

> The Frankfurt city hall is one of the most beautiful and oldest of the Republic. For more than 600 years the 'Römer' has been the seat of government where emperors went in and out, and (more recently) football stars cheer the crowds from its balcony … On the 11 March 1405, a Wednesday, the city council of Frankfurt purchased the two houses 'Zum Römer' [The Roman] and 'Zum Goldenen Schwan' [The Golden Swan] for 800 Gulden. Since then the 'Römer' has been Frankfurt's city hall … The Römer is not only important for the city, but also has national importance. It became the 'hus des riches' [house of rich people] where negotiations preceding the election of German kings and emperors took place. The national assembly in 1848 was originally planned to convene in the 'Kaisersaal' [hall of emperors and part of the building] before having to move to Paul's Church due to a lack of space [the assembly had up to 800 participants]. Today the 'Römer' hosts the most sought after balcony of the country. (Stadt Frankfurt am Main n.d.-a)

While much more detailed accounts of the building's history exist (e.g. Herbers and Neuhaus 2005), this relatively short statement is interesting as it presents what is seen as the essential qualities of the site from the perspective of the city, identifying its distinctive and outstanding character. In this text the building is recognised as a symbol of power for both the city of Frankfurt and the German nation. The building's history, as recounted on the city's official website, starts in 1405 with the purchase of the building by members of the city council, powerful people who represented the ruling class of the city at the time. It is further related to key political events of German history on a larger scale, namely, the election of kings and emperors of the so-called Holy Roman Empire of German Nations which existed from the ninth century until 1806 and included a number of small- and midsized states which convened under the administrative roof of that conglomerate. This major event took place in Frankfurt after a ruling emperor died, and it was driven by decision-makers representing the wealthy and powerful, distinguished aristocrats, electors of the emperor and their entourage.

Another key date in German history mentioned in the text is the first meeting of the National Assembly in 1848, which is presented by mainstream historiography as the beginning of a path towards representative democracy and nation-building. While the event in 1848, again, mainly involved members of the educated bourgeois elite and state bureaucracy, it is the mention of the 'Römer' hosting the most famous balcony in the country that finally defines the building as a place of the people. It is from this place that the German national football team greets the large crowds gathering after an important international tournament, right after landing at Frankfurt international airport and before moving on to other places for celebration. In this text we see how the building is constructed as a site that is intimately related to German local and national history, its iconic character residing in its architectural beauty, age, political function and, more recently, its symbolic power to connect with people through football as an iconic sport that is followed passionately by millions of German fans. Deriving its symbolic meaning mainly from its role in history,

Fig. 10.2 The Römer (https://pixabay.com/de/frankfurt-stadtzentrum-646808/)

the building clearly falls under the category of pre-global icons, which Sklair (2006) describes in the following terms:

> the production and representation of architectural icons in the pre-global era (roughly before the 1950s) were mainly driven by those who controlled the state and/or religion, whereas the dominant forms of architectural iconicity for the global era are increasingly driven by those who own and control the corporate sector. Iconicity in architecture is a resource in struggles for meaning and, by implication, for power. (p. 21)

Icons created in the global era—namely the skyline of high-rise buildings that are competing with the Römer for the position of the city's leading icon—can be found just around the corner in the bank and financial district, marked on the tourist map with number 7. While comparing icons and the meanings they produce across temporal eras is a fascinating endeavour, this paper solely focuses on the two chosen buildings from the pre-global era (Fig. 10.2).

The Colosseum as Icon

The Colosseum is the landmark par excellence of Rome and far more famous around the world than its Frankfurt homologue (Teichmann 2011). A leading website selling tickets to international tourists (150,000 between January and June 2016) offers the following information:

> The Colosseum or Coliseum is today the most recognisable of Rome's Classical buildings. Even 2000 years after it was built, and despite centuries when the abandoned building was pillaged for building materials, it is instantly recognisable ... a Classical template for the stadia of today. It was the first permanent amphitheatre to be raised in Rome, and the most impressive arena the Classical world had yet seen. And with accommodation for 60,000 seated and 10,000 standing, all of whom could enter and leave in a matter of minutes, courtesy of 80 entrances, this is a structure that the designers of modern sports stadia could learn from. The name Colosseum is in fact a much later addition. It was originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, and was conceived as a peculiarly Roman political gesture ... a gift from a new dynasty of Roman emperors to a populace kept happy by bread and circuses. (Tickitaly 2017)

From the text we read that the unique character of the building lies in its global recognisability, which privileges it over all other classical buildings in Rome, despite its incompleteness and state of ruin. In contrast to the Römer in Frankfurt, the text does not highlight the building's value as a landmark of national Italian history—but rather its global or universal value as the first permanent amphitheatre which served as a blueprint for stadiums around the world and could even be held up as a model for safety regulation standards in contemporary stadiums.

Sklair (2010) distinguishes 'between two contrasting meanings of iconic in architecture, namely the stereotypical copy, like the iconic Palladian villa or iconic mosque (Iconic I) and something unique as in unique selling point (Iconic II)' (p. 136). In the case of the Colosseum, both meanings are brought into play. The building is presented as the original of all stadia and the prototype of many of its copies around the world. Its design is lauded by the authors as efficient and well-thought-out and recommended as a model fit for purpose even for today's architects. It also serves the second meaning as a unique selling point. Like the Römer in Frankfurt, the description also hints at uncertainty about the name Colosseum and its origin. While the Colosseum is another excellent example of monarchic power and representational architecture of the wealthy and powerful, like the Römer, a line can be drawn to the common people when the text identifies the building as 'a gift from a new dynasty of Roman emperors' intended to keep a populace 'happy by bread and circuses'. While entertainment here is not quite the same as footballers greeting the crowd from a balcony, it is interesting to see how ownership by the common people seems to be a prerequisite for a building to function as an icon that is recognised as a public place and meaningful to the common people.

Sites of Engagement: The City Tour

In what follows I will explain how participating in an alternative guided city tour led me to foreground and produce a different reading of the city's history and major icon, the Römer. Using the conceptual framework of geo-semiotics (Scollon and Scollon 2003), the experience of the tour can be described as a complex semiotic system, whereby three types of dimensions intersect. There is the *interactional order* focusing on how 'humans form social arrangements and produce social

interactions among themselves' (Scollon and Scollon 2003, p. 7). In our case, this aspect focuses on the participants of the tour, particularly the guide, a Russian-born woman in her late 40s who studied history at the University of Frankfurt and who specialises in offering thematic guided walks that highlight the contributions of particular ethnic groups to the city's history (e.g. 'Italians in Frankfurt' or 'the Dutch in Frankfurt'). Then, there were the participants of the tour, 15 adults who were either teachers or parents from the bilingual German-Italian school project and some colleagues from the University of Frankfurt. It was a self-selected audience of those who shared a particular interest in a group of people of Italian heritage living and working in Frankfurt. A major organising system of the *interactional order* was discoursed which was delivered in the form of talk by the guide. While language was obviously important, the verbal mode was embedded in an interaction that intersected with the second dimension, *visual semiotics* (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). This refers to visible artefacts (such as signs and maps) which also shaped meaning-making and discovery throughout the tour. The third dimension is *place semiotics*, a meaning system which arose directly from the material environment including the built structures. A last dimension that needs to be added was the activity of walking as an experience (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) that physically connected the individuals with the places they visited along the tour. Listening to the tour guide's explanations and moving from one site of the tour to the next, participants were tracing a new kind of path. Completed through movement and walking, this experience represented a very special frame for talk around an object (Budach et al. 2015)—in this case a building—in which the emerging narrative had a notable and marked impact on the participants.

The proposed tour differed from the selection of buildings suggested on the official tourist map of the city. The selection of buildings was underpinned by a logic that aimed to foreground the activity and achievement of people from an Italian background and at the same time deconstruct the narrative role of Germans as the driving force responsible for the city's prosperity as a world-leading centre of trade. Some of its highlights were included (the Römer and the cathedral), while others were excluded (the banking district and the popular amusement area of Sachsenhausen). Sites that were added included the ruins of a Roman settlement, an example of modern Italian signature architecture and the remains of the Palace of Thurn and Taxis, owned by a famous aristocratic Italian family which owned a postal company and possessed the exclusive right to transport mail for the Vatican. For reasons of space, this last part of the tour will not be discussed.

Our walk began at a site which is not on the official tourist map located between the 'Römer' (no. 1) and the 'cathedral' (no. 2). Our attention was drawn to the ruins of a city bath built by the Romans in the first century. The guide pointed out: 'Italians will instantly recognise this as an Italian bath', thereby drawing a direct line between classical Rome, Italians living today and their (presumed) knowledge of what a Roman/Italian bath should look like. More importantly, the discovery of this early Roman settlement during building works in 1994 caused the city's history and origin to be rewritten. The tour guide explained:

> For a long time the city's year of birth was set in 794 when it was first mentioned in writing by Charlemagne who called here the synod. Without this archaeological discovery nobody would ever have linked the emergence of the city with the presence of the Romans.

This is noteworthy as Charlemagne is treated in many ways as a founding figure of the city, his status marked by a massive statue standing in front of the city's historical museum. While nineteenth-century archaeologists had already found evidence of Roman construction at the same location, it was soon built over to accommodate the rapid growth of the city. As a consequence, they were not explored any further or considered worthy of inclusion in the founding myth of the city. After 1994, an archaeological garden was established to make the Roman heritage visible to the public—but still not included in the list of important landmarks.

The next site of our tour was the cathedral, a Catholic church which hosts, as the guide explained, the only reliquary possessed by a Frankfurt church. Here, a surprising connection with the Italian community emerged. Despite becoming Lutheran in 1555, the city still needed a Catholic church to administer the election and coronation procedures for the new emperor. Making the connection to the Italians in Frankfurt, the guide explained:

> We talk about the seventeenth century. The religious wars were ravaging in Europe. You are an Italian here in a Lutheran city. You get a beautiful, massive church. What do you do? What do you need to do? And what are you in a position to do? You have to maintain it. This was an immensely honourable but costly task for the Italian community. They made up 10 per cent of the city's people.

This quotation is interesting as it demonstrates that Italians, mostly merchants and successful business people, counted among the wealthiest people of the city who could afford such a costly task as maintaining an enormous building. It highlights their socio-economic status and points to their affiliation with the Catholic religion that they continued to be allowed to practice in a Lutheran city. However, the offer of religious freedom did not come for free and fitted comfortably with the city's need to maintain a Catholic church for enthronement ceremonies. The tour guide pointed out that the city generated enormous income from the enthronement business, which attracted many thousands of people who needed administering and accommodating. Circumstances suggest that the responsibility for maintaining the church had probably been imposed on the Italian community by the city council as the price of guaranteeing their status as citizens and their safety as a minority at a time when religious freedom was not the order of the day. Among the names of responsible Italian benefactors in Frankfurt appear the parents of the literary figures brother and sister Brentano, often mentioned in German literature lessons in schools. Despite their evidently Italian name, their Italian heritage is rarely if ever noted.

After visiting the cathedral, we made our way to a building erected in the 1990s and designed by the Florentine architect Adolfo Natalini, whose house is called 'tree of friendship'. Originally, his plan included a model of a tree with golden branches and leaves reaching over a ventilation tunnel. As the city found the project too costly, only a few golden glazed mosaic stones were realised. This point of the tour illustrated the observation that projects of contemporary architecture in the

making often raise debate in which aesthetic, financial and symbolic aspects are intermingled (see also Sklair 2010). After this short excursion into the world of modern signature architecture, we finally reached the Römer, a key site and the main focus of our exploration in this chapter.

Here, our guide noted that, like the story of the origin of the city which usually begins with Charlemagne, the history of the Römer tends to be told from 1405 onwards, the date at which the city council purchased the building. Indeed, in many of the available guide books, what is actually told is not the history of the building but rather the history of the institution—the city hall—hosted by it now.

A more nuanced account of the origin of the building, and in particular of its name, is offered on the city's website in an article based on an interview with the historian Silke Wustmann titled 'Why is the Römer called Römer?' Let us have a look at her viewpoints first before turning to our tour guide's explanation. Wustmann first rules out some popular layperson's theories, including that the name was linked to previous settlement by ancient Romans. She favours the following explanation:

> It certainly has to do with the fair which was held on the Römerberg [the area around the Römer] during the Middle Ages. Italian merchants showcased their products on the ground floor and were living on the upper floor. 'Rom' was a synonym for the whole of Italy. People during the Middle Ages who thought of Italy instinctively thought of Rome as the place of the Pope … It could also be that the owner of the house came from Italy and maintained trade connections across the Alps … It will not be possible to clarify this with certainty. But it is 99.9 per cent certain that it was Italian merchants. (Stadt Frankfurt am Main n.d.-b)

Our tour guide stated that the first owner of the building was an Italian merchant, who commissioned its construction and used it as a base for his trading missions during fairs in Frankfurt, known as a central marketplace in Europe since the Middle Ages. In her account, the house's history began in the thirteenth century, long before the date that official records of the city hall promote. At all the historical buildings that were part of the tour, the guide highlighted the original contribution of Italians to which she attributed some status as part of a 'founding act', helping to make Frankfurt into what it is and what it claims to stand for today: an international place of trade and finance with a global profile.

For the author, who has lived in Frankfurt for 11 years and had learnt about the city on a variety of guided tours, this tour was a revelation. After the tour, discussion with some participants continued in a café, and everyone highlighted how surprised they were at the discoveries they had made. The tour had changed their view of both Italians and the city's buildings where Italians had been 'at work' in the past. The tour highlighted the contribution of Italians in new and unexpected ways. It also revealed nuanced aspects of history that are often submerged or hidden under a narrative that seeks to build national history and Germanness. It demonstrated that even iconic buildings whose meanings are defined in particular ways to market a city and its history can be used to tell a different story about people whose contributions tend to be silenced or removed from the official record.

Walking enhanced the experience of hearing and taking in the new story. Not only did the words offered by the tour guide function as an important organising system (Scollon and Scollon 2003), the experience of standing in front of a building or walking inside a place one had seen, visited and walked about many times before, in a hasty or leisurely manner, also created a particular effect. The places were re-examined with renewed attention, and the narrative offered by the guide helped create a new image of the observed buildings. The activities of people were projected onto the material sites, buildings, ruins or well-kept prestigious interiors, thereby creating a vivid image of these usually silenced actors and depicting in colourful and memorable terms what their lives and fortunes in this city may have been.

This tour experience brings to mind what Sheets-Johnstone (1999, 2010) has termed 'thinking in movement'. This is more than just setting up a relation of correspondence between subjectivity and the material world but rather 'making one's way *through* a world-in-formation' (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, p. 2). While walking often figures in ethnographic field notes, it is usually sidelined when it comes to explaining what really matters. The combination of walking and listening—bodily experience and verbal input interspersed with questions and bits of conversation with the participants—created a unique experience involving the body and the mind. Hence, 'conversation en route' encouraged a form of 'thinking in movement' which emerged as a tangible experience and lived spatial practice for the participants. This experience created a sense of story that enhanced an understanding of the role, fate, actions and identities of a group, Italians in Frankfurt, as emplaced and anchored into concrete places of the city. This also resonates with what Ingold and Vergunst (2008) say about walking: it 'validates through experience and connects the mental and the material in new ways' (p. 6). Through walk accompanied by talk, a new pathway of meaning-making was emerging connecting standard tour sites and new ones. This also resembled a procedure of organised sampling, which is shared with field sciences and cartography; it makes the 'unknown known by assembling data from different locations into a comprehensive survey' (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, p. 6). This operation produced a new type of social geography with alternative social actors in a starring role that could be mapped onto the more mainstream touristic geography, adding another layer of meaning and based on alternative principles of selection which guided the practice of mapping (see Fig. 10.3 below).

From a geo-semiotic perspective (Scollon and Scollon 2003), the city walk appears as a complex semiotic system in which social relations and experiences of the visual and material intersect. But as well, highlighting a focus on walking (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) and 'thinking in movement' (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, 2010), the guided city walk could be seen as an embodied practice reshaping individual social geographies and collective ones, putting on the map pathways of interconnected social spaces that would otherwise be perceived as disconnected.
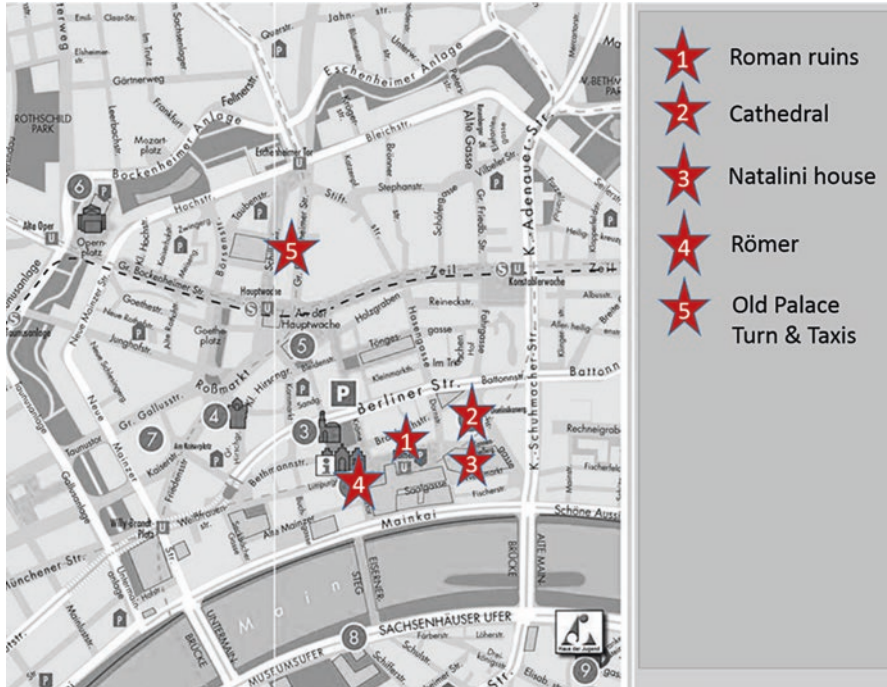
Fig. 10.3 Map of the guided tour 'Italians in Frankfurt'

Sites of Engagement: Children's Art and Play

The context in which the second set of project data was gathered is quite remote from Rome and the birthplace of the original of all stadiums, the Colosseum. The activity took place at the school and children were asked to make a drawing of things that reminded them of Italy and Italian things in Frankfurt. Different items, places and people were depicted by the children: public places, pizzerias, restaurants, shops or the market where children practised Italian with Italian-speaking waiters and shopkeepers or where they met with family, cousins, friends or other members of the local Italian community. Children also depicted places in other geographical locations: in Italy, Turkey, Croatia or Australia, particularly if they had mixed family backgrounds and felt an association with wider transnational family networks in different geographical parts of the world. While these complex relations children represented in their drawings are highly significant and also underlie the piece of data under examination here, they cannot be analysed fully as part of this chapter. However, it is important to keep them in mind as the complex background of trans-local orientation to which children referred while carrying out the task and which were an important part of how they situated themselves, their lives and identities, transcending boundaries of place and states.
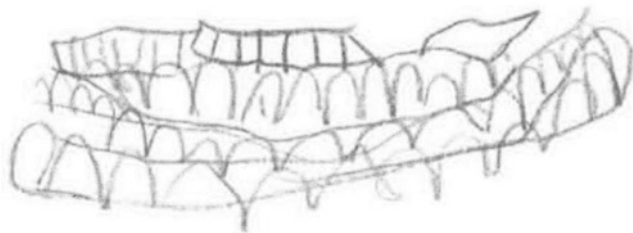
Fig. 10.4 Fabrizio's drawing of the Colosseum

The drawing below (originally in yellow) shows what one of the children proposed in response to the task. He proudly showed it to me after finishing, and I was slightly puzzled for a moment, searching for some meaningful local reference in Frankfurt and its surroundings (Fig. 10.4).

Fabrizio told me that he had drawn the Colosseum, and we sat down with his classmate Claudio to talk more about their drawings. Claudio had drawn the Tower of Pisa, another iconic building, which also revealed interesting connections, but which will not be the focus of analysis here. The following conversation unfolded between the three of us (see English translation below):

G: Ah und warum das Kolosseum?
F: Hab ich von Playmobil. Ja das kommt von Italien, ich weiß schon dass das von Italien ist, aber—
C: Ja toll! Das kommt aus Frankreich.
F: Nein. Ich weiß nicht woher es kommt, eigentlich hat es mir der Weihnachtsmann gebracht.
C: Also dann kommt es aus Weihnachtsmannland.
G: Ah, and why the Colosseum?
F: This is from Playmobil. Yeah, this comes from Italy, I know that this is from Italy, but—
C: Yeah great! This comes from France.
F: No. I don't know where it comes from. Santa Claus brought it for me.
C: OK, then it comes from Santa Claus land.

This sequence is quite intriguing and includes a number of place names that initially are hard to connect with the Colosseum. Asked about why Fabrizio drew the Colosseum, he first offered a reference to play and Playmobil, a gift he received for Christmas. Playmobil is one of the world's largest toy companies with headquarters in Zindorf near Nuremberg in Germany and production sites in Germany and Malta (Szabo and Köpper 2014). At the centre of the play system are 7.5 cm high figures made from plastic, with movable hands, arms, legs and heads; first brought onto the market in 1974 as knights, (American) 'Indians' and building workers. Up to a hundred million figures are sold every year. In the 1980s, themes such as safari world, electric railway, school and kindergarten, seafaring and winter sports were introduced. Since 1977 Playmobil has claimed an explicitly educational mission and promotes its merchandise with the motto 'Spielen und Lernen' (playing and learning). On the back of its 1977 catalogue and referring to the knight's castle, the company explains that it wants to revive the past and educate children about history.
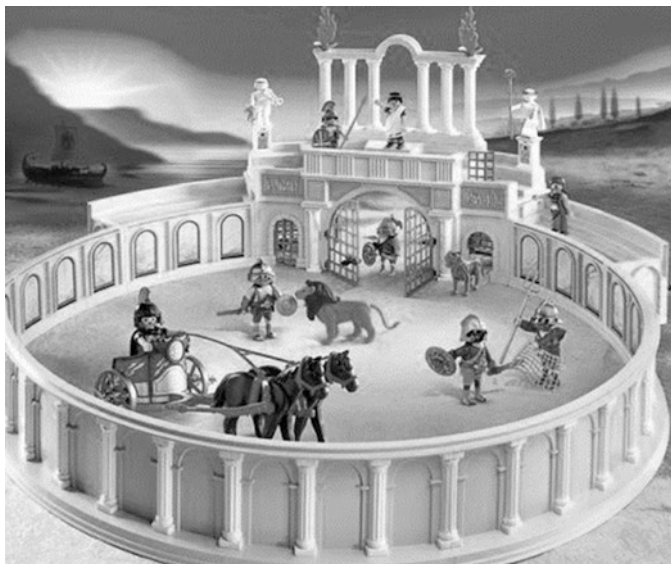
Fig. 10.5 Playmobil 'Colosseum' (https://pixabay.com/de/colosseum-ruine-rom-gladiatoren-123 5219/)

The knight's castle has remained a classic in German children's bedrooms and has evolved with more and more buildings and figures added over the years to form quite a detailed representation of medieval society. In 2010 the company published a 16-page booklet 'Grosses Wissen über die Ritter' (compendium of knights) aiming to present and explain the collection. Other historical themes were added after 2000: the Vikings in 2002, ancient Rome (and the Colosseum, our item in question) in 2006 and ancient Egypt in 2008. In 2015 a new product recycling older themes was launched, depicting the Romans conquering Egypt. This is the context in which Fabrizio's first reference to the 'Colosseum' needs to be understood (Fig. 10.5).

While Fabrizio explained that his toy model was from Playmobil, he quickly noted that, of course, he knew that the original Colosseum 'does come from' Rome. This is when Claudio kicked in offering another place of origin, France, which might come as a surprise to some connoisseurs of ancient history. In fact, we can note that two lines of reference intersected and became confused here in the conversation of the two boys. While Fabrizio was referring to the 'original' building situated in Rome, Claudio referred to one of its many copies related to the Playmobil context, namely, the Playmobil Fun Park near Paris.

There are Playmobil fun parks in Athens, Malta, Palm Beach Gardens (the USA) and Paris. With the installation of fun parks, Playmobil joined a worldwide trend in the tourism industry, as Milman (2001) noted: 'While ride-oriented amusement parks developed and gained their popularity at the turn of the century, theme parks are a relatively new entertainment concept that strive to create a fantasy atmosphere of another place or time' (p. 139).

At the centre of this strategy is the creation of an experience that is sold in addition to the products and services of companies. Pine and Gilmore (1998) define this commodified type of experience as follows: 'An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event' (p. 98). Experiences of this sort may have an educational value, broadly speaking, as they shape the knowledge of those who share and remember them. Claudio had been to the Playmobil Fun Park in Paris; this experience was therefore in the foreground of the knowledge he mobilised to situate the Colosseum in the discussion with his classmate.

In this setup, the distinction between original and copy and the importance of such a distinction was blurred. The Colosseum no longer needs to be in Rome; it can be anywhere. In this way an iconic building becomes delocalised and a trans-local semiotic resource that can be mobilised wherever it has used value, for instance, as part of another theme park. Transnational spaces help to facilitate this mobility. The use of architectural pastiche—the stitching together of different styles and references without the need to establish local relevance—is a hallmark of such spaces, as seen in examples like shopping malls and waterfront developments. Sklair explains that such spaces 'transcend' difference by incorporating transnational architectural signs:

> What makes them transnational is that they are designed to represent simultaneously one of the various global architectural styles recognized through the mass media as much as through direct experience by quite different communities of people … What is important here is the idea of transcending the very real differences that exist between geographical, ethnic and cultural communities, at 'home' and 'abroad'. (Sklair 2010, p. 139; see also Abaza 2001)

Also applicable to Playmobil fun parks is what Ritzer (2005, p. 91) calls 'consumption as enchantment', fitting well with the logic of an educational mission that consists of designing toy worlds to encourage the child's fantasy and creative play (Bachmann 2004). Interestingly, what these two children came to agree on as a source of knowledge was a terra incognita, a fantasy land far removed from daily local experience: Santa Claus Land. After all, it was Santa Claus who brought the present for Christmas; where he brought it from is left to mystery. Children do not always insist on defining the borderlines between real and imagined, between 'original' and 'copy'. Their world view includes local, trans-local and 'unreal' places connected by threads of knowledge and experience (Fig. 10.6).

The second transcript describes how Fabrizio plays with and around the concept of 'Colosseum'.

G: Und das Playmobil. Ist das ein ganzes Spiel nur Kolosseum?
F: Ein ganzes Spiel
G: Super, und sind da auch Figuren dabei?
F: Ja. Da sind vier Sklaven, Soldaten, und dann so eine Frau und Löwen und Tiger
G: Und was spielst du dann so damit?
F: Einmal hab ich alle meine Sachen genommen und damit ein riesiges Colosseum gemacht … wo die Figuren so festgenommen sind und dann müssen die so ausbrechen.
G: Ah die Sklaven haben einen Aufstand gemacht?

The Building in Rom
The original

The Funpark in Paris
One copy among many

playmobil
FunPark

The Playmobil Toy
Copy of the original

Santa Claus Land
Fictious land of origin

Fabrizio's drawing
of the colosseum
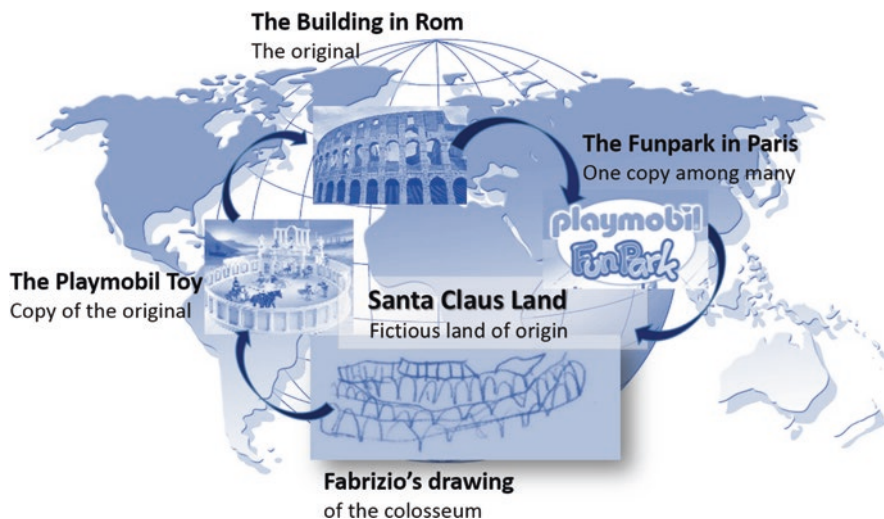
Fig. 10.6 Co-constructed mental map of locations of the Colosseum

> F: Es gab gar keine Sklaven. Es gab nur Star Wars Lego.
> G: And the Playmobil. Is this a whole play only Colosseum?
> F: A whole play.
> G: Great. Does this come with toy figures?
> F: Yes. There are four slaves, soldiers, and then a women, and lions and tigers.
> G: And what are you playing with it?
> F: Once I took all my things and built a huge Colosseum with it … where the toy figures were arrested and then had to break free.
> G: Ah and did the slaves organise an uprising?
> F: There were no slaves. Only Star Wars Lego.

First the researcher established that the 'Colosseum' to which Fabrizio referred is a whole integral package from Playmobil (see also Fig. 10.5). Fabrizio then specified the parts and figures he possessed, which were rather few in number. Asked about the kinds of things and scenes he played with his toys, he recalled one occasion of play when he created a 'huge' Colosseum and scene, where a cast of characters were all imprisoned. Maybe building on the knowledge that gladiators were slaves and did not fight in the arena out of their own free will, Fabrizio imagined it as a prison from which the captives were striving to break free. To stage the play he was intending, his number and range of Playmobil figures would probably have been insufficient.

He therefore repurposed other available 'manpower', namely, Star Wars figures from the rival company Lego—the other classic toy brand to be found in children's rooms around the world. This quotation demonstrates that children are creative players and do not hesitate to repurpose semiotic resources in ways that suit their intentions for their play. This seems a very understandable choice, also since the full kit of figures and other items such as wagons and horses belonging to the Colosseum Playmobil set (see Fig. 10.5) is very expensive to buy.

Recombination is not only practical; it also circumvents the consumerist logic of selling as many purpose-built figures as possible. In addition, it also demonstrates the independence and creative skill of the child's mind which transcends the purposes of play attached to the figures created by (adult) others and gives way to imaginative play in which Star Wars warriors and slaves can live, fight and be in solidarity with each other side by side.

Discussion

In what follows I will discuss how, in these cases, engagement with iconic buildings unfolded in multimodal encounters and how it led to the emergence of new social meanings which can be recognised as learning. The interactions also brought about the reshaping of social relationships through the mediation of an object: iconic buildings in this case. Finally, this led to the creation of new narratives that transgressed the logic of powerful discourses on historiography promoted by the nation-state or transnational companies.

In the first scenario, participants of the tour through Frankfurt's inner city engaged with real-size buildings that, for the most part, were known to them beforehand. The multimodal encounter was an immediate experience—lived in the here and now—that all participants were able to experience directly. The participants received new knowledge via the tour guide's explanation of the role of Italians in Frankfurt's past in an environment different from a classroom, namely, while being visually and spatially exposed to the buildings and immersed in the built environment that was being talked about. This immersion included, for instance, standing in front of the ruins, sitting on the benches inside the dome and raising one's eyes to the coat of arms of the Brentano family or walking around the Römer, appreciating first the façade and other symbols of magisterial power, such as the fountain of justice, and later the courtyard and wine cellar which powerfully evoked a merchant past. The guided tour thereby presented a particular form of engagement that shaped a specific multimodal, multisensorial experience. In this context, the new knowledge came alive and was projected onto the environment and buildings that participants experienced. The environment served, literally, as scenery in front of which historical action was staged in the participants' heads. Thereby this knowledge was also sinking into the building's own story, producing social meanings which can be revitalised, potentially, by all those who share it, on any subsequent visit to these buildings or while talking about the present one. This is similar to the process which the phenomenologist and philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1958) described as the sedimenting of meaning into an object and as a mechanism that plays an important role in the assembling and structuring of the cultural memory of community.

Living this multimodal experience also allowed new forms of connectivity to emerge. Experiencing space while hearing about people whose lives and activities had been disconnected from these places changed both the relationship to the buildings and the relationship to the people. Participants from an Italian background after

the tour felt that they had a longer historical connection with the city and deeper ancestral roots in Frankfurt than they had been aware of. The role of Italians in Germany's history is often reduced to the provision of human economic capital particularly with reference to the so-called 'Wirtschaftswunder' (economic miracle), when, after the Second World War, thousands of Italian migrant workers were contracted by bilateral state agreements to come to Germany and to work in the car factories of the Rhine-Main area. Relationships changed in different ways for different participants. Participants from a German background, like the author, felt enriched to have learnt about the role of a group that is usually neglected in the early historical narrative of the city.

Another level of connectivity was gained by movement and the experience of walking through space from building to building. This 'movement in making' gradually began to form a new trajectory in which the experiential traces of spatial movement and verbal narrative merged. In this way, walking while listening helped to build and incorporate a new geography of the city that the body will remember and that humans can reactivate in renewed encounters in the future. In sum, engaging with iconic buildings in this way helped participants to reconnect with people and the cityscape in new ways. In addition, the newly gained ability to appreciate and interpret particular details or design features on a façade or portals of a building can be interpreted as a sign of learning (Kress 2013). It can be read as a manifestation of this new connection that materialised from the contact and engagement of humans with material culture—here producing a new meaning valuing people and their 'work on the city', in a very literal material sense, as builders and maintainers of the city's built structures and, more metaphorically, as contributors to the city's growth and prosperity.

The outcome felt by many participants of the tour was a feeling of satisfaction. With the help of the tour guide, all of us had uncovered a hidden layer of the city's history and broadened the often narrow and monolithic narrative of national historiography. This raised our suspicion, which turned out to be well founded, that other groups of people had also been erased from Frankfurt's golden book; we later learnt that Dutch merchants and craftspeople played a similar role to Italians in the city's history. All participants who shared their impressions after the tour highlighted that they felt reconnected with Frankfurt as a multilingual, multicultural place and that this feeling was lively and quite different from what gets produced in the Sunday discourses of politicians who laud diversity in an attempt to evoke a harmonious vision of the future to be built. In fact, diversity and conviviality have also been features of the past, and it is worthwhile understanding how previous generations made it work.

In the second scenario, the participants—two second graders from an Italian-German bilingual programme and the researcher—engaged in a conversation that started unfolding from a drawing. It had been produced by one of the children in response to a task which required children to represent things that reminded them of Italy or Italian things in Frankfurt. The multimodal interaction, here, enabled a complex reconstitution of knowledge that drew on several layers of the participants' experiences prior to the interview. Engaging with an iconic building here was differ-

ent from the first scenario as we learnt about cultural practices in the daily life of the children outside of school, which they brought to the interview and used to negotiate meaning collectively. While in the first scenario, the guided tour, the tour guide's presentation was neither discussed abundantly nor challenged by the participants who took it in with interest and pleasure, in the second case, both children contributed their knowledge actively, being encouraged by the researcher and the interview situation, and negotiated meaning by making sense of both of their accounts.

The drawing which initiated the talk was done in yellow, reminiscent of the toy Colosseum rather than the real building which, after millennia of erosion from wind and rain, has turned from light-coloured sandstone to shades of grey and black. This path of crossing over between the world of toys and the real-life building was continued when the children debated the origin and local emplacement of the Colosseum—a question which produced multiple responses. The geographical starting point for Fabrizio, the toy's owner, was his bedroom in his Frankfurt home. Here, the yellow toy Colosseum belongs in a collection of objects which provide the background and figurative semiotic resources to inspire and facilitate the child's creative play.

The experience of place and activity in the home, then, interacted with another reference from the world of toys which was brought in by the other boy. He mentioned Paris as one of the places where Playmobil has opened a fun park in which the company recreates its toys, as life-sized or midsized buildings, to enhance the 'educational experience' under the guise of amusement. Rome was also mentioned as a possible location, but, surprisingly, decision-making between the two boys on the correct place of origin took a different turn. In an attempt to value their knowledge and experience as equal, Fabrizio, the owner of the toy, turned to his most immediate and personal knowledge about 'his Colosseum' to clarify the question. He called upon Santa Claus as the (fictitious) giver of the toy which prompted his classmate Claudio to evoke Santa Claus Land as the imagined origin of the benefactor. This proposition seemed to satisfy both of the boys and put an end to the discussion. I see this as an interesting example of how children negotiate their social relationships and how they deal with the contradicting interpretations that are offered by today's world in which claims for 'truth' are becoming more and more relative, dependent on individual experience and difficult to establish on a universal scale.

Another example of the transgression of boundaries between the 'real' and the 'imagined' emerged when Fabrizio explained how he plays with the Colosseum at home. It transpired that he uses the Colosseum as scenery and structural support on which he stages his play. However, in the child's play, the scenery becomes detached from (a specific) historical period, and the precise activity for which the toy has been purposely built (as conceived by the toy makers) takes on a cross-history, cross-genre, cross-spatial sort of play. It transcends boundaries and mixes typified semiotic resources to appear in a non-typified activity of play. This goes against the logic of Playmobil and its rival Lego, which both offer period- and activity-specific toy figures with a high level of individualisation and functional specification, implying that a more diversified and complex toolkit for play also allows for a more

sophisticated, authentic and educationally valuable experience. Repurposing his available armour of figures, Fabrizio practises a kind of play which can be seen as subverting the educational and commercial efforts of toy companies.

In addition, the commercial products offer a specific interpretation of world history and, by designing a range of buildings and figures, create a vision that is sold (and potentially implemented) internationally, across cultures and in children's rooms across the globe. While many children love Playmobil and become influenced by the politics and aesthetics these toys offer and portray, it also appears that children do not feel compelled to subscribe to the proposed logic completely and still create their own variants of play. These, as we see, produce performances of history which may be closer to the lived reality of the children, in which mixing—here in terms of time periods, genres, characters and narratives—is the order of the day, rather than playing according to the rules of toy companies that propose a more purified and homogenous vision of history, as is also done, in a way, by historiographies of the nation.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the idea that meaning-making around iconic buildings can be a worthwhile activity as part of city learning. Starting from the assumption that iconic buildings are important semiotic resources in discourses of city branding and marketing, in this chapter I aimed to show what kinds of alternative social meanings can be created beyond the official marketing strategies and by looking at social actors positioned in different realms of society and their engagement with iconic buildings. Data for this investigation was drawn from two different types of activities: a guided city walk in the city of Frankfurt and a mind map activity with second graders in a bilingual Italian-German primary school class in inner Frankfurt. Both activities had a particular focus on Italians and things associated with Italy and were conducted with social actors who had a particular interest or identity investment in this issue. Both activities therefore brought out meanings related to this specific focus: in the first case the role of Italians in Frankfurt and their contribution to the city's development and wellbeing and in the second the importance of an iconic building as the background for children's imagining and acting out of play.

Both activities provided an occasion to recount a multisensorial embodied experience (Pink 2009) that resided in specific encounters with the built environment. While both activities had 'talk around objects' (Budach et al. 2015)—iconic buildings in this case—at their centre, engagement with these buildings unfolded in quite different ways. The case of the guided tour talk was embedded in walking, and the participants' movement between the sites (and momentary focus of explanation) created a new path through the city that, underpinned by an alternative historic narrative, potentially changed the participants' relationship to the buildings they already knew well. Beyond the immediate experience of this tour's participants, the

new itinerary could also be put on a map, adding another layer of meaning to the existing social geographies of these places.

Embodiment was different and more fragmented in the second case based on the discussion around the Colosseum. Embodied experience as co-constructed by the two 7–8-year-old boys related to different semiotic resources, places and experiences. They drew on the phenomenon of 'original buildings' and their many 'copies' that have been created to satisfy the desire to have a copy of an icon in one's home or to which one can travel, such as at a relatively nearby theme park. This practice has become even more common with the globalisation of cultural icons as symbols of a desirable lifestyle and locally reinvented spatial experience. While the city walk emphasised the possibilities of embedding alternative narratives into local spatial movement, and 'thinking in movement' as a physical and mental experience connected through walking, the second activity showed the rather fragmented nature of trajectories of experience that draw on a variety of semiotic resources in different places and material forms. This is in line with the experience of many children (and adults) from the bilingual project whose family ties and identity orientations spread transnationally, so that the delocalised multifold becomes the norm, rather than identities that are firmly emplaced and localised within one site. Since there is not yet a vocabulary available to the children that would enable them to deal with such ambiguity, Santa Claus Land seems an appropriate term to locate the origin of their possessions, experiences and objects of desire.

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Chapter 11
Spaces of Informal Learning and Cultures of Translation and Marginality in London's Jewish East End

Ben Gidley

Introduction

In this chapter, I want to explore the concept of 'studying the city' by examining some spaces of learning in inner London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were the informal spaces of dialogue and exchange created by immigrant Jews in the metropolis's East End. I will argue that these spaces constitute a dissident or proletarian public sphere, in which a rich pedagogical culture emerged as a counterculture of modernity. The men and women who inhabited these spaces, I will argue, can be thought of as organic intellectuals of the immigrant working class. These spaces are important and relevant today, not least because the London they inhabited anticipated features typical of the global city today: the dense web of interactions—some hostile, some convivial—between people of different cultures (Keith 2005; Gilroy 2000).

London's East End from the 1880s until the Second World War was home to massive numbers of working-class Jews with origins in Central and Eastern Europe, driven westward by violent racism (the wave of pogroms that began in the 1870s and culminated in the Ukrainian pogroms of the Russian Civil War), by legal exclusion and by the desire for a better livelihood. Like most of today's migrants, therefore, they existed in the ambiguous space between the status of refugee and the status of economic migrant.

In Britain, they faced poverty and exclusion, albeit less harsh than that which they left. They faced violence too, if again on a much smaller scale, from proto-fascist organisations like the British Brotherhood. They were also the target of both anti-Semitism and antialien prejudice, a racialisation of alien immigrants as such that anticipates the 'xeno-racism' which contemporary migrants experience

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(Sivanandan 2001, p. 2). More subtly, they faced a demand to *assimilate*, to suppress their cultural difference. This demand was articulated by various British figures of authority, but it was articulated most insistently by their own community leaders (Kahn-Harris and Gidley 2010; Williams 1985, 1990).

Central to the question of racism and assimilation is that of language. In addition to the social and political exclusion and economic injustice that Jewish East Enders faced was linguistic inequality (Hymes 1996). Jewish East Enders were multilingual, moving between different languages as they moved between different spheres of life. In Eastern Europe, for example, they may have interacted in the home in Yiddish, conducted Jewish learning in Hebrew, operated in the marketplace in Polish, dealt with the state in Russian and negotiated with landowners in German. After migration to London, they had to learn the language of citizenship in Britain and, if they did not, face exclusion from the public sphere and from access to social goods. The promotion of English had a downside: the devaluing of Yiddish, the language of Eastern European Jewish culture. This downgrading was actively pursued not just by the English school system but by the Anglo-Jewish elite (Fishman 1975). In the face of all of this, though, the immigrant Jews were able to develop an extraordinarily rich cultural and political life in the East End's informal spaces of learning, and out of linguistic inequality was born an extraordinary culture of translation.

In this chapter, I will describe this cultural life, focusing on the informal pedagogies that developed in these spaces and placing them within 'an alternative genealogy of modernity' (Benhabib 1996), using the concepts of proletarian public sphere (Negt and Kluge 1993) and organic intellectual (Gramsci 1971). I will then conclude by briefly drawing out the contemporary relevance of this account. That relevance is twofold. First, the forms of pedagogy developed by the immigrant radicals anticipate, in crucial ways, models of learning-centred education and lifelong learning still being developed today. Second, the organic intellectuals of these spaces suggest models for critical practice today, for educationalists, urbanists, scholars and activists.

The East End's Proletarian Public Sphere

> We were a working-class world … Many influences moulded us. The Clarion Van preaching Merrie England Socialism was on my doorstep … If I went over the road I was in the thick of the battle of causes on Mile End Waste … We went to the discussions at the Social Democratic Club, the I.L.P. Club and the Liberal Club as well as the Jubilee Street Club. At the end of my street was the Talmud Torah and Synagogue I attended, with which I managed to reconcile my other interests. (Leftwich 1956, pp. 15–27)

As the above quotation from the poet Joseph Leftwich illustrates, the cultural and political activity of the East End was characterised by a multiplicity of spaces, from the relative formality of working men's clubs to the carnivalesque informality of

parks like the Mile End Waste. Of the clubs, the migrants created several such under-ground micro-public spaces, notably the International Workers' Educational Club at Berner Street in the 1880s–1890s and the Workers' Friend Club at Jubilee Street and the Workers' Circle at Alie Street in the early twentieth century. A Labour Institute was formed in 1902 by the Independent Furniture Carvers Association and hosted some political discussion groups, modelled on the Maison du Peuple in Brussels (Black 1988). In 1908 journalist Peter Latouche wrote that there were five anarchist clubs in the East End, the largest being Kingsland Road, with over 1000 members (Cardwell 1988). There was a Capmakers Hall off Commercial Road, where, accord-ing to the *Workers Dreadnaught* journal, the Communist League's Stepney branch met every Friday night in the spring and summer of 1919. There was also a Russian library, maintained by exiled socialists (Dreen, cited in Avrich 1980).

As well as these sites, each street or block of buildings constituted an informal space of dialogue. Jerry White's oral history account of *Rothschild Buildings* under-lines this point. 'At Rothschild we were like one family', said one of his informants. White (1980) uses phrases like 'a protective society', 'a complex support system of mutual aid ... deepened and perpetuated by kinship' (pp. 81–83). This system was protective yet open, able to take new people in at times of crisis. The street itself was another focus for this culture of mutualism, a place where men and women, Jews and non-Jews, could come together.

> [Brick] Lane was in many ways the social nucleus of the wider Jewish community. 'The beloved Lane,' as Zangwill called it, had wonderful charisma, with its colour, bustle, laugh-ter, the voices of dispute and greeting, all in the universal language of the Jewish working class. It helped unite the Jewish East End, for in the Lane shopped women from Cable Street, as well as Spitalfields and Whitechapel ... The Lane, the Flower and Dean Street neighbourhood ... produced a unifying adhesive, built of and for the community, drawing people ever closer to it. (White 1980, p. 119)

The area near the bottom of Brick Lane, the wide pavements of Whitechapel High Street's north side, around the underground station entrances and the library and gallery, was known as the Haymarket, after its previous usage. This was a space in which the Jewish young would be seen *shpatsiren* (strolling or promenading) in the evenings and weekends. Groups of friends would come together, often loosely organised along political lines, blurring the distinction between the spheres of affect and political rationality (Lichtenstein 1999; Leftwich 1911; Jacobs 1978).

Particular street corners, as well as parks, were places of debate, interaction and oratory. Victoria Park on a Sunday or bank holiday and the Mile End Waste on a Saturday night were transformed into vast open-air debating societies, where a bab-ble of raucous voices competed for attention: secularists, socialists, Primitive Methodists, birth control advocates and anarchists. These discursive spaces were free from the respectable proprieties of the bourgeois public sphere. Emma Goldman (1931), frequently in London and a highly regarded orator, wrote that in England the

> social centre of the masses is the out-of-door meeting in the park. On Sundays they flock there as they do to music-halls on weekdays. They cost nothing and they are much more entertaining. Crowds, often numbering thousands, drift from platform to platform as they would at a country fair. (p. 163)

Joseph Leftwich ([1911](#)) wrote in his diary in the spring of 1911 of

> the Mile End Waste with its balloons and cheap-jacks, its socialist orators and open-air discussion groups, the Assembly Hall Brass Band, the Salvation Army meetings, Old Clark, the Bible preacher and the handful of atheists religiously attacking Christianity night after night. (p. 28)

All of these spaces constituted an alternative associational and pedagogical cartography of the multicultural city, as well as a culture of marginality, a creative and dynamic culture flourishing on the margins of the dominant 'host' culture.

The Anarchists

> Many a time on our walks through the East End, we were accosted by complete strangers who, having heard of my father's role in the great strike, wanted to express their gratitude and admiration. Even religious Jews would approach him and give him their benediction, a most unusual distinction for an anarchist and a 'goi'. (F. Rocker [1998](#), p. 96)

This culture of marginality was exemplified by Rudolf Rocker and Milly Witkop, two of the founders of the Workers' Friend Club in Jubilee Street. Rocker was not Jewish. He was born into a Catholic artisan family in Mainz, in the German Rhineland, the city of Gutenberg. The map of his life criss-crosses Europe and the Atlantic. As a journeyman bookbinder, he tramped across Western Europe, meeting fellow craftsmen and radicals. He joined the Jewish anarchist movement in Paris and then the German anarchist movement in London. It was in London that he learnt Yiddish. Arrested as an enemy alien by the British authorities during the World War I, he was deported to Holland and then Germany, from which he fled when the Nazi terror became too intense, carrying nothing but a book manuscript. He lived his final years in a polyglot utopian commune in Upstate New York.

Milly Witkop was a garment worker from Ukraine, who arrived in London by herself as a teenager, before earning enough money to send for her religious Jewish parents and three sisters. Rudolf and Milly met in the East End and fell in love. Influenced by Russian revolutionaries and British feminist radicals such as Mary Wollstonecraft, the Jewish anarchists were opposed to marriage; they believed that if love is not free, it is not love. Rudolf and Milly's partnership epitomised the transversal nature of the East End radicals' culture of marginality. Their son Fermin later wrote of his family:

> We were four and each of us was a native of a different country: my father German, my mother Russian, my brother [Rudolph Jr] French and I British. My father and brother were Gentiles, my mother Jewish. The language used at home was German, which both Rudolph and I spoke as fluently as English. (F. Rocker [1998](#), p. 14)

Rocker was instrumental in the organisation of the Arbayter Fraynd or Workers' Friend Club, founded in 1906 at Jubilee Street in Stepney Green. Leftwich wrote:

> Everybody in my world knew Rocker … All kinds of East End Jews went to [Rocker's] lectures, used the reading room in the Jubilee Street Club, and attended its fine amateur

theatrical performances. I was never in his movement. But I enjoyed many of its benefits. Much of my Yiddish knowledge comes from it as well as from my Shul [synagogue] and Chedar [religious school]. We East Enders were avid for culture, and we took the facilities offered to us by the Jubilee Street Club as we took those of Toynbee Hall and People's Palace and the South Place Institute. I saw my first Ibsen plays at Jubilee Street (Leftwich 1956, pp 26–27).

As Rocker (1956, pp. 15–27) says, the Jubilee Street Club played a great part in East End Jewish life because it was open to anyone. Anyone could use its library and reading room or join the educational classes without being asked for a club membership card.

Connected to the Workers' Friend Club was the Workers' Circle or Arbayter Ring. The Circle combined political, cultural and educational activities with benefits and had a strong working-class ideological dimension. In 1909 there were two Workers' Circles in the East End. A Free Workers' Circle was formed in 1902. Unusually for the benefit societies, men and women were able to join on equal terms (Rocker 1956; Rosenberg 1994). As Mick Mindel (1959) recalled, the brochure containing its rules and regulations 'caused quite a stir among bourgeois friendly societies, especially the declaration that we welcomed women to free membership' (p. 8). Among its founders were Arbayter Fraynd activists Arthur Hillman and Nathan Wiener; its first meeting was in Wiener's kitchen (Rocker 1956; Rosenberg 1994). There were 50 members at the end of 1909. A year later there were 220 members, and by 1920 it had nearly a thousand members (Rocker 1956; Workers' Circle 1959; Mindel 1959).

On 8 June 1908, an alternative Arbayter Ring Vereyn (Workers' Circle Association) was formed in Woolf Krasner's kitchen in Umberston Street, off Commercial Road, enrolling 18 members. It was to have three functions: as a friendly society, for education and for socialist propaganda. A month later it started a library of 150 books contributed by readers, and at the end of the year, there were 200 registered readers (Krasner 1959; Podolsky 1959). It briefly had a paper, *Der Yunger Dor* (The Young Generation) and had 72 members in 1911 (Cohen 1959). In 1910 or 1911, the two circles amalgamated; the Free Circle became Division I, its West End branch became Division II and the Vereyn became Division III (Cohen 1959; Krasner 1959).

The Workers' Circle supported workers' trade union activity. For instance, it was active in supporting the 1912 tailors' and bakers' strikes, helping to manage the latter's cooperative, boycotting non-union bread and lending money to the bakers' and tailors' unions and later to the miners' and other non-East End unions (Barnett 1934; Mindel 1959). It involved itself in relief activities, playing a major role in the Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund during World War I, which raised £15,000 in its first year for new refugees and other victims of the war in Eastern Europe (Podolsky 1959). It organised cultural activities, too, and ran a secular Sunday school (Dreen cited in Avrich 1980). And it hosted debates, such as one between Morris Myer, representing 'Socialism, pure and simple', against the Russian theorist of socialist Zionism Ber Borokhov in 1913 or 1914 (Barnett 1934). In other words, these were not simply leisure spaces, but pedagogical spaces, but in such a

way that the domain of pedagogy was not separated out from that of everyday life and leisure nor from the space of politics.

Space of Dialogue, Culture of Translation

> Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. (Bhabha 1994, p. 172)

While the Circle was politically committed to the Yiddish language as part of a refusal of assimilationism, the Jubilee Street Club was a space which included people of many tongues. There were Irish and London-born Catholic workers, who went on strike at the docks at the same time as the Jewish bakers and tailors went on strike in 1912 and who later fought side by side with Jews at Cable Street to keep Oswald Mosley and his fascist Blackshirts out of the East End. There were refugee radicals from many lands: Italy, Russia, France and the USA—people like Errico Malatesta, Italian peasant leader; Tarrida del Marmol, Spanish astronomer and revolutionary; Louise Michel, heroine of the Paris Commune; Prince Kropotkin, Russian anarchist geographer; and Emma Goldman, Russian-born American libertarian. There were Yiddish poets, like Anna Margolin and Aaron Glants-Leyeless, and Hebrew writers, like Joseph Chaim Brenner.

This was, then, a space of *dialogue*, a transversal space defined by the coming together of differences. As well as a culture of dialogue, we can see the East End alternative public sphere as a culture of *translation*.[1] Here, translation stands as a figure of the in-between, the interstitial or intercultural, of double consciousness, anticipating what Gilroy (2000) describes as 'a distinctive understanding of identity' which emerges 'from serious consideration of the dense, hybrid, and multiple formations of postcolonial culture in which translation is simultaneously both unremarkably routine and charged with an essential ethical significance' (p. 77).

Not only were many individual migrants bilingual or multilingual, but meetings were often held in several languages. The Yiddish radicals built up a huge body of translated material, publishing literally hundreds of texts in Yiddish in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. As Rocker (1942) later wrote,

> Young women and girls earning with pains their 10 or 12 shillings a week in the infamous sweating trades of the East End, regularly gave their share [to the cause of solidarity and the production of literature], took it from their last money, in order not to be behind their male

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[1] The concept of a culture of translation has been used, for example, by the Portuguese historian and translator Luís Filipe Barreto (1996) in relation to the cosmopolitan colony Macau; by Croatian writer Andrea Zlatar (2001) in relation to the antinationalist counterculture in the Balkans; by Maria Rosa Menocal (2002) about medieval Andalusia, a 'culture of translation, [and therefore] perforce a culture of tolerance' (p. 197); and by the Islamist and culinary scholar Sami Zubaida (e.g. 2002), who has used the term to describe the interstitial cosmopolitan worlds of the Ottoman empire, which he argues still survive in some crevices of the Islamic world. See also the work of Anthony Pym (e.g. 1992) and Bhabha (1994, pp. 18–28) on 'the space of translation'.

colleagues. In this way the 'Workers' Friend' group alone, within not quite ten years, published nearly half a million books and pamphlets. (p. 17)

In particular, Rocker and his associates translated works of world literature, both by their contemporaries and from the Enlightenment and Romantic eras. For example, they published translations of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; several works by Scandinavian writers like Georg Brandes, Ibsen and Knut Hamsun; as well as many Russian novels.[2] Rudolf Rocker and Emma Goldman both wrote and lectured extensively in Yiddish and English about world literature, for example, on Ibsen, Brandes and Wollstonecraft. This body of work can be seen as an attempt to establish the sense of a cosmopolitan tradition at the margins of European culture, a sense of what Paul Gilroy (1992) has called a counterculture of modernity.

Crucially, it was also a *transnational* space. Rocker (1942) again: 'London was, so to speak, the school where the newly arrived from Russia and Poland, drifting continuously to England, were introduced to the new ideas; from here propaganda spread over many countries' (p. 18). In other words, the Workers' Friend group practised an informal pedagogy of cosmopolitanism, the world city's helots learning to act as citizens of the world.

But this cosmopolitanism was deeply rooted in the specific cultural traditions of the immigrants, not some sort of free-floating hybrid formation as celebrated by some of the more utopian postcolonial and postmodern theorists.[3] As well as Yiddish translations of modern *world* literature, the Arbayter Fraynd group published modern *Yiddish* literature—Sholem Aleichem, Perets, Sholem Asch—in the weekly paper, in the monthly journal *Germinal* and in books. Major Yiddish poets, including some associated with the emergence of Yiddish modernism, read at the club (Glanz-Leyeless 1969; Fishman 1975; Leftwich 1956). Harry Lang, a journalist with the leading New York Yiddish paper the *Forward*, wrote that 'Rocker was one of those who stood at the beginnings of our modern Yiddish literature' (quoted in Leftwich 1956, p. 20).

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[2] Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was translated by Rudolf Rocker as *Azoy hot geredt tsarathustra* in 1904. *The pillars of the community* was translated as *Di shtitsen fun der gezelshaft*, 1906, and *The lady from the sea* translated as *Di froy fun yam* by S. Dobrik. *When we dead awaken* was translated as *Ven mir toyte ervakhen* by Rocker's close collaborator Abraham Frumkin with an introduction by Rocker, both in 1908. Frumkin translated *Slaves of love* as *Shklafn fun liebe*, published in 1904 with a second edition in 1906, and *Mysteries* as *Misteryen* in 1911. Hamsun was highly regarded in the Yiddish-reading world until his support for Quisling's Nazi puppet government in Norway during World War II. His reputation was partly due to Rocker and Frumkin. Nobel Prize winning Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer later described him as 'the father of modern literature'.

[3] I am thinking here of Braidotti's (2010) work on 'nomadology', and particularly of much of the work on diaspora and exile from the literary disciplines, such as Rapport (1995), or many of the contributions to collections such as the 1993 double issue of *Yale French Studies* on 'Post/colonial conditions: Exiles, migrations, and nomadisms', or Barkan and Shelton (1998) or Broe and Ingram (1989). See criticisms by Mitchell (1997), Anthias (1998) and Lavie and Swedenburg (1996).

Alternative Pedagogies

> I will teach them only the simple truth ... I will not conceal from them one iota of fact. I will teach them not what to think but how to think ... [E]very human being has a right to know, and science, which is produced by observers and workers of all ages and countries, ought not to be restricted to a class. (Francisco Ferrer, quoted in Avrich 1980, pp. 19–20)

The Workers' Friend Club's pedagogical dimension was crucial to its role in the East End. Educational activities were a major part of the club's appeal, in a world where there was a thirst for modern culture alongside a deep attachment to tradition. Joseph Leftwich's memories (he was nearly 20 when the club closed down) convey the way in which Rudolf Rocker, as the charismatic figure who presided over it, was able to mediate between modernity and the traditional idioms of Yiddishkayt:

> Rocker was to all the Yiddish-speaking workers of that time … the symbol of culture. They flocked to his lectures on literature and art. He was their guide and teacher. They drank in his words. To the official Anglo-Jewish community, he was an agitator, a preacher of revolt and of atheism and free thought. But to the Jewish workers, he was a man who spoke to them, in their own Yiddish, of things of the spirit and the mind about which they wanted to hear. (Leftwich 1987, p. 30)

Rocker also gave history and sociology classes and took Sunday morning trips to the British Museum, and there were English classes and speakers' classes (Rocker 1956).

The club also carried on the tradition of libertarian schools in London. The first of these was the International School in Soho, initiated by Parisian exile Louise Michel in 1891. In the 1900s the Jubilee Street Club had its own Sunday school, based on libertarian education principles; it closed in 1911. After this closed, one of the pupils, Naomi ('Nellie') Ploschansky, supported by Rocker's son, Rudolf Rocker Jr., opened her own school, the Ferrer Sunday School, in June 1912. Around the same time, a different Ferrer Sunday School was operating in Soho (Avrich 1980). The Ferrer schools were named and modelled after Francisco Ferrer's 'Modern School' in Barcelona and thus part of a global network of libertarian or alternative education.

Ferrer was an inspiration for the London anarchists and a personal hero of Rocker's. Ferrer's philosophy was that children need to *learn* rather than be taught, that learning by doing was more effective than rote repetition and that discipline should be used sparingly if at all in schools. There were no rewards or punishments in the Modern School, few rules and no examinations. Adults were encouraged to participate in the schools, which often featured evening and weekend classes. Long before the concept of 'lifelong learning' was coined, the Modern School conceived of education as a 'never-ending process, extending from cradle to grave' (Avrich 1980, p. 192).

One of Ferrer's key disciples in Britain was Jim Dick, the son of a Scottish policeman, born in Liverpool in 1882. Working in menial jobs as a young man, he had a great thirst for knowledge and attended classes at Liverpool University. He was taught there by and befriended Lorenzo Portet, a close comrade of Ferrer's.

Dick met Ferrer in Liverpool in 1907 and the following year opened a Ferrer school, the Liverpool Communist School. The school was affiliated to the International League for the Rational Education of Children, of which Portet was on the committee. When Ferrer was executed in October 1909 after the Barcelona 'Tragic Week', there were protests in London (led by Kropotkin, Malatesta, Tarrida del Marmol, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle). The school in Liverpool changed its name to the International Modern School and issued a pamphlet, *The martyrdom of Francisco Ferrer*. Dick's school also had an International Club for adults, with adult education lectures in Spanish and French (for sailors) as well as English. The school was evicted in 1911 when there was a moral panic about anarchists in the wake of the Houndsditch Affair. When the school closed, Dick went to Ruskin College and then to the Central Labour College in London, thus connecting to a wider world of working-class self-education linked to the socialist movement (Avrich 1980).

Meanwhile, by 1912, Ploschansky's school had 100 children. She met Jim Dick at a May Day march in 1913. She persuaded him to get Central Labour College teachers to lecture in the school. The children, impoverished Stepney kids with Yiddish-speaking parents, read Morris's *News from Nowhere*, published their own magazine (*The Modern School*), learnt Esperanto, had a cricket team and went boating on the Thames (Avrich 1980). Dick left Britain for the USA during World War I, fleeing military service. In America, he played a key role in the development of the residential Ferrer school movement in Shelton, New Jersey.

The pedagogical philosophy Rocker, Ploschansky and Dick espoused would not seem radical now—a learner-centred model, based on children's own desire for knowledge rather than a coercive imperative to follow the teacher's rules—but it was extremely controversial then. And it exemplified the open, dialogical and transversal public culture of the East End urban radical movement.

The Two Public Spheres of the City

> Just as there will be plural accounts, so too will there be a plurality of publics and 'counterpublics.' (Disch 1994, p. 86)

We can contrast the Workers' Friend and Workers' Circle's type of informal pedagogy and countercultural civic activity with a very different project of citizenship learning practised in the East End at the same time.

The 1880s saw the rise of settlement houses, people's palaces and philanthropic working men's clubs. Toynbee House in Whitechapel, started by Samuel Barnett, Oxford House, started under the aegis of Octavia Hill, and Walter Besant's People's Palace on the Mile End Road (which now houses Queen Mary College) were all institutions intended to bring culture and education to the benighted people of the East End. Toynbee Hall and Oxford House were 'settlement houses'; university-educated young men lived in them and were supposed to form bonds with the

working men of the slums, in the process exercising a civilising influence. As 'settlers', male settlement workers entered the formerly closed spaces of the working class (cf. Simey and Simey 1960; Walkowitz 1992).

Hosted by these sorts of institutions, there were organisations in the Jewish East End, such as the Jewish Literary and Social Society and the East End Jewish Communal League, where working-class people (especially men) were able to come into contact with the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community. In these spaces, however, as in the settlement houses, working men had to submit to the proprieties of bourgeois discourse, modify their accents and language and attempt to deport themselves in the manner deemed correct. As such, these spaces aimed to transmit bourgeois ideologies into the working class.

Of course, the borders between the world of the anarchist clubs and that of the settlement houses were not absolute and impermeable. People moved between them; Joseph Leftwich's diary, as quoted above, shows that he was accessing adult education classes at Toynbee Hall at the same time as he was going to Yiddish plays at Jubilee Street. And the more formal spaces were often occupied for less formal purposes; the People's Palace hosted a Communist League Stepney branch 'Grand Dance' in June 1919, with a foxtrot competition and a jazz band, as reported in the *Worker's Dreadnought*. Nonetheless, we can see two models of public sphere in the city, two different types of arena or social space in which meanings, ideas and demands are articulated, distributed and negotiated.

Toynbee Hall and the other settlement houses were part of the *bourgeois public sphere* identified by Habermas (1989). Bourgeois culture was constructed as the universal norm to which working-class and migrant residents were expected to conform. The settlement houses were monolingual, not just in the literal sense that people who went there were expected to speak English and not Yiddish but also in the sense that specific forms of communicative reason were prescribed and others banished. Nancy Fraser (1986) describes the '"authoritative" voice' in which people are expected to speak in order to enter the public sphere:

> the officially recognized vocabulary in which one can press claims; the idioms available for interpreting and communicating one's needs; the established narrative conventions available for constructing the individual and collective histories which are constitutive of social identities; the paradigms of argumentation accepted as authoritative in adjudicating conflicting claims; the ways in which various discourses constitute their respective subject matters as specific sorts of objects; the repertory of available rhetorical devices; the bodily and gestural dimensions of speech which are associated in a given society with authority and conviction. (p. 425)

At Jubilee Street, in contrast, different languages and different voices mingled. Alternative modes of bodily disposition and verbal communication flourished: song, theatre and story-telling. Difference and particularity were not melted away, as in the Kantian universalism of the bourgeois public sphere, but respected and nurtured. The Jewish refugee and political philosopher Hannah Arendt conducted what Seyla Benhabib has called 'an alternative genealogy of modernity', to recover the traces and fragments of spaces where this sort of coming together of differences took place, where people created 'the four walls within which new forms of

sociability and intimacy could develop among members of an emergent civil society' (Benhabib 1996, pp. 15–16).

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) offer the concept of a 'proletarian public sphere' to describe this sort of space. Central to it, in their account, is 'sensually graspable solidarity' (p. 28) and 'social wealth': 'sociality—co-operation—freedom—awareness—universality—wealth of needs and of subjective human sensuality' (pp. 81–82). It is defined by its striving for autonomy from the dominant society, often in a particular location in space. But it is also heterogeneous, open and diffuse.[4]

One of the most important features of the proletarian public sphere in the period we have been looking at was a certain type of leadership: the creation of what Gramsci termed *organic intellectuals*. In 'The study of philosophy', written when he was languishing in Mussolini's prisons, Gramsci attacked the idea of a philosophical elite. Everyone, he claimed, is a philosopher. In contrast to the 'elite intellectual', he conceptualised the '*organic* intellectual': an 'organic quality of thought', he wrote, presupposes

> the same unity with the simple as there should be between theory and practice. That is, if the intellectuals had been organically the intellectuals of those masses, and if they worked out and made coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc. (Gramsci 1971, p. 330)

Indeed, the 'philosophy of praxis' that Gramsci advocated 'never forgets to remain in contact with the "simple" and indeed finds in this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve' (1971, p. 330). In 'Notes on Italian history', written in the same period, Gramsci (1971) defined the organic intellectual in terms of 'an identity of the represented and the representative' (p. 60). The organic intellectual *economically belongs* to the group it leads. The organic intellectual of the working class would be both a theorist, or activist, *and at the same time,* be a worker.

The concept of organic intellectual seems perfectly suited to people like Rudolf Rocker, Milly Witkop, Nellie Ploschansky and Jim Dick. These people were organically connected to the urban working-class communities from which they came and in which they lived. They became intellectuals in the autonomous pedagogical spaces of the working-class movement itself. And they used the knowledges which they had learnt in these spaces to engage with the world from which they came, rather than to escape it. And, finally, they created new spaces of learning in the city to sustain this public culture and alternative pedagogy.

What are the implications of this for today? To conclude this chapter, I want to raise some speculative points that go towards answering that question. First, the legacy of people like Rocker, Witkop, Dick and Ploschansky is almost completely

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[4] According to Hansen (1993, p. xxxvi), the discourse of 'counter-public' and 'proletarian public sphere' cannot be equated with the discourse of 'community' (the dominant discourse within black, gay, Jewish and other 'identity' politics). The counter-public is a radical, new, modern form of solidarity, grounded in collective experience of marginalisation and expropriation, not in (real or fictive) kinship, affection, loyalty, nostalgia, love and in-group status.

unknown. But in subtle ways, it has had a major impact on not just British but global society. Pedagogical practice has fundamentally shifted since their time, from a model of rote learning, of facts drilled into pupils through repetition and discipline, to a learner-centred model, in which students' own desire for knowledge, both for its own sake and for its practical value, is paramount. Rocker and his group, building on Ferrer's work, anticipated and pioneered this shift in a fundamental way.

Second, their role as urban organic intellectuals might be an inspiration for us today. In my experience of the contemporary inner city, including of the East End where Rocker and his comrades were active, it is still possible to find organic intellectuals of their type, relating closely to the needs and aspirations of their own communities. However, it is far more common to find other models. In particular, crowding out the space once occupied by people like Rocker is either vanguardist activists or new versions of the 'traditional intellectuals' of whom Gramsci was so critical. The former are the voluntary sector workers and political activists who claim to act in the name of the people of the inner city but who are not rooted or deeply embedded in its messy, hybrid, translational communities and cultures. The latter are the bureaucratised community workers, dependent on the patronage of the local state, whose work more closely echoes that of settlement houses than of the Jubilee Street Club. In our own practice—as teachers, as activists, as community workers, as urbanists or as social scientists—I would suggest that we have a lot to learn from Nellie Ploschansky and the other organic intellectuals of the old East End.

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Chapter 12
Learning the Sexual City

Alison Rooke

Introduction

The relationship between minority sexual identities and city life has a long history. Most recently this has been manifest in the popular belief that sexual minorities such as lesbians and gay men are integral to the cosmopolitanism of city life, reflecting the diversity and tolerance of urban cultures (Young 1990; Bell and Binnie 2000, 2004). This association between queerness and cosmopolitanism is manifest in popular representations of queer[1] cultures (such as the UK's Channel 4 TV series *Queer as Folk* and *Sugar Rush*). It is realised spatially in the concept of the 'gay village' and the alleged vibrancy the visible presence of queer people brings to cities. It forms part of the backdrop for policy and planning literature concerned with the regeneration and revitalisation of global cities. This chapter seeks to tell an alternative story by moving our focus from the perceived sexual cosmopolitanism of city centres and their cultural quarters towards the everyday life of lesbian and bisexual women in the suburbs. The focus on the everydayness of sexual identities that I am proposing requires we turn our critical gaze away from the seductions of the metropolitan centres and instead think about the life of the city's hinterlands. It also requires an ontological shift away from the more spectacular aspects of identity politics and the sexiness of sexuality and instead requires that we focus on the ways that sexual minorities learn to navigate heteronormativity in the places where they live and work.

This chapter takes London as its focus and is based on ethnographic research which took place in and around a lesbian and gay community centre at the edge of this city. The research was concerned with the ways in which working-class lesbian

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[1] By which I am referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and transsexual people.

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and bisexual women experience the meaning of their sexuality and their sexual identities on an everyday basis. The fieldwork involved a variety of methods including participant observation. Activities that I took part in during this process included volunteering at the centre and running sexuality discussion groups and photographic workshops with lesbian and bisexual women. I also used visual methods such as participative photography and video as an interpretive method to explore the spatiality of home, belonging, inclusion and exclusion. I recruited the 12 participants in my project through the centre and by the method of snowballing (one person suggesting another and so on). I gave the participants cameras and asked them to produce 'photoscapes' of their everyday lives. The participants then interpreted these photoscapes in semi-structured interviews. In this chapter I will consider some of the themes that emerged in these interviews and in so doing evoke some of these understandings and experiences of the city, focusing on the performativity of heteronormativity. I will address how heteronormativity is navigated and sometimes challenged in everyday life. I use the concept of performativity developed by Judith Butler (1993, 1999) to refer to the cultural workings of heterosexual presumption. This draws our attention to what heterosexuality *does.* For Butler, language or discourse materialises the world through a performative process which is normative in regard to gender and heterosexuality, that is, heteronormative. The images produced, and the talk about them, are what Lefebvre (1991a) describes as representations of space and spaces of representation.

Sexuality and the City: A Brief Theoretical Introduction

Before discussing what an examination of the everydayness of sexuality might tell us about how minority sexual communities learn from and through the city, I will offer a brief overview of the ways in which matters of gender and sexuality have been central to the imagination, theorisation and realisation of the city. Urban theorists have long recognised that tropes of sexual pleasure and danger are central to the ways that the city of modernity is imagined, designed and inhabited. Feminist theorists such as Walkowitz (1998) and Wilson (1991) have shown how gender and sexuality were central to bourgeois anxieties about the cities of modernity. In Victorian London, the moral dangers of falling into prostitution and sexual disrepute were at the heart of a range of discourses of the city as a place in which working-class women, freed from the control of patriarchy and the family, became part of public culture. These narratives were popular themes in literature, as seen in novels such as *Moll Flanders* (Defoe 1973/1722) and *Fanny Hill* (Cleland 1985/1750). In these texts, the city is imagined as a site where respectable femininity is corrupted while a predatory male sexuality is realised. This is epitomised in the 11 volumes of *Walter: My Secret Life* (1888–1894) (Anon 1996). These anonymous[2] diaries of a Victorian gentleman constitute a sexual psychogeography of

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[2] Attributed to Henry Spencer Ashbee.

Victorian London. The text is filled with accounts of brothels, public sex and endless sexual opportunity. These differently gendered geographies are also a theme in the extensive feminist literature on the *flaneur* (Green 1994–1995; Pollock 1988; Wilson 1991; Wolff 1985), a figure which has been critiqued as epitomising male sexual predatory sexuality, eroticising the street and problematising women's presence in the public spaces of the city.

While these writings concern themselves predominantly with the heterosexuality of urban space, it is worth remembering that lesbian and gay sexualities have long been associated with urbanism. Urban spaces have offered queer people the opportunity to explore their sexual and gendered subjectivities in ways that were not possible elsewhere. The pervasiveness of narratives of the city as the locus of nonnormative gender expressions and sexual opportunity combined with the sociocultural isolation of many rural queers can account for a long history of queer diasporic migration to cities (Binnie 2004; Castells 1983; Fortier 2003; Knopp 1992, 1995). These spatial flows are shaped as much by sexual subjectivities as historical and political forces. European cities such as London, Paris and Berlin have a long history of homosexual subcultures, often closely intertwined with other minority sexual practices such as prostitution and casual sexual encounters in public spaces (Weeks 1981). Lesbian and gay history shows that after the Second World War, many of the servicemen and women who had enjoyed same-sex relationships during the sexual segregation of the war years were discharged and remained in the city ports, aware that there was not a viable possibility of a queer life if they returned to their families in their hometowns. Faderman (1991) documents the way in which US military policy unintentionally contributed to the formation of distinct lesbian and gay communities in US coastal cities after 1945. Thousands of homosexuals were loaded into 'queer ships' and sent with 'undesirable discharges' to the nearest US port. Many of them believed that they could not go home again. They simply stayed where they disembarked, and their numbers helped form the large homosexual enclaves in cities such as New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Boston (Faderman 1991, p. 126).

Cities are the receivers of considerable flows of queer migrants crossing national and international borders in a globalised search for the combination of indifference and recognition that cities provide. Queer urbanism thrives in an 'indifferent city' where differences are no longer remarkable. Both Simmel's (1971) and Sennett's (1990) descriptions of a blasé or nonchalant urbanism provide models for understanding a queer city. Writing in 1907 on urbanism as a distinct way of life, Georg Simmel argued that the density of interactions in the urban environment promotes an intellectual rationality, insensitivity and blasé approach to new experiences and urban others. For Simmel this urban sensibility allows for a more highly developed individuality and personal freedom of movement, which was not found in rural settings. Similarly, Richard Sennett argues that, for the city dweller, the urban sensibility is less one of eroticising an urban 'other' and more a sensibility of indifference to difference. The citizen of the metropolis has a sophisticated competence in dealing with difference. In global cities differences of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and lifestyle are all around, and due to their ubiquity, they are unremarkable. The city

dweller learns to make her way through this diversity by listening, looking and interpreting. In *The Conscience of the Eye*, Richard Sennett (1990) traces a walk in New York City, revealing 'that difference from and indifference to others are a related, unhappy pair. The eye sees differences to which it reacts with indifference' (p. 129). In this way we learn to make sense of and live amongst the everyday quality of diversity in the city. While in antiurban imaginaries indifference is associated with anomie, alienation, immorality and the end of social order, in queer imaginings of the city, almost the opposite is offered: a queer urbanism and the possibility for a (dispersed, non-locational) sense of community to thrive.

Many queer people are drawn to the promise of disappearing into a city with space for sexual and gendered exiles, a city of anonymity and invisibility, where sexual and gendered difference at least is no longer remarkable. The city also offers queer people a space of recognition. Urban indifference to sexual difference has allowed the growth and consolidation of lesbian and gay political movements. These movements in turn have called for the redistribution of material and cultural resources to enable the development of community facilities, health services, arts and so on (see Castells 1983) and for recognition, which is essential to legal and civil rights protection (see Butler 1997; N. Fraser 1997; M. Fraser 1999). The seemingly contradictory promises of recognition and indifference in the city offer the possibility of anonymity, a loss of a previous self and exile from the opinions of family and neighbours. Furthermore, the privacy of public urban space and dynamics of movement and journeying within the city's flows support the formation of multiple identities; one identity can co-exist alongside another. So, for example, one can simultaneously live a gay and straight life, moving in and out of queerness and queer space.

In the UK contemporary landscape, lesbian and gay sexualities are increasingly framed through discourses of taste, lifestyle and choice rather than as political identities or erotic cultures (Gill 2009; Rooke and Moreno Figueroa 2009). Today lesbians and gay men are frequently represented as agents of consumption and the possessors of taste, distinction and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. An empirical research in the USA into the 'economic geography of talent' (Florida 2002, 2003) has found that the number of lesbian and gay households is one of the measures which can be used to predict whether a region is able to innovate and attract talented people (or the 'creative class') and in doing so raise its economic profile (and property prices) and attract new technology industries. This has been quantified through the Gay Index (Black et al. 2002). These partial and deeply problematic versions of lesbian and gay identities are classed and racialised (Binnie 2004; Skeggs 2000, 2004; Taylor 2007; Rooke 2007). They are symptomatic of a more general neoliberal cultural emphasis on flexible subjectivities (Blackman 2009; Skeggs 2004).

These shifting cultural politics of sexuality are also reflected in the city landscape and the spaces available to queer subjects. In London, since the emergence of the lesbian and gay identity movement marked by the birth of the Gay Liberation Front in 1971, lesbian and gay identities have historically been articulated through queer constellations (Chisolm 2005) around 'bohemian' spaces of squatting and cooperative housing, temporary spaces of festivals, political meetings and activism,

as well as the more commercial spaces of saunas, clubs and bars (alongside spatial practices such as cruising and cottaging). Today the spaces of identity have changed radically. The promise of the eroticism of the city, which was central to Victorian concerns about urban life, has been employed by those agents concerned with the regeneration and revitalisation of global city centres. Many aspects of queer culture have been incorporated into the spectacular erotic landscape of the city as part of a wider sexualisation of culture (McNair 2002). The development of 'gay villages' and gay quarters in UK cities such as London and Manchester can be understood as the relatively recent spatial realisation of manifestations of a longer historical relationship between modern gay identities and capitalist development (Rubin 1993; D'Emilio 1983; Castells 1983). However, it is worth noting that these primarily commercially focused spaces have developed just as contemporary understandings of sexuality have shifted. The development of gay villages around the Canal Street area of Manchester and the Soho area of London in England came about as the gay and lesbian identity politics of representation were squeezed off the local governmental agenda, and this political demographic was reimagined as the cultural and aesthetic presence in a market structure (Lee Badgett 1997; Quilley 1997).

The conceived space of the gay village evokes the presence of lesbian and gay bodies and cultures through the promise of visibility, eroticism, cosmopolitanism and consumption. In this process a constituency and the urban spaces these constituents move through and within are produced. Gay identities become associated with territorialisation, linking political rights to place and territory and in that process expressing the challenge to homonormativity that queer sexualities and genders offer. These developments have paradoxical dynamics. As some queer sexualities that are easily commodified are incorporated into the spectacle and gain a legitimate sense of presence, other sexualities escape these regimes of visibility.[3] This is especially the case for lesbians who often have a spatial configuration which is distinct from that of gay male cultures. Lesbian bars, for example, tend not to be places but rather temporary 'women's nights' at different venues on different nights of the week or month. Furthermore, lesbian spatiality tends to be different from the patterns that have characterised gay male cultures, often being associated with bohemia (Chisolm 2005) and located in poorer, run-down neighbourhoods, reflecting lesbians' inferior economic position and imbued with their subjectivities as women, and often as mothers.

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[3] Samuel R. Delany (1999), in his ethnography of Times Square, argues that the 42nd Street sex cinemas were spaces of complex sexual and nonsexual contact and communication between people of different classes and ethnicities. Delany argues that the Haussmann-like rebuilding of Times Square as a family tourist attraction was justified through discourses of safety: safe sex, safe neighbourhoods and safe relationships.

From the Spectacular to the Everyday

Much writing on queer urbanism has focused on the more spectacular aspects of queer urban sexual culture described above (see collections by Bell and Valentine 1995; Ingram et al. 1997). I now want to shift our focus towards thinking about the ways that many queer people live their lives at the level of the everyday. I am drawing on a concept of the everyday found primarily in the work of Lefebvre and later de Certeau. For Lefebvre the everyday refers to the hidden aspects of life, that which remains after the momentous achievements and spectacular occasions; that which is 'left over' after all distinct, superior specialised and structured activities have been singled out for analysis (Lefebvre 1991a, p. 97). De Certeau's (1984) everyday has a different emphasis. It focuses on multiple and contradictory logics in society: small, sometimes fleeting moments of resistance, inventiveness and agency within the practices of a commodified culture. De Certeau is concerned with subtle moments of creativity and festivity.

It is in the temporality and spatiality of everyday life that we make sense of the city, where we find our place within and through it. My ethnographic concern here is with lesbian life on a micro-human scale: emotion, bodily experience and practices, embodied understandings and practical knowledge and the way we live in city space. Against a backdrop of learning to live with diversity, the experience of coming out as a lesbian or gay man is often one of learning the direct and subtle discomforts of living with one's queerness and learning to make sense of the meaning of one's identity in relation to the social meanings of sexuality.

In many ways, these everyday urban geographies are unremarkable. They tell us about the apparently trivial, immediate events and experiences of daily life in what Lefebvre (1991b) describes as *lived space*. This is a reflection of everyday temporality which is found in the routine, repetitive and ordinary aspects of life. However, it is in their very ordinariness that we find their salience. In attending to the more banal aspects of many lesbian women's lives, we see how they learn through and shape their city. Like George Perec, I am prioritising the ordinary as a way of foregrounding what is missed when dominant ideas about what is significant are applied within sociology, queer and urban theory. For Perec (1997), then:

> What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary: the front page splash, the banner headlines ... How are we to speak of these 'common things', how to track them down rather, flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally speak of what is, of what we are. (p. 210)

It is worth pointing out here that this concept of the everyday is quite different to the concept of the 'normal', which is associated with a lesbian and gay assimilationist project (see Sullivan 1995). The ordinary refers to a queerness that is commonplace and familiar rather than a claim that 'we are just like you'. This focus makes visible the lives of those sidelined by media representations of lesbian and gay life which insist on the sexiness of sexuality: lesbian and gay expressions of distinction and 'lifestyles', scandals of outing or the tragedy of homophobic violence. Like

everyone else, queer people also do the ordinary everyday things: shopping, taking their children to school, going to work and college and engaging in hobbies. It is in the space and temporality of the everyday, in the ordinary, the banal and the routine, that we learn to navigate the city, and understandings of sexuality are learnt, navigated and made sense of.

I now want to present a selection of stories of living in London which reveal how these interpersonal and spatial dynamics unfold. In these stories, as the women described move in and through lived space, there is a continuous negotiation of the meaning of their sexual identities in interpersonal encounters. Here sexual identities are *double-edged*: simultaneously present and yet absent, often an underlying consideration rather than an immediate impetus. In each case, pseudonyms have been used to protect the women's identities.

Mary: Navigating Normativity

Mary had recently moved to a new neighbourhood in north London after many years of living in a squat (housing occupied without official consent of the owner) in the north-west of London. Showing me a photograph of her new home, she reflected on why she had moved. After living in a relatively close-knit squatting community for many years, her social landscape changed; after having her son and commencing working full time, she found it hard to keep in contact with her friends. Her decision to move to a house of her own in a neighbourhood where she knew fewer people was precipitated by attitudes to her lesbian sexuality at her son Kyle's school:

> There was a situation where he [Kyle] was being kicked on the floor by ten lads. It was so obvious. So finally the head teacher was alerted to something was not quite right. It was just too much. The same kid was getting too much agro. And then she kind of turned round and said, 'You know, well I think actually it might be because, you know, of you'. I don't think it was particularly that. But I just think that … I didn't like the way the school dealt with it. The head teacher said Kyle was unpopular because certain things were being said. I thought that was too easy to say, actually. I thought it was a bit of a cop out. But, you know, it was just a slow process really and I knew various people and it was time for him to go to high school. It was time to think about where he was going to go. And I started to talk to people who were saying Stoke Newington High, lots of gay kids. Well probably gay kids too, but kids of gay parents end up going there, and I just thought, oh that would sound, that just sounds marvellous. You know, that sounds fantastic.

The head teacher blamed Mary's appearance for the way that her son was being bullied at school: her lesbian identity was visibilised through a pink triangle cut and dyed into her hair. By blaming Mary's appearance, the head teacher denied the school's responsibility to address the situation. Her experience is not unique. Research has found that 60% of gay pupils reported that teachers did not intervene in homophobic bullying and a mere 10% reported that teachers actively challenged homophobic taunting (Guasp 2012).

Mary was subsequently attracted to the neighbourhood of Stoke Newington, which had a sizable lesbian and gay population. There was thus a distinct possibility that there would be other children at the school who would have gay and lesbian parents. Mary had not previously prioritised sexuality when choosing her friends or places to socialise. Prior to the situation which arose at the school, it was not a factor that shaped her sense of the city. Her lesbian identity had been just one, ordinary, everyday aspect of her life. It only came to the fore when her son was being bullied.

Her account points to an understanding of the complex ways that lesbian identities are experienced. They are often present but not felt directly, becoming an issue that needs attention in an encounter with certain nodal points within a matrix of everyday heteronormativity. This is one manifestation of what Rich (1980) describes as compulsory heterosexuality. For the head teacher, the problem was not homophobic bullying but rather Mary's lack of conformity and the reactions it may or may not have provoked in the school's children. Mary realised the ways in which heteronormativity was operating in this situation; the meanings of her identity and its physical expression were working to absolve the teacher of responsibility for addressing the schoolchildren's behaviour.

Her move out of a community space into a privately owned home indicates awareness of the operation of social and cultural capital of middle-class lesbians and gay men in the area. The critical mass of middle-class gay parents in the area had the potential to affect the culture of local schools, with the hope that a less homophobic environment could be created for her son. I do not want to frame Mary's experience as a search for community or lesbian and gay territoriality (later in an interview, she discussed her ambivalence about many aspects of her new neighbourhood's lesbian and gay culture); however, this does speak of her recognition of some of the advantages of a gay and lesbian presence in the neighbourhood. She learnt where other lesbians and gay men lived, and she learnt how their cultural capital might influence the culture of the school.

Mary's experience also points to the ways in which the workings of what Butler (1999) describes as the 'heterosexual cultural matrix' are felt:

[A] hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (p. 151)

The 'heterosexing' of space in which many queers live requires a performative act that is naturalised through repetition. This performativity, the basis of heterosexism, constructs both self and cultural space as prediscursively heterosexual. Within the dynamic performativity of the heterosexual cultural matrix, sexual difference is maintained and actively produced and reproduced through space as a means of ensuring sexual and gendered dissimilarity. Sexual geographers such as Bell and Valentine (1995) have examined the spatial manifestations of the presumption of heterosexuality, the ways in which it is ubiquitous: in the visual cultures of cities, on billboards and advertising, through music, through prescriptions of romance and public displays of affection and intimacy. Butler shows how heteronormativity's

inculcation is realised in its very everydayness (although she does not use this term). It is in the space/time of repetition (and materialisation) that social constraints are reproduced.

Although the heterosexual matrix is ever present, it is only felt intensely at certain times. These are moments when identity is the primary way that one is interpreted and interpolated. These are often the times when private troubles (e.g. the period when Mary's son was unhappy at school) become public matters (Mills 1959). At these times, sexuality temporarily becomes the dominant lens through which we see the city (e.g. when Mary was deciding where to live in the future). Sometimes sexuality makes the matrix evident, and its presence is felt; at other times one is able to move about within its skein without feeling its presence. In moments when identity is felt as difference, there is an internal shift from living with one's sexual identity somewhat unreflexively, as something one is embodying, to it being temporarily a more important lens through which the city can be seen.

The (Dis)Comfort of Identity

Paying attention to the everyday makes the routine intersubjective experience of subjectivity apparent. Throughout my research, sexual subjectivity was often only felt when it became an issue, when it became necessary to speak about it or address the way someone else spoke about it (due to a presumption of heterosexuality or equally a presumption of what it is to be a lesbian). Lesbian women described countless moments of experiencing the discomforts of heteronormativity. This regularly manifested itself in discussions of outness and the discomfort that heterosexual presumption produces. Sarah Ahmed (2004) describes this discomfort in a discussion of the cultural politics of emotions:

> Queer subjects feel the tiredness of making corrections and departures; the pressure of this insistence, this presumption, this demand that asks either for a 'passing over' (a moment of passing, which is not always available) or for direct or indirect forms of self-revelation … No matter how 'out' you may be, how (un)comfortably queer you may feel, those moments of interpellation get repeated over time, and can be experienced as a bodily injury; moments which position queer subjects as failed in their failure to live up to the 'hey you too' of heterosexual self-narration. (p. 147)

This 'hey you too' is continuously at work and forms the walls of the closet, a space that is negotiated by queer people on an ongoing basis. It is not the case that lesbian and gay people 'come out' once and for all. Rather, the closet walls can spring up at any opportunity. The women I interviewed frequently discussed moments of discomfort. One woman was assumed to be a 'friend of the family' at her child's birthday party as her female partner was recognised as the child's mother; another had her partner mistaken for a man. Many women discussed how they were continuously choosing when to be 'out' and when not to be, in an ongoing process of second guessing people's reactions and learning from previous bad experiences.

People come to their self-understandings within different circumstances, and they bring varied cultural resources to their understandings of sexuality. Repeatedly the representations of sexualities and the spaces of the city which seek to articulate and validate those identities do not always resonate with their self-understandings. It is necessary to think through the intersubjectivities of class and sexuality and the ways these differences are shot through with the complexities of generation, responsibility and differing degrees of physical and mental health. Some of the promise of belonging in a lesbian identity is the element of security it offers. However, it is hard to achieve and maintain. The category 'lesbian' is felt and mobilised in inventive and strategic ways on a very mundane level, and this is contingent on the personal and intersubjective cultural resources with which one lives the category. Frequently sexual identity is not a point of arrival but a journey of reflection and negotiation, which is lived in relation to the availability of personal and cultural resources.

Jade: Learning the Politics of Identity

Gaining these resources is a consequence of learning the city. Jade, who was 39 and white and had identified herself as a lesbian for almost 20 years, reflected on how her attitude to being 'out' had changed over this period and most specifically since her son was born 6 years earlier. At the time of the interview, Jade was teaching sport on a voluntary basis at her son's after-school club. While she felt that after-school sports were an important contribution to the school culture, she was also motivated to offer this activity by the degree of status and credibility it gave her. Jade made a conscious decision to be 'out' at the school as she felt that this would make school life easier for her son, particularly when he was talking about his home life and extended gay and lesbian family. By being 'out' and part of her local school community, she felt she would impact positively on the parents' and children's attitudes to lesbian and gay people, and, in turn, this might, in some small way, influence the school culture and possibly prevent homophobic bullying.

Prior to having her son, Jade worked in a small community mental health project for 6 years. During this time Jade was never 'out' as a lesbian to any work colleagues or the service users. Her logic at the time was that her sexuality was a private matter that had 'nothing to do with the punters'. Reflecting on her earlier logic in hindsight, she realised that she had been respected by the staff and service users at work and that not being 'out' as a lesbian had been a 'missed opportunity'. She explained, 'You know, some of those women coming to that project might have been struggling with their sexuality. It could have been important. I just silenced myself.' She described how she no longer felt that she could live with her sexual identity sequestered off from the rest of her life. These days if the situation arises, she makes it clear that she is a lesbian and that her partner is a woman. She tells me, 'I'm just normal about it, after all. Who am I protecting by not talking about myself?'

This is a pertinent question which points towards Jade's ontological security. Her journey, from routinely keeping her lesbian identity private to routinely being public

about her sexuality, also speaks of the conditions through which we live identities and of what it takes for Jade and many others like her to be able to treat her sexuality as a 'normal' part of her life. Jade, like many people, came to London and subsequently 'came out' when she was young, with few emotional or economic resources available in a political climate which was fraught with the politics of sexual identity (see Green 1997). Today, when negotiating her sexuality in public, she has a well-developed repertoire at her disposal. She has been part of a validating lesbian culture in London for many years. She no longer feels that she needs to protect herself from possible homophobia. Nor does she feel that it is a good idea to protect others from the possibility of discomfort. Her sexuality is an everyday aspect of her life in London; in this way she does not feel that she has to 'make a big deal out of it'. For Jade, like many of the women I worked with, her lesbian identity is something that is felt and negotiated on the basis of her personal development.

Jade had developed personal resources for interpretation and reinterpretation over time. I am referring in this sense to her cultural and social capitals and resources (Bourdieu 1990; Skeggs 2004). Her life trajectory has brought self-understanding and confidence, and this perhaps explains the difference in Jade's attitude to her child's school and Mary's. Unlike Mary, Jade had reached the point where she understood her lesbian identity as a resource in itself, creating some cultural change within her son's school, for example. Feeling part of an affirming community had been important in her own development. Jade was part of a London lesbian culture of social networks, cooperative housing and community projects, which formed a web of connections, friendships and allegiances across the city, shifting in space and time. Her experience speaks to the difference it makes to do one's growing up in a lesbian culture which has thrived in London, one which offers alternative narratives of sexual identity.

Dee: Finding a Way Home

Dee was aged 38 and unemployed. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she had lived in several lesbian houses in a street of short-term housing in Hackney in north London. Subsequently, after becoming homeless twice in 5 years, she was housed at the Angel, Islington, in a third-floor, one-bedroom housing association flat where she now lives. In the interview Dee reflected on her personal history of growing up. Looking at a photograph, she took in the process of the research; she stated 'This is the Hackney skyline and it says to me, every cloud has a silver lining. I was happy to grow up there'.

The growing up Dee referred to is not that of growing from a child to an adult but rather a time in her 20s and 30s when she went through a period of learning. This was a personal and political education in the countercultural spaces of the city. Her street of short-term housing, which she described as being made up of 'lesbian houses, mixed houses, anarchists and travellers', gave Dee a feeling of home. The impermanent materiality of this home was secondary to the sense of community that

Dee felt. Dee's history of finding home in London is also a sharp riposte to any cosy notions of lesbian community. She described her life then as 'violent, druggy, hedonistic, political, musical, artistic and problematic'. Some of these factors were not specific to any sexual identity politics but were more due to the general counterculture of the time.

One of the positive aspects of Dee's community was its casual membership. This allowed Dee a lot of movement during a transient period when she described herself as 'very flighty'. Dee lived in all of the four lesbian houses in the co-op between periods when she was travelling. This was a supportive space where she felt well looked after during times that were hard both emotionally and financially. Like many similar sites, the short-term housing was eventually reclaimed by the local council, and she was offered a one-person flat on a very large estate further north in Hackney. She explained the local housing policy here: 'They moved the squatters out and the co-op people in. Not an easy transition.' She found this change difficult to cope with. Missing the everyday togetherness of her street and neighbourhood, after 3 months she decided to hand the flat back and subsequently became homeless. Although she is happy to have 'grown up' and moved on in terms of her personal life, she recalled this community space and expressed a sense of loss:

> I am happy to have finished my growing up. I became an adult in Hackney, on my own, in a sweet little community. I felt very lucky to be part of a mixed community and I've lost that. I lost any community, now, living in an isolated situation. I knew at least thirty people then, just bumping into them, out and about in my daily life.

Dee was still in touch with many of her friends from these times, but the casual, everyday basis of her local community had changed. Her friends had either settled down into couples or moved out of the area into more permanent housing situations, as squats gradually closed and short-term housing was taken back for refurbishment by local authorities.

This is part of a wider change in the city's cultural landscape. Over the past 20 years, lesbian community spaces, which were part of countercultural London, have changed. The short-term housing that Dee, and earlier Mary, described has almost disappeared.[4] These shifts are part of the changing urban landscape as vacant sites have been bought and sold by developers. In this process, lesbian space in London has become far more privatised and less communal, with the decline of local government investment in municipal equality work (see Green 1997) and with the politics of redistribution replaced by the promotion of enterprise. The lesbian and gay popular press in London is filled with advertisements for apartments and houses to buy or let and images of aspirational professional couples expressing their taste and distinction. Today Dee takes the bus back to Hackney every week to visit friends from her old street who stuck it out on the estate where they were resited. In this process she moves between her old and new home both physically and cognitively in the formation of her identity. Although Dee enjoys some aspects of

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[4] However, writing in a climate of economic crisis, it seems that these spaces are once again emerging in the context of 'market failure'.

having her own home, she misses the easy togetherness of her lesbian neighbourhood.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, sexuality identities, like other cultural identities, are realised in space, through spatial processes. Furthermore the formation of these spaces offers the possibility of the realisation of identity. The social and the spatial are deeply entwined and realised in each other through the specifics of spatiality (Keith and Pile 1993). Just as the availability of competing narratives of identity affects the extent to which one is able to develop a coherent narrative of the self or produce new narratives, whereby identity becomes a cultural resource, the availability of city spaces also impacts on these processes. The spaces described by Dee offered her the possibility of 'growing up' at her own pace and acted as an alternative to more spectacular and commodified aspects of lesbian and gay identities.

Queer Cultural Capitals

I have argued in this chapter that lesbians navigate heteronormativity in their everyday geographies as they move through the city. A secondary argument is that lesbian spaces have offered spaces where woman have found self-understandings and cultural resources which have enabled them to live without shame and to experience their lesbian identity as a positive entity in the face of the subtleties of heteronormativity. I want to avoid constructing a utopian lesbian community or lesbian space, as these spaces are inevitably filled with politics and tension. I now want to move on to discuss thinking about the workings of homonormativity (Duggan 2002; Rooke 2007) and the ways in which the cultural resources at work in lesbian culture impact on the ways that women navigate lesbian (and to a lesser extent lesbian and gay) spaces. The term homonormativity draws attention to some of the ways in which spaces of queer consumption, such as the gay village, work to exclude those queers who are less desirable and do not possess some of the cultural resources required to fit within lesbian cultures' norms.

One of the ways that homonormativity in lesbian and gay space is consolidated is through embodied expressions of the *lesbian habitus* (Rooke 2007). This is expressed through deportment, for example, ways of walking or holding a drink. It is a matter of disposition expressed, for example, in a sense of confidence about matters of sexuality. It is also realised in embodied expressions of lesbian distinction, for example, in ways of wearing one's hair, clothes or accessories. The lesbian body embodying a lesbian habitus is one site where some forms of lesbian cultural resources and capitals are incorporated, performed and rendered with the *appearance* of being inherent. Women who are navigating the city spaces where these embodiments are at work learn to develop a 'practical mastery' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 60) of them with confidence. During my ethnographic fieldwork, I was struck by the ways in which the performativity of lesbian and gay identities was continuously enacted in an expression of a lesbian habitus. This took many forms, for example, in discussing rumours about which celebrities may be lesbians, discussions about

sexual and local politics, collective reminiscing about historical moments in lesbian and gay culture and expressing an agreed understanding about the effects of homophobia. The lesbian sexuality of the group was maintained by sexual humour, by the participants using double entendre and sexual innuendo and sparring, swearing and playfully flirting. The more 'out' lesbians in the group were at ease with their sexuality and discussions about sexuality. However, some members of the group were unable to perform this 'stylised repetition of acts' (Butler 1999, p. 179) and hence to cultivate the signs and sense of belonging. The ability to participate depended on the possession of specific kinds of linguistic and embodied capital.

Tracy, a bisexual participant, just beginning to explore her attraction to women, described how she found another participant's self-presentation quite confronting. Although in conversation Tracy would play with (mostly hetero) sexual innuendo, she was out of her depth when a lesbian habitus was demonstrated. In a discussion about one of the other women in the group, she explained:

Tracy: One thing I can't get over about her. She's such a tomboy. Whenever she's sitting there, she's got her legs wide apart and especially when we were sitting opposite her. I had to look this way or that way so that I wouldn't be looking at her bush. I remember one day when she had these shorts on, it was like, if she moves a certain way, it's going to be on display.

Alison: I never noticed any of that. Did it make you uncomfortable then?

Tracy: Partly, yes because I thought if she saw me just looking and not looking at her face, she might say something flippantly for the whole group to hear but which would reduce me to about a centimetre in size.

Alison: Ah, right. Were you worried about that? The comeback thing.

Tracy: Yes. Because she's very much a kind of person who could say something as a joke but somebody not quite on her wavelength would take it as a slight. And then she was just so out and proud with it and I thought oh, they seem to be accepting all what she's saying, I could have been like that. And it was like, I saw myself as a wallflower then. I thought, I didn't think I was like that. So it put me in a … I saw myself in a different light, comparing myself to somebody more bold and brassy. I think it just showed me that maybe when I'm worried about offending people, maybe I shouldn't be. But when you're with new people, you don't always know how to tread.

Tracy was struck by the way another participant embodied her lesbian gender expression through a rejection of a conventional 'ladylike' demeanour. In this moment of reflection, she discussed learning some aspects of lesbian culture. Tracy knows that she does not possess sufficient sexual cultural capital to be able to respond adequately to any quick sexual innuendo about her lesbian desire. In our conversation, she saw herself as a 'wallflower', sitting quietly on the edge of the group, silenced and somewhat marginalised by the expression of confident lesbian sexuality. Belonging in lesbian culture, then, is not merely constituted through the provision of policy or open doors. It is achieved at many sometimes intangible levels. Skeggs (2004) argues that heterosexual female respectability is achieved through a distancing from sex. My fieldwork revealed that there is, perhaps, a corollary, alternative dynamic of respectability within the lesbian habitus which is achieved by embracing and emitting a sense of ease and confidence about matters of sex and sexuality. This works to demonstrate an embodied freedom from the constraints of the classed respectability and 'niceness' that Skeggs cites. In contrast to the ethic of

care at the heart of a caring (female) self, expressions of lesbian sexuality within lesbian cultures emphasise taking responsibility for one's desires. This can be understood as part of the 'sexual ethic of shame' that Warner (1999) argues characterises queer counter-cultures. My work often entailed trying to create a sense of belonging, to include women such as Tracy in the group, allowing them to express their identities and deal with the tensions between these identities. This is just one example of how both the production of identity and the achievement of belonging are realised and enacted. The concept of a lesbian habitus offers a way of making sense of some of these tensions and women's diverse experiences of lesbian cultures.

Conclusion

The brief stories told here and the theoretical problematics they speak to offer a nuanced tale of queer urbanism. I have focused mainly on lesbian women living in the hinterlands of south-east London, lying between the cosmopolitanism of the centre and the urban sprawl beyond. Within this multifaceted spatiality and ongoing intersubjective negotiation, identities are continually in a process of emergence and becoming as they are interpellated, stabilised and destabilised in turn. In the stories, sexual identity is at times foregrounded, while at other times it moves into the background. To track down these common everyday happenings enables a microanalysis of 'being' lesbian within both heteronormative and homonormative cultures. It is in the space of daily practices that we become human. We negotiate and celebrate the city on a human scale, by going about our daily business of living: travelling to and from home, working, caring and being with friends and family (Weeks et al. 2001). The underlying theme here is one of simply getting by, getting on with it and finding one's own pleasures amidst the difficulties of living in a crowded, expensive global city.

Focusing on the everyday draws attention to the ways in which we make sense of ourselves and the ways that others make sense of us. Crucially, it is in these spaces that heteronormativity is navigated, that the meanings of sexual identities are interpolated and negotiated. It is in the space/time of the everyday that we meet our immediate needs. It is here through often routine and repetitive embodied practices that our needs are met, formulated and understood. Sexual identity is an underlying theme in these representations, but it is not the main focus here. Many lesbians and gay men lead very ordinary lives. In this space of ordinariness, battles for acceptance are fought, terms of belonging are negotiated, children are raised, prejudice is encountered and lives are lived. It is through the negotiation of the meanings of sexuality described above that women develop in their daily lives what Goffman (1959) has described as a 'moral career', as they move between the intimate and the public and in the process develop a framework of the imaginary through which they make sense of themselves and others. It is in the spatiality and temporality of everyday life that we learn about ourselves and the sexuality of the city over our life course.

However, the matters discussed here also have wider relevance when thinking about how we might conceptualise and research sexual and gendered identities.

Methodologically, conducting ethnographic research into queer lives (Rooke 2009, 2010; Halberstam 2005) offers a way of bringing together queer theories of sexual subjectivities and identity categories, the practices which generate them and the ways in which people live with and make sense of them. I chose to conduct ethnographic research into lesbian and bisexual women's everyday lives in a deliberate attempt to counter the tendency towards high abstraction and a reliance on theoretical cultural texts identifying the category queer. Queer is, after all, as much a feeling as a body of theory. My methodology represents an attempt to work in a theoretically engaged way while grounding my analysis in materiality, lived experience and empirical research. Grounding abstraction in the up-close world of the everyday attends to the ways in which private troubles become public issues (Mills 1959).

Today the ways in which sexuality becomes a public issue demand critical attention. Gendered and sexual identities are frequently being refigured as sexual morality is continuously discursively deployed in a wide range of debates stretching from the local to the global. In today's increasingly sexualised culture, the ostensibly intimate and private matter of sexuality is continuously debated in the public sphere, where it provides the raw materials of popular entertainment, the discursive material of debates concerning public and private morality in the 'new politics of intimacy and everyday life' (Weeks 1998, p. 35). As Berlant (1997, p. 5) argues, we are living in an intimate public sphere where acts which are not civic acts, such as sex, have increasingly come to define proper citizenship and national imaginings. The hard-won battles for respect and social justice which have characterised the lesbian and gay political movement have turned out to be something of a double-edged sword. Discourses surrounding the recognition and legitimacy of lesbian and gay identities within western nations have been uprooted from their left-of-centre political beginnings to be deployed to assert that western civilisation is politically and socially superior to an Islamic culture deemed sexually repressive. This discursive deployment of sexuality is at the heart of the war on terror as the sexual freedom of women and lesbian and gay people is 'invoked instrumentally to wage cultural assaults on Islam that reaffirm US sovereign violence' (Butler 2008, p. 3). This discursive deployment of the sexual freedom of lesbian and gay minorities in a global battle over moral superiority is taking place at the precise moment when popular culture in the West is increasingly sexualised in ways which make differences of sexuality, class, race and generation problematic (McNair 2002; Attwood 2006, 2007; Gill 2009).

As I stated at the outset, cities are sites where these processes are at work. Attitudes of tolerance to gendered and sexual diversity continue to be a significant factor in cultural and spatial strategies seeking to promote the cosmopolitanism of global cities such as Sydney, New York, Paris, San Francisco and London and the realisation of cultural regeneration of city centres. It is in these spaces in global cities that lesbian and gay cultures are at their most visible and where they are particularly marked with a kind of cosmopolitanism (Bell and Binnie 2000) which markets particular forms of knowingness, sophistication and distinction as multiculture or exoticism (Skeggs 2004; Žižek 1997). Spaces such as the 'gay village' represent a utopian entity, which works to evoke a sense of recognition and belonging in ways that are powerful, especially for the queer diasporic migrants reaching

the city. However, just as much as the visibly recognisable identity spaces of the cosmopolitan centre, which are so attractive to theorising and promotion of urban cosmopolitanism, it is in the spaces of the everyday that lots of lesbian and gay people live out their everyday lives. It is in the micro-spaces of everyday routines and habits that identities are formulated and spontaneous encounters take place. The sexual politics of the everyday described in this chapter are not easily sold in the promotion of a cosmopolitan city or employed discursively in the promotion of 'tolerance'.

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Chapter 13
Learning in/from 'Disadvantaged' Communities: Connecting People and Sites of Learning

Denise MacGregor

From Child to Teacher in a 'Disadvantaged' Community

As a classroom teacher in the 1980s and 1990s, I had always involved schoolchildren in projects that connected with the communities in which they lived. Throughout this time I taught in schools in the area known as 'the northern suburbs', a place more often mentioned for its welfare statistics and disappearing industries than for its achievements. Schools in this area had literacy and numeracy levels lower than the state average; attendance and student motivation was also low. McInerney et al. (2011) raise a valid point in stating that it is 'easy to feel a strong sense of attachment to an aesthetically pleasing landscape … much less so to a squalid, unsafe, environmentally degraded place or one that is fractured by social, economic and racial divides' (p. 10). The places that are central to the case studies presented in this chapter may not appear to be aesthetically pleasing to some, and they are fractured by social, economic and racial divides. They are places defined by high levels of unemployment, a heavy reliance on welfare payments and a rapidly changing cultural demographic. At the time of writing, the Australian national youth unemployment rate for 15–24-year-olds is 14.2% (National Welfare Rights Network n.d.). In the northern suburbs, however, the youth unemployment rate is 33.6–46.7% (.id 2011). With current unemployment at a 13-year high, young people are bearing the brunt of the closure of manufacturing industries which historically provided the driving force for the growth of industrial cities and suburbs.

I had also grown up, and continue to reside, in the north. As a child I valued the experiences provided through school and local community groups. School holiday programs provided opportunities to meet other children and to undertake day trips that as a family were not affordable. It was not until my teenage years that I became

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aware that the community I resided in was described as a community of disadvantage. I began to realise that my social identity in the wider world was linked to my community membership. Being a northern suburbs girl carried an expectation that I would probably not complete school and would definitely not attend university. My response to the discourse of disadvantage that often surrounded me was growing resilience and determination. I knew that the community I lived in had provided me with a sense of belonging.

When I became a teacher, this situatedness influenced my orientation to the school communities with which I worked. Individuals need to engage with their communities to value them and to facilitate change through collaboration. I viewed the connection to community as a way of providing not only an authentic learning opportunity but also a way of valuing that community and what it had to offer to the people who resided within it.

One of the first community projects I undertook in my early teaching career was initiated by schoolchildren in response to concerns they had about the amount of litter that polluted the local lake around which we walked for fitness each week. We discussed possible solutions, and in response we drafted a class letter that we sent to the local council to ask that rubbish bins be installed in the park. The letter was raised at a council meeting, a councillor came to speak with the children about possible designs for the bins, and after several months they were installed. Similar projects involved the collaborative development of a skate park and visits to local historical sites and industries. At the time I did not formally theorise the idea of learning from issues identified from the local surrounds.

When I commenced teaching in a university, I continued to build on a belief that the city and the communities in which we live provide collective and reciprocal learning opportunities. However, it was not until I read the work of Gruenewald and Smith (Gruenewald 2003, 2005; Gruenewald and Smith 2008; Smith 2002) that I realised that there was a broader social movement that had developed in response to 'patterns of social, educational and economic development that disrupt rather than cultivate community life' (2008, p. xiii). According to Gruenewald (2003), this movement lacks a single theoretical tradition; instead:

> Its practices can be connected to experiential learning, constructivism, outdoor education, environmental and ecological education, bioregional education, democratic education, multicultural education, community-based education, critical … [and] other approaches that are concerned with context and the value of learning from and nurturing specific places, communities and regions. (p. 3)

For the first time I recognised that my teaching was shaped by a combination of critical and place-based pedagogies. Or, as Gruenewald and Smith (2008) identified, my practice involved a critical pedagogy of place with an implicit goal of social transformation through collaboration.

Critical Place-Based Learning

Based on the work of Freire (1996, 1998) and Giroux (1988), a critical pedagogy of place begins by recognising that people exist in a cultural context and that acting on that context can change the person, the situation and the relationship people have with that context.

> People, as beings 'in a situation', find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark … Human beings *are* because they *are* in a situation. And they *will be more* the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act on it. (Freire 1996, p. 90, original emphasis)

Gruenewald (2003) states further:

> It is this spatial dimension of situationality, and its attention to social transformation, that connects critical pedagogy with a pedagogy of place. Both discourses are concerned with the contextual, geographical conditions that shape people and the actions that people take to shape these conditions. (p. 311)

It has been argued that the current primary purpose of schools is largely defined in economic terms rather than the social and cultural advancement of communities and society generally (McInerney et al. 2011). Standardised curriculum coupled with high-stakes testing reinforce a teaching pedagogy that can become far removed from one that acknowledges the needs, strengths and contributions of local communities. One of the strengths of place-based learning experiences is that they can serve to authorise locally produced knowledge (McInerney et al. 2011).

Dewey (1954) argued that truly authentic learning required students to engage in real-world activities, solving real-world problems. I continue to believe that when learning has 'real-world' purpose, the outcomes can have a genuine impact and inherent value for all concerned.

The application of place-based learning as a means to cross traditional boundaries between school and community is not new. In fact, place-based education has a strong foundation, emerging from the works of Dewey who emphasised the importance of experiential learning that connects communities with students' lives, cultures and interests (McInerney et al. 2011). Such beliefs were raised in 1954 when Dewey identified the significance of connecting learning opportunities with students' local communities through nature studies as a means to develop a sense of place. One of Dewey's major criticisms of the American educational system at that time was the apparent lack of connection or transfer between students' knowledge from outside of the classroom and into the classroom, or from school into the community. In essence, Dewey (1954) argued that truly authentic learning required students to engage in real-world activities, solving real-world problems.

Definitions of place-based learning (PBL) vary, however. Smith (2002) has defined place-based education as real-world problem solving, where students are engaged through identifying school or community issues they wish to investigate or address. In doing so, they are scaffolded to become 'creators of knowledge rather than the consumers of knowledge created by others' (Smith 2002, p. 593). Such a

view is not dissimilar to that of Sobel (2005), who positions place-based education around the notion of working in collaboration with local communities and environments as a base from which to teach across learning areas. He further highlights the hands-on and authentic learning that connects people and place, engaging students as active, contributing citizens. According to Sobel (2005):

> PBL helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances their appreciation for the natural world and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Furthermore community vitality and environmental quality are improved through active engagement of local citizens, community organisations and environmental resources in the life of the school. (p. 7)

A critical pedagogy of place embraces authentic learning experiences. Such experiences aim to foster twenty-first century thinking through interactively connecting to real-world and meaningful experiences (Snape and Fox-Turnbull 2013). Recent educational movements have extended this understanding through constructivist approaches to teaching that emphasise authentic learning experiences and practices within Australian and international curriculum frameworks.

Place-Based Learning in Design and Technology Education

The Australian Curriculum framework that underpins the case studies explored in this chapter is Technologies (ACARA 2014). The Australian Curriculum: Technologies describes two distinct but related subjects: Design and Technologies, in which students 'use design thinking and technologies to generate and produce designed solutions for authentic needs and opportunities' (ACARA 2014, p. 5), and Digital Technologies, in which students 'use computational thinking and information systems to define, design and implement digital solutions' (ACARA 2014, p. 5). An education in the subject Design and Technologies provides the experiences and skills required to engage learners in a rapidly changing world.

The capacity-building nature of PBL is central to design and technologies education, which strives to sustain communities and society by producing independent, capable and critical thinkers. The Australian Curriculum framework in Technologies conceptualises Design and Technologies as an education for an increasingly global and culturally diverse community where ideas, innovation and enterprise are central to the design and development of sustainable, socially responsible, preferred futures (ACARA 2014). In doing so, design and technologies education presents rich opportunities for user-informed design to connect people and place. More specifically, trainee teachers completing Design and Technologies courses have the opportunity to:

- develop their capabilities to critique the technological and designed worlds around them
- question those worlds in new ways and construct new meanings
- challenge the status quo of acceptance of the built and created world

- detect and deconstruct dominant power structures which create inequalities (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2001, p. 36).

PBL provides opportunities for learners' histories and experiences within communities to be acknowledged, valued and built upon. This applies as much to the trainee teachers as it does to school students. PBL recognises that all communities have assets (Mc Knight 1995, cited in Prosser et al. 2010), or funds of knowledge (Gonzales et al. 2005), that can be drawn upon to shape and support the learning of its community members and that through this process the community itself is strengthened

The University of South Australia is one of only a few universities within Australia to offer a specific 4-year undergraduate bachelor degree within the area of design and technologies education, where trainee teachers specialise in design and technologies, including food and textiles. Current design and technologies education course content and assessments provide trainee teachers with theoretical, practical and conceptual understandings that relate to their specialisation. Trainee teachers undertake four professional experience practicums in both primary and secondary school settings throughout their degree, with a specific focus on design and technologies education, to develop their educational practice and critical place-based pedagogy and philosophy.

The university campus in which this program is offered is located in the northern suburbs and draws a high percentage of its trainee teachers (32% in 2016) from these communities. These trainee teachers understand the complexities and at times the difficulties associated with living in these areas. Each year, a percentage of graduates return to complete their teaching placements or commence a teaching position in the north with a desire to improve the learning outcomes of the students they teach. PBL informs the teacher education pedagogy and provides opportunity for trainee teachers to recognise, and at times re-evaluate, the distinctive elements of their local cultures including the practices of the people in the community.

The aim of each of the PBL projects described in this chapter was to connect what is taught in the university or school classroom with the community, and where possible to acknowledge and draw on the strengths of the local community. Making these connections opens up opportunities to learn more about the community and to identify what could be transformed to support the wellbeing of both individuals and the community as a whole. However, this aim is also tempered by the realisation of what can be realistically achieved in the context of a single university course, through localised, small-scale projects. PBL in teacher education can be viewed as a process for informing the professional identity work and pedagogical practices of trainee and beginning teachers. As Thomson (2006) states, 'Place-based curriculum can offer students new resources for identity work, and new ways of making meaning about a particular local place and the collection of people who live there' (p. 92). It is envisaged that involvement in the PBL projects presented here will be a starting point for trainee teachers' personal and professional growth. Through providing meaningful and purposeful PBL teaching and learning experiences, it is hoped that

trainee teachers develop a greater capacity to interpret and adopt similar approaches in their own planning and teaching practices.

Learning with Authenticity

This chapter presents two case studies which are the outcomes of PBL experiences embedded across design and technologies education courses. Each course aims to engage trainee teachers in a range of place-based learning experiences. In doing so trainee teachers are provided with the opportunity to link and build upon learning from previously studied courses. The place-based learning experiences involved working collaboratively with members of the community to identify, design and produce a range of technological artefacts to meet community needs (Pahl and Rowsell 2010, 2011). In this instance a technological artefact is defined as a material object that is designed and created to meet an identified need or purpose in a particular context with a view to long-term sustainability.

Bartlett and Vasudevan (2010) remind us that 'Artifacts, through their creation and use, are useful tools for learners and educators as they create opportunities for interaction and listening, offer insights about everyday life, and provide understanding of culture, family and community' (p. 10). The two case studies that follow reflect the positive consequences, together with the challenges, of linking authentic purpose with the development of artefacts to facilitate community engagement.

Case Study One: Artefactual Literacies

The Artefactual Literacies project involved designing and producing artefacts to support early literacy development with preschool children. The Artefactual Literacies approach involved merging technological artefacts with literacy learning in order to present different opportunities for children to make connections with text and build understanding (Pahl and Rowsell 2010). The concept of artefactual literacies builds on the notion that literacy learning is a sociocultural process involving interactions not just between individuals but also with material objects such as writing tools, books and toys. Artefacts used in literacy events are infused with meaning related to the social purposes they serve (Bartlett and Vasudevan 2010). Applied to early childhood education practice, this can prompt investigation into families' use of literacy artefacts or, as in this project, processes of deliberately designing artefacts to support literacy development by prompting connections to be made between texts and children's lives. While much of the associated research has been focused on families' use of their own artefacts, this project focused on the purposeful design of artefacts for the use of families.

An assumption of this project was that artefacts which connected with books, and which could travel from preschools into homes, might provide parents/caregiv-

ers with resources to support early literacy development as well as strengthening connections between the preschool and children's homes. Numerous research studies have found that a child's ability to learn language develops most efficiently during the first five years of life (Kenney 2012). Emergent literacy skills lay the foundations and potential for success in later learning and are most strongly shaped and influenced during the first five years of life, that is, before a child starts school. Research suggests that some of the most influential experiences to support early language and literacy development include companionable storybook reading, play and writing between children and their parents or caregivers (Kenney 2012). It is therefore believed that a child's home environment and the people involved in that early upbringing are the most influential factors in early literacy acquisition and development. However, for some of the people involved in this crucial stage of literacy development, there are barriers that prevent or reduce their degree of involvement. The aims of the project were twofold: first, to provide parents/caregivers with textile artefacts to support the literacy participation of their children during this critical period and, second, for trainee teachers to develop an understanding of early literacy development as well as to apply their designing and production skills in a collaborative partnership.

During the project 35 trainee teachers worked in partnership with teachers and parents in seven early learning centres to design and produce textile artefacts based on popular children's storybooks. Also involved in this collaboration were the Family Learning, Early Learning and Quality Reform Unit from the Department of Education and Child Development and advisors from that department. The project was introduced to the trainee teachers by several early childhood educators and a parent during an on-campus workshop. During this session, the trainee teachers heard about the value of developing early literacy skills and the role that early learning centres play in supporting the educational and social development of children as well as providing a point of social contact for parents within the community. The parent affirmed that coming to the centre provided her with a place to talk with other mothers and to offer support to each other when needed.

Trainee teachers allocated to metropolitan centres visited them on two occasions; those working with remote centres contacted them via email and phone. The trainee teachers were warmly welcomed into the centres they visited. They identified the colour, vibrancy and warmth that they experienced on entering each site. During this time they observed parents' interactions with their children during shared reading of storybooks, asked parents and teachers questions about the type of books that children liked to read and investigated ways that the use of artefacts (such as toys, games or other resources) could facilitate greater parent/child engagement with texts. Conversations with parents revealed that they related to and choose literacy kits that contained books that they had read as children, for example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Several parents also stated that they preferred kits that contained artefacts 'that did more than just one thing'. They wanted their child to engage with the artefact beyond just linking it to the story. They wanted the artefact to help with teaching numbers, to be used in imaginary games and in one instance a parent wanted a child to take the artefact to bed as a comfort toy.

For some trainee teachers, interacting with parents and young children was a new and daunting experience; some found the noise levels, including crying babies and toddlers, challenging. Mature-age trainee teachers, particularly those that were parents, found initiating conversation with parents less confronting:

> I really enjoyed having the opportunity to return to a place that I have not visited for some time; it brought back memories of my own time as a young mum. It was good to talk to mums about their little ones. (trainee teacher, journal entry)

However, a number of journal entries reflected broader observations than the intended focus of the visits. One journal entry revealed sadness that one child arrived at the centre in the same clothes for most of the week, and another stated that the childcare centre provided the only meals that a child would probably receive on that day. Another journal entry stated: 'we were able to talk with the parents who were here today but what happens for the parent who rarely or never attends but more importantly what happens to those children?' This was a trainee teacher who had listened and understood the importance of what the visiting parent had said during her introductory talk some months earlier when that parent had highlighted the centrality of the early learning centre as a place of social interaction, support and guidance. This was a trainee teacher whose question reflected the practice of a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald and Smith 2008) with an implicit goal of social transformation through collaboration.

Trainee teachers recorded the outcome of their questioning and observations through journal entries. The findings from these observations and discussions shaped the design, form and function of the artefacts that the trainee teachers designed and produced, and in doing so this place-based project was able to provide trainee teachers with an authentic, community design-based experience. The trainee teachers produced a range of artefacts through this design process which, together with children's books, formed literacy kits that were distributed to each of the seven centres located in socially disadvantaged metropolitan and regional areas of South Australia. The kits were then borrowed by parents who attended the early learning centres. For parents/caregivers who were unable to attend a centre, the artefacts were taken into their homes through community outreach programs (Figs. 13.1 and 13.2).

A small-scale qualitative study investigated the impact that the literacy kits had on children's opportunities for literacy development in one early learning centre (MacGregor and Clark 2014). The findings revealed that the use of artefacts had four impacts:

- Raising young children's interest in books and literacy generally
- Providing parents/caregivers with the confidence to source reading materials for their children
- Offering parents/caregivers a reading engagement strategy
- Strengthening parent/caregiver–child interactions

As one childcare teacher in the study stated, 'the artefacts in the literacy kits were an effective tool for scaffolding parents through the shared learning process; they

Figs. 13.1 and 13.2   Artefacts produced by trainee teachers for use in literacy packs

act as a core of the shared learning'. It appeared that the use of artefacts helped parents to scaffold their child through a shared learning experience as they read, talked and played together. The same teacher stated further that children 'loved that their parents were being involved; they love it when their parents take an interest in what they're doing and the artefacts enabled this to occur more easily'.

Inquiry into children's choices in regard to the literacy kit they borrowed to take home demonstrated the popularity of the brightest and largest artefacts and those associated with familiar books such as the *Shaun the Sheep* series (Martin Howard) or the *Maisy* series (Lucy Cousins). Some children had borrowed the same literacy kit on a number of occasions.

Parents commented on the interactive nature of the literacy kits and the positive ways in which that interaction had benefitted their child's literacy skills. One parent identified that the textile toys had helped her child make connections with words and pictures as well as written numbers and being able to physically count objects. Another parent expressed that having themed literacy kits that appealed to the children's individual interests were a great way to engage them in reading. A number of parents commented that their children had developed a love of reading and of books, and they believed that their own exposure to text through the literacy kits had an impact on this.

The findings of the study revealed that the artefacts developed through the project created opportunities for interaction and listening as well as providing a connection between early learning centres, families and community. This interaction was significant both in the development and the use of the literacy artefacts. For the trainee teachers, the project involved authentic engagement in codesigning and cocreating quality design solutions for an identified community need. This authentic, place-based project has now been active for 7 years, and in this time almost 200 artefacts have been presented to early childhood centres in disadvantaged city and regional communities to support early literacy programs.

Case Study Two: Working Together in the Garden

Working Together in the Garden involved 25 trainee teachers working in partnership with the Stephanie Alexander Garden Program and the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) to engage parents/caregivers from one school in a range of place-based experiences. The primary school was located in an area identified as disadvantaged, with high levels of absenteeism and resultant low levels of student engagement. There was also limited parent/caregiver participation in school-based activities. The aim of the place-based project was also to increase parental/caregiver involvement and to strengthen communication between the school, students and parents/caregivers.

The Stephanie Alexander Garden Program, established in 2007, has a vision of helping children to form positive food habits for life. The program aims 'to provide the inspiration, information, professional learning and support for educational institutions to deliver pleasurable food education, in conjunction with educators, partners and the wider community' (https://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au). An independent evaluation, (Block and Johnson 2009) found that the community played an integral role in developing and maintaining the program, with community members feeling they were part of the education process. It was also noted that student absenteeism was reduced on the days they were timetabled to work in the kitchen or garden. The Working Together in the Garden project described in this chapter aimed to engage with the cultural diversity of a school community and more specifically to embed a critical pedagogy of place.

The school involved in this project served a culturally diverse community with families from Africa and the Middle East, many of them refugees, as well as Indigenous Australians and Anglo-Australian residents from previous waves of migration. As previously stated, the design and technology curriculum in teacher education involves trainee teachers developing resources in response to authentic community needs. In this case, the need was for a greater sense of cultural inclusion, tolerance and mutual understanding. Additionally there were concerns about health and nutrition. This was a place-based issue since there were numerous takeaway food outlets situated very near to the school site, accessed by students on their way to and from school.

Addressing these needs involved collaboratively designing and producing a number of artefacts that could lead to the development of a broader understanding of the possible contribution to healthy living of the diverse cultures represented within the school and wider community. The garden project was a central strategy in encouraging children and their families to develop a greater understanding of rich cultural traditions in relation to food. Design activities associated with this focus included building a pizza oven for community use, developing a recipe book that contained recipes representative of the rich cultural diversity of the community and producing a community quilt that visually represented the values of the students and the wider school community.

These activities were implemented in a way that fostered interaction. For instance, the development of a recipe book required students talking with parents

about recipes that were specific to their culture, as well as acknowledging the traditions that surrounded the production and eating of the food. The process of writing the recipe book also encouraged a small number of parents to volunteer in the school kitchen for the first time, enabling them to share their skills and traditions outside of the family home. Families from Burundi, Iran, Afghanistan and Syria joined Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian families to provide new funds of knowledge (Gonzales et al. 2005) in regard to sourcing, preparing and eating food. For instance, blessing food before eating it, the introduction of flat breads or blini to meals, eating some meals with cutlery and others with fingers, and the introduction of halal food were measures that challenged and broadened the western discourse of food preparation and eating.

Similarly, the building and the use of a pizza oven enabled the development of relationships and contributed to building a sense of community. Trainee teachers collaboratively designed and built the oven. A small group of schoolchildren helped with the laying of bricks and rendering. Once the oven was completed, teachers and members of the school leadership team invited parents and students to monthly informal 'free pizza and chat nights'. A number of families took the opportunity to attend, and the number of attendees gradually increased over time. Many teachers reported that these occasions were the only time they had the opportunity to meet with parents.

However, sometime afterwards vandals, who were identified as a small group of teenagers known in the community, broke into the garden and damaged part of the oven. In response a number of parents and their children made the necessary repairs. More than 1 year later, the oven appears to be 'off limits' to vandals who unfortunately continue to cause damage to other parts of the school. It is also interesting to note that the garden itself is very rarely vandalised, perhaps because the garden provided a place of connection for these teenagers when they attended the school.

Schoolchildren were actively involved in discussing what it was that they liked and valued about their school and community as part of the process of designing and producing a 'values quilt'. To produce the quilt, the schoolchildren were introduced to basic sewing techniques to transfer their drawn images and text onto the fabric. The material used to complete the boarder of the quilt was in the school colours. Once completed, the quilt was presented at the school assembly and then publicly displayed in the school foyer.

The production and subsequent display of the quilt provided all students with an opportunity to discuss and critique their school, community or 'their place' and to identify what they saw as being 'good' or of value. Although not all responses were positive, the overwhelming message was that the community was friendly and had good playing areas, and, for some students, school was identified as a safe and happy place. A number of them also identified the kitchen and garden as places they valued. Negative responses included 'not liking much' about where they lived and not wanting to be at school. Responses, both positive and negative, provided an opportunity for ongoing conversations as the schoolchildren designed and produced the quilt.

From these conversations, it could be gleaned that community and place for these schoolchildren can be complex, at times difficult and unstable, particularly in regard to employment and income. For these schoolchildren, home and school were interconnected places within the larger community; they walked or rode their bikes to school, and their parents talked in the schoolyard. The schoolchildren referred to 'their' place as where their families and friends lived and a place that provided them with a sense of familiarity and belonging. On the other hand, it was impossible to ignore the vandalism which seemed to reflect a willingness to damage the place of schooling in their lives and communities. As McInerney et al. (2011) state: 'Place is a lens through which young people begin to make sense of themselves and their surroundings. It is where they form relationships and social networks, develop a sense of community and learn to live with themselves' (p. 5). This sense making and these relationships reflect both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of children's places in their schools and communities.

Informal evaluation of the Working Together in the Garden project was undertaken with information collected from two sources: trainee teachers' responses in reflective journal entries (non-assessed), and anecdotal feedback from partners including teachers, principals, parent/caregivers and community members. The trainee teachers' reflections reinforce the value of place-based learning for them as future educators working in a diverse social context:

> Place-based learning offered me a holistic approach to learning by engaging with real-life experiences. The students were actively involved in the process and were able to have a say in what they wanted to achieve in their school kitchen. This allowed them to feel a sense of pride and achievement.

The trainees were able to articulate how the collaborative design and production process created many kinds of connections between participants, with multiple benefits:

> Students were noticeably excited about the pizza oven, and would often talk to us about what sorts of pizza they could make using produce from the school's garden, and eggs from the school's chickens. Students also made personalised tiles that they would later finish the pizza oven with. This helped create a sense of connection and ownership of the project. During pick-up and drop-off times parents stopped, looked and thanked us for our time and effort. And teachers were already developing future lessons around nutrition, cooking and fire safety. When we built the pizza oven, we did not simply build a physical object. We created a learning environment for immediate and future students, a resource for teachers, and a meeting place for the wider school community.

Conclusion

The projects outlined in this chapter were successful and continue to be so because the teachers, school leadership and members of the community recognise that to maintain student's interest and motivation they needed to introduce authentic

learning experiences that have relevance and connection. Formal and anecdotal evidence suggested that the place-based projects were successful in:

- Developing positive relationships between students, parents, teachers, trainee teachers and members of the wider community
- Providing a 'real', tangible purpose for student involvement that connected directly to their lifeworlds
- Increasing the opportunity for school–community communication in developing a more coordinated response to the needs of students
- Providing an insight into possible future employment or enterprise opportunities
- Enabling students to gain recognition for their efforts

However, there are a number of challenges that may impact on the longevity of PBL opportunities. If we are to promote a critical approach to place-based learning in schools, we need to consider how we can better prepare trainee teachers to develop a curriculum that 'fosters a spirit of critical inquiry into communities and landscapes' (McInerney et al. 2011, p. 12). Teaching staff in universities worldwide are being encouraged to deliver courses online with ever-increasing trainee teacher numbers. These measures pose a potential challenge to establishing projects that are unique to place and are driven by the specific needs of local communities and the people that inhabit them. The positive synergies that can develop from working with like-minded people in community settings to acknowledge and find alternative solutions to issues associated with student disengagement, absenteeism and related social and ecological issues could be lost. Developing a sense and understanding of place and the issues that may be associated with that place can only achieved by working with and in the community. How to do this utilising the affordances of digital technology is a question for the immediate future, keeping in mind its potential as a means of connecting with places that may be too remote for city-based trainee teachers to visit easily.

In this chapter I have described communities as the places in which we develop a sense of belonging and connectedness with the members who live there, and as valuable sites of learning. I have aimed to contribute to the theory and practice of place-based learning and a critical pedagogy of place through presenting two case studies which reflect connection between university trainee teachers, children, teachers, parents/caregivers and members of the wider community as they designed and produced artefacts to meet collaboratively identified community needs. The project findings suggest that place-based learning experiences facilitate opportunities for meaningful educational and social connections between people and communities. When teachers, students, parents/caregivers and trainee teachers view communities with a critical lens, they are prompted to ask questions such as:

- What are the best features of the community? What are the features that we need to change? What can be done to make this happen?
- What can we do to encourage a more inclusive community that values the diversity of its inhabitants?

- What can we do to conserve our environment and resources to achieve a more sustainable future?
- Who makes the decisions in our community? Whose voices are represented? Who is empowered and who is disempowered? (adapted from McInerney et al. 2011, p. 12)

As a teacher educator, I am mindful of the extent to which this can realistically be achieved in the context of university courses and of the extent to which the outcomes can be sustained for trainee teachers once they graduate. However, the PBL highlighted in this chapter created authentic opportunities for all participants to learn about, value and care for the social wellbeing of their communities. Trainee teachers recognised the need to connect schools and communities as part of a collaborative effort to improve student engagement and participation. In case study one, parents were appreciative of the literacy kits and perceived them as a way to improve literacy engagement with their children. In case study two, formal and informal opportunities for communication between parents and teachers improved. Importantly, engagement in place-based learning experiences combined with critical inquiry appeared to scaffold a deeper and richer understanding of the role that education can play in supporting individuals and communities to create communities in which they want to live, work and play.

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Chapter 14
Learning How to Smell a Rat and Identify the Spaces: Community-Based Education and Urban Renewal

Marjorie Mayo

Learning, Cultures and Class in Urban Contexts

As Michael Keith (2005) reflects in his study of multicultural cities and the future of racism, the city has been depicted in a contradictory fashion in the English literary tradition. Quoting from Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973), he explores the manner in which urban life 'connoted a series of positive and negative values, the corollaries of which were logically identified with the rural way of life', and how the 'stigma of noise, worldliness and ambition that are associated with the city (and often the court as a metonym for the urban)' have been juxtaposed against the 'backwardness, ignorance and limitations of the rural way of life' with notions of 'learning, of communication and of light as the positively signified aspects of city life in contrast to the peace, innocence and simple values of the country' (Keith 2005, p. 27). Learning and communication, then, emerge as central to the very notion of the urban. For Williams himself, these inadequate stereotypes of the rural and the urban in literature—rural idiocy or pastoral innocence on the one hand and the city as civilising agency or the place of corruption, on the other—needed to be unpacked. They needed to be set in the context of wider power relations, a context that included the development of capitalism, from the agrarian as well as the industrial revolution, through imperialism to the postcolonial era.

For Williams, this focus upon education related to more personal issues of identity. As a working-class boy turned academic via educational opportunities, he was deeply concerned with the tensions between education and the life of custom, social life and identities of origin. These were the tensions Thomas Hardy explored, most notably in *Jude the Obscure* (1995/1895), his last and particularly controversial novel that was so influential in movements to promote opportunities for working-class

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education at the time. This included the foundation of Ruskin College, Oxford, to provide the educational opportunities that 'Christminster'/Oxford so signally denied the unhappy Jude. For Williams (1973), there was an inherent tension between education and social solidarity, when education was 'tied to social advancement within a class society' (p. 202). He was concerned lest the former be destroyed by the latter. For the working-class boy who gained a grammar school education at this time, progression to an elite university such as Cambridge typically involved the loss of working-class identity and, with this, the loss of solidarities rooted in working-class culture.

Elena Ferrante's (2012, 2015) Neapolitan novels offer more recent insights into these cultural tensions, as the paths of the two young friends, Elena, the novels' protagonist, and her closest friend Lila, diverge. Elena completes her secondary schooling, going on to university, reading voraciously and then writing a successful novel in grammatically correct Italian. Lila, in contrast, leaves school to get married, still expressing herself in the local Neapolitan dialect, thereby effectively marking herself off from mainstream Italian culture.

The character Lila was surrounded by the solidarities of working-class culture, but without illusions about its concomitant violence. As Elena reflected subsequently, in similar vein, she felt 'no nostalgia for our childhood: it was full of violence'. She continues:

> Of course, I would have liked the nice manners that the teacher and the priest preached but I felt that those ways were not suited to our neighbourhood, even if you were a girl. The women fought amongst themselves more than the men. (Ferrante 2012, p. 37)

Learning—and so leaving for a very different urban context—had its benefits, then, as well as its costs.

Although the city has been depicted as the site of alienation in literature, it has also been depicted as the site of educational opportunities and personal development. And the city has been identified as the location of movements for social change, including the development of mutuality, cooperation and trade union organisation. Williams illustrated this point, for example, through Grassic Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* (1995), in which Gibbon follows the story of a woman torn between her love of the land and her desire to escape the constraints of village life, a tension resolved by her son through his engagement with struggles for social justice. In a class-divided society such as Britain, Williams was concerned to affirm these values of connectedness and mutuality whilst valuing education and social change, holding on to a wider vision of education, beyond education's potential for instrumental gain and individual advancement. These concerns remain central to debates on community-based education and urban regeneration: education for whom and for what purposes?

More specifically, Williams drew attention to the contradictions inherent in literary representations of urban regeneration. For example, Charles Dickens provided a remarkable illustration of urban regeneration in North London with the development of the railways, as described in *Dombey and Son* (2012/1848). Dickens was a habitual walker (Beaumont 2015) who relished the experiences of

the streets, evidently fascinated as he learnt and relearnt the city, urban regeneration and change. He was horrified by the social deprivation, the ragged tenements, whilst marvelling at the developments accompanying the railroad, the new streets, the villas, gardens, churches and healthy public walks. For Dickens, as for a number of nineteenth-century writers including Zola and Tolstoy, the railway was a symbol of industrial progress and power just as it was a symbol of destruction: the lifeblood and the triumphant monster. The development of the railways was for Dickens, then, both threatening and exciting, destroying traditional working-class neighbourhoods whilst promoting local regeneration, in the context of wider social transformation.

For *Dombey and Son*, the merchant trading house at the centre of this particular novel, the business was located within the framework of imperialism. 'The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and the moon were made to give them light', Dickens mocked.

> Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre. (quoted in Williams 1973, p. 161)

The physical transformation of London, with all its contradictory potential—for creation and destruction—had to be understood, then, within this wider context of London's financial role as an imperial city.

This wider framework has particular contemporary relevance to the global city, as Saskia Sassen (1998) explains. Global cities such as London connect remote points of finance, production and consumption, connections that impact upon the city's development. And global cities depend upon supplies of newcomers, low-wage labourers, including migrant labourers from the global South. Whilst the nation-state continues to have key relevance, Sassen argues, the politics of the global city cannot be understood outside this wider framework.

For those concerned to facilitate learning and to promote capacity building through community participation, there are tensions, then, and challenges in the context of urban regeneration. Can learning opportunities be provided in ways that promote social solidarity, enabling community organisations to engage with the politics of regeneration democratically? Or do these learning opportunities simply promote individual advancement, the professionalization of key activists, the 'community stars' and the community godfathers, the 'usual suspects' of the regeneration game (Taylor 2003)? What lessons do community activists learn themselves, reflecting on their experiences of engaging with the politics of regeneration in the global city? Do they deepen their understanding of the structural factors involved, sharpening their analyses of the scope for local action within the global context? Does this lead to increasing solidarity within and between communities, taking account of diversity and difference? Or does this all lead to increasing tensions within and between communities of locality and interest, with increasing xenophobia in the wake of New York's 9/11 and London's 7/7, sharpened by popular anxieties in a period of economic austerity?

Before focusing upon particular experiences of education, learning for participation and learning from experiences of participation in urban regeneration, I want to examine approaches to community-based learning more generally. Whilst these approaches have been profoundly influenced by Williams' work, the influence of Paulo Freire has also been central to debates on adult learning and community development. Freire's ideas underpin such texts as Popple's *Analysing Community Work* (2015), for instance, as well as the work of Crowther, Martin and Shaw (1999) and Kane (2001) on popular education, both in Scotland and in Latin America.

There are a number of ironies here, as I will suggest in more detail subsequently. Freire's approach, based upon his most famous text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), has been lauded for its particular relevance in rural development contexts in the South, although Freire himself concluded his career as an educator in the global city of São Paulo. Emphasising the dysfunctions of authoritarian didacticism, Freire's educational philosophy has also been interpreted to support populist, libertarian and anti-statist strategies. More recently in England, for example, Freire's writings have been appropriated under the centre-right coalition government's programs to promote the so-called 'Big Society', rolling back the state whilst 'enabling people to play a more active part' in (an increasingly unequal) society (Cabinet Office, UK Government 2012; Taylor and Wilson 2016). But Freire himself engaged with the complexities of the state and formal political structures as an active member of the left-wing Brazilian Workers' Party. The discussion of these contradictions sets the scene, then, for the discussion of policies and recent experiences of education and regeneration in practice in London and elsewhere in the UK.

Approaches to Adult Popular Education: Constructing a New 'Common Sense'?

Building upon the history of progressive adult education in the past, Williams and others envisaged that their work as adult educators could contribute to the development of a New Left in Britain. In the post-World War Two period, these educators believed that adult education had the potential to open up the cultural struggle, the politics of representation, ideology and hegemony (Steele 1995). Through adult education 'a new political common sense was to be constructed', and 'a critical popular consciousness had to be developed' (Steele 1995, p. 47). This was to be an educational process rooted in actual social processes, what Williams described as 'an attempt at a mass democratic education' (quoted in Steele 1995, p. 49), linking learning to social engagement.

In the event, this approach to adult education led in a number of differing directions, from the incorporation of 'cultural studies' within the academic mainstream, on the one hand, to the promotion of 'a kind of uncritical populism' that has arguably 'celebrated virtually every manifestation of popular culture as politically progressive' on the other (Steele 1995, p. 55). But adult education could still play a

progressive role, Steele concluded, providing spaces for critical dialogue between academics, communities and social movements.

This has been the view of those engaged in popular education more recently. Popular education, as defined by the Popular Education Forum for Scotland, is popular—*not populist*—in the sense that:

- it is rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people
- it is overtly political and critical of the *status quo*
- it is committed to progressive social and political change. (Martin 1999, p. 4)

Popular education, in this tradition, would provide the spaces, then, for individuals and organisations to develop their critical understanding of the wider interests, including the global pressures, involved in the regeneration of urban neighbourhoods, enabling them to develop strategies for more progressive social and political change.

Popular education drawing upon the ideas of Paulo Freire links reflection with action, encouraging people to be active subjects rather than objects of social change (Kane 1999). Freire's process begins through the teaching of literacy, starting to read and write a limited number of 'generative' words, with an ascending order of phonetic difficulty—words that have also been selected for their practical significance in the learners' daily lives. In this way, the learning is rooted in the learners' reality, starting from what they already know, as the basis for going on to challenge men and women to seize the written code and its political meaning. This approach provides 'a widespread notion not only of language, but also of the world, as a true political-linguistic pedagogue must do', as Ana Maria de Araújo Freire commented, reflecting upon the contribution of Paulo Freire (Freire 1995, p. 32).

The overall aim of Freire's approach has been to facilitate 'conscientisation', the development of critical consciousness, enabling the oppressed to challenge the dominant oppressors' 'common-sense' representations of reality. The goal is for the oppressed to problematize this reality, rather than to accept it or take it for granted. Freire acknowledged his debt to Gramsci's thinking on the battle of ideas, here, together with Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of educational approaches relating theory to practice (Mayo 1997). Whilst Gramsci himself was actively involved in promoting workers' political education, he was also convinced of the importance of rigorous theoretical work.

So was Freire. In later life, in conversation with Miles Horton, the American adult educator whose educational work supported the development of the Civil Rights movement, Freire (1972) acknowledged that this aspect needed more emphasis. He had been concerned to critique a 'banking' style of education, traditional approaches that treated the learners as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Rather, Freire had argued, learning should be based upon critical dialogue between educators and learners, posing problems together so that 'they become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' (Freire 1972, p. 53). Reflecting on this with Horton, subsequently, Freire recognised the problem of differential power between educators and learners; they were not starting out on an equal footing. Populist approaches to adult education, based on the assumption that 'the people'

needed no more than the space to reflect upon their experiences, were effectively disarming educators by failing to provide the necessary theoretical tools. Educators' critical understanding of competing theories was key, as well as their access to relevant information (Horton and Freire 1990).

As educators involved in promoting community participation in urban regeneration have been arguing more recently, whilst people can and do indeed learn from their experiences of urban regeneration, they do not necessarily learn lessons that enable them to engage effectively with the structures of governance and private sector interests whilst developing their own alternative strategies (Merrifield 2010; Mayo and Annette 2010). Nor do they automatically learn lessons that promote social solidarity, rather than increasing social divisions as different interests within and between communities compete for scarce resources. As the evaluation report of a previous UK government's program to promote community-based citizen education concluded, 'active citizenship cannot be provided on the basis of self-help alone. Resources are required to support and train skilled learning facilitators as well as to provide the learning directly' (Mayo and Rooke 2006).

In previous policy contexts in Britain, there was a level of agreement that governments should work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors as well as with the private sector. Programs such as 'New Deal for Communities' explicitly stated that communities should be 'at the heart of renewal' and actively involved in the management and delivery of urban regeneration initiatives, with time and resources provided to facilitate their involvement, including resources for education and training for capacity building (Taylor 2003, p. 124). The reality has been more problematic, however, and increasingly so as governments have become more and more overtly neoliberal. There are, of course, challenges inherent in promoting local community-based participation in government-led programs, even at the most favourable of times. In the current context of increasing marketisation and austerity, the case for resourcing community-based learning is even more inherently problematic, although more necessary than ever.

Although previous governments' programs did demonstrate some commitment to community-based education to promote active citizenship and community empowerment, then, such programs had to compete for funding with more vocational priorities, education and training to match the labour force to employers' requirements more closely. There are echoes here of the utilitarian approach to education and training lampooned by Charles Dickens in *Hard Times*. In the view of Dickens' entrepreneur, Mr. Gradgrind, children in the school that he supported should be instilled with useful facts, and 'nothing but fact'. He admonished a child who had mentioned fancying flowers with 'You must discard the word Fancy altogether' (Dickens 1995, p. 14). Teachers in *Hard Times* were to fill the vessels of their pupils' minds full to the brim with useful facts. There would seem to be echoes here of adult educators' distinctions between 'Useful Knowledge'—instrumentalist knowledge—and 'Really Useful Knowledge'—the knowledge and critical understanding required for the promotion of social justice and transformation agendas, critical 'knowledges calculated to make you free' (Johnson 1993, quoted in Crowther 1999, p. 30).

On the basis of research exploring participants' perspectives on their experiences of participation in urban renewal programs, Anastacio et al. (2000) concluded that participants certainly did want access to technical skills, including access to independent technical expertise. They also wanted resources, including time, to be made available for capacity building. The type of learning that was most valued, however, was learning that had been negotiated with participants to meet their learning needs, as they defined and prioritised these themselves. And they particularly valued spaces to share their experiences and reflect upon these critically. The type of training that was least appreciated, in contrast, was when trainers were 'parachuted in' without prior negotiation with participants about their learning needs and when consultants were 'paid considerable sums to tell people what they knew already' (Anastacio et al. 2000, p. 30).

Learning for participation and learning from experiences of participation in urban regeneration thus raise questions about purposes and strategies. One question is whether the purpose of this learning is the provision of instrumentalist information to enable residents to learn the rules of the regeneration game or, alternatively, to build a critical understanding of the structures of power and the wider pressures impacting upon their spaces in the city for the development of effective alternative strategies. Will the focus be individual progression—the promotion of particular community 'stars'—or will this learning be geared towards the promotion of increasing solidarity within and between communities, linking local concerns with the wider global context? Can learning be provided in ways that facilitate learning from people's own experiences, without remaining within the confines of populist approaches?

Learning for and Learning from Participation in Urban Regeneration Programs

Lifelong learning emerged as a key theme in the 1990s, a buzzword in public policy debates in Britain and the European Union and beyond. Typically the focus has been upon the supposed outcomes in terms of the knowledge economy, promoting global competitiveness (Edwards 1997). Lifelong learning enables individuals to adapt to changes in the world of work, it was argued, taking responsibility for their own employability in a rapidly changing job market.

Whilst this somewhat instrumentalist view has been predominant in public policy debates, there have also been expressions of less instrumentalist views, however. For example, Jacques Delors, at the time president of the European Commission, reflected that lifelong learning must, in addition to its economic benefits,

> constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings—their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community. (Delors 1996, quoted in NAGCELL 1997, p. ii)

In addition to 'securing our economic future', the then Secretary for Education and Employment in the UK David Blunkett reflected, in the same period, that learning was to be valued for its wider contribution to active citizenship. It 'enables people to play a full part in their community' (DfEE 1998, p. 7).

A decade later the government of the day reaffirmed this importance of learning for wider purposes. The 2009 White Paper *The Learning Revolution* promised to invest in innovative approaches to reach and engage new learners. This proposal had the backing of a wide range of organisations from the Church of England and the National Trust through to the University of the Third Age, a voluntary organisation providing opportunities for learning on a self-help basis with and for older people. Whilst the then Secretary of State John Denham endorsed the importance of these types of informal community-based learning, including learning for citizenship, he emphasised that government's continuing prioritisation of vocational learning (Kingston 2009).

There has been some recognition, then, that learning has value for the promotion of active—and critical—citizenship, as well as for the hoped-for promotion of economic competitiveness. Whilst these benefits of lifelong learning have been recognised in the past, policies and programs to resource community-based learning for active citizenship were slower to emerge. These wider agendas emerged from policy papers on lifelong learning and strategies to tackle social exclusion via urban regeneration (DfEE 1998; Social Exclusion Unit 1999) through to subsequent initiatives to promote citizen participation in structures of governance. More recently, the emphasis has been on citizen engagement to facilitate the promotion of localisation agendas: community organising to encourage citizens to participate at the very local level. If residents were to be engaged in these earlier programs for urban renewal, their participation needed to be resourced through capacity building, it was argued, just as policymakers and professionals needed to learn to work more effectively with service users and communities in response (SEU 1999).

Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) was a community-based citizenship education strategy which was developed from the bottom up rather than from the top down through regional partnerships or 'hubs'. The strategy supported the development of learning programs through working in dialogue with learners and learning providers to enable people to gain knowledge, critical understanding and skills to participate in existing structures and, where necessary, to transform them. Programs were explicitly defined as being geared towards empowerment and the promotion of social justice.

Right from the start, the ALAC hubs took initiatives to promote social solidarity, taking account of the global context. In South Yorkshire, for example, a course on 'Globalisation and Local Action' was developed, building upon a previous course on globalisation run by the Workers' Education Association. The new course set out

to explore the links between the local and the global, focusing upon some very practical issues, such as the potential loss of local shopping facilities threatened by the proposed developed of a major supermarket, part of a global food chain, and the potential loss of jobs from call centres as the result of global shifts in investment. White working-class communities' concerns, from concerns over job losses to concerns over the loss of locally accessible shopping, needed to be addressed, along with the concerns of refugees and asylum seekers and black and ethnic minority communities. Identifying the common ground was key if solidarity was to be promoted, rather than white backlash (Hewitt 2005).

As Osler and Starkey (2005) argue in their discussion of the importance of cosmopolitan approaches to citizenship education and human rights in schools, cosmopolitan citizenship 'implies recognition of our common humanity and a sense of solidarity with this' (p. 93) based upon a critical understanding of common interests and needs. Such increased understanding provided the backdrop for subsequent activities in South Yorkshire, including an Africa Study Group, exploring issues with African refugees and migrant workers (a number of whom had already contributed to the Globalisation and Local Action course). Through sharing critical understanding of the global pressures that were giving rise to violent conflicts and to migration across continents, these programs contributed to reducing misunderstandings and stereotypes, improving social solidarity between different communities in the region.

Subsequent initiatives expanded these approaches in South Yorkshire. The 'Home Is Where the Heart Is: People, Migration and Europe' project, for example, organised a study program based around a study visit to Malmö, Sweden, to develop critical understanding of current European migration policies including those on refugees and asylum seekers. This program recruited participants who had been on anti-racist courses, together with those working with refugees and with black and ethnic minority groups in the area. The group of 18 participants included refugees and asylum seekers, members of black and ethnic minority communities and white British residents. Before going to Sweden, the group explored the history of migration to the UK (the 'mongrel nation') and considered the roots of racism, before exploring the lessons for challenging discrimination and pursuing social justice agendas. The study visit provided the opportunity to set this learning in the wider context of European policies and to share the learning about positive ways forward on the group's return to South Yorkshire.

In the Greater Manchester area, the ALAC hub similarly addressed issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers, including issues of shared concern such as local transport, cultural and sporting issues and environmental concerns, as well as issues of more specific concern to minority communities, such as policing and racist incidents. A Refugee Charter was developed as part of strategies to tackle the latter. Here too, there was shared learning and community-based research, building upon ALAC's training in research skills. This provided the basis for joint action involving different minority communities along with other local organisations and groups in the voluntary and community sector. Subsequent programs to promote community research for community development developed these types of initiatives, both in

Greater Manchester and elsewhere, promoting partnerships between universities and colleges and their local communities (Mayo et al. 2013).

Although funding for the original ALAC program came to an end in 2006, the hubs continued to work together as part of the successor 'Take Part' initiative, with further funding from 2008 (Mayo and Annette 2010). This successor program was more directly geared towards increasing levels of participation in civic activities, such as participation in local structures of governance, rather than towards strengthening civil society more generally—a somewhat more limited view of active citizenship. The reality would seem to have been more complex however: these public programs were influenced by pressures from civil society more generally, including pressures from autonomous social movements. Despite the narrowing of focus, overall, from the top down, local activists still found (at least some) spaces for more critical forms of active citizenship. Although programs were being formally evaluated in terms of criteria such as how many learners were progressing to become school governors or magistrates, for example, other outcomes included advocacy and campaigning around resources for education and training. And civil society organisations and social movements have continued to contribute to citizenship education, more generally, from the outside. Citizenship education programs in schools, for example, can and do engage with materials, including learning packs, provided by organisations such as those concerned with the promotion of peace, social development and social justice globally.

The point to emphasise here is simply this then: that critical learning for active citizenship can take place in a variety of ways. Despite their inherent contradictions and in-built tensions, government-supported initiatives have provided some spaces for community-based learning in the pursuit of urban renewal and community solidarity agendas rooted in social justice values, although these spaces have been shrinking dramatically in the current policy context. As a result, the potential contributions of civil society organisations and social movements would seem to be more urgently required than ever.

Studies have also demonstrated the learning that took place informally, as participants reflected upon their experiences of urban renewal programs. A number of community representatives who were interviewed for a study in South East London, for example, conceptualised capacity building as being about more than the acquisition of technical competencies. Capacity building, from this perspective, involved developing the critical understanding to challenge the vested interests of the powerful and the ability to identify the spaces to promote strategies for social change (Anastacio and Mayo 1999). As one community representative commented, she had 'gained a better understanding of the real world and the political game'. Her involvement had sharpened her 'sense of deciding what to make trade offs around'; increased her self-confidence, assertiveness and critical understanding; and heightened what she described as her 'sixth sense for both smelling a rat and seeing potential' in a regeneration context (Anastacio and Mayo 1999, p. 14).

Such learning did not necessarily take place, however. Some participants became cynical and even so frustrated that they simply walked away in disgust. Others learned the 'rules of the regeneration game' (Taylor 2003). But that, in itself, did not

necessarily lead to significant changes in the regeneration programs as a result. Individuals could acquire knowledge and skills, gaining in self-confidence as individuals, but that did not necessarily translate into wider collective benefits, let alone increasing social solidarity within and between individuals and communities within regeneration areas.

Learning to Strengthen Social Solidarity: Current Challenges

Since the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on 9 September 2001 (9/11) and subsequent bombings elsewhere, including those of 7 July 2005 in London, there has been increasing concern with 'community cohesion' agendas. There has been a 'dark side' of transnational activism in response to the dysfunctions of globalisation. These attacks unleashed dark responses, it has been argued, including 'aggressive militarism abroad and national chauvinism' at home in the metropolis (Tarrow 2005, p. 217). Human rights concerns have been raised in parallel, in relation to the treatment of those suspected of terrorism, whether domestically or internationally, causing major anxieties for minority communities, especially Muslim communities (Kundnani 2009).

Islamophobia has not, of course, been confined to urban contexts. On the contrary, Islamophobia has become more evident in recent years, along with racism more generally, as migrant labour has been more visible—and more visibly exploited—in rural contexts. But rural experiences of 'community cohesion' are beyond the scope of this particular chapter, given its focus upon urban contexts.

Community cohesion has been described as providing a new framework for race relations policy in the UK, signalling a shift from the previous emphasis upon multiculturalism towards a greater emphasis upon social integration and cohesion into a (British) whole. This can be related to wider shifts in the contested politics of multiculturalism in the context of white backlashes against this, on both sides of the Atlantic (Hewitt 2005). White backlashes have been described as 'part of a socially disparate set of responses to equalities discourses' and 'part of an on-going dispute with an also socially and politically disparate equalities and multiculturalist agenda' (Hewitt 2005, p. 4).

The concept of 'community cohesion' has been contested then and from differing perspectives. Community cohesion agendas have been criticised, for example, for fitting into wider approaches that imply that there are, or at least could be, unitary communities, without taking sufficient account of diversity and difference, including differences based upon structural inequalities. In the USA, Macedo (1999) has described educational approaches based upon the notion of a common culture as 'a poisonous pedagogy'. In his view, in contrast, educationalists should be unpacking the myths behind this notion of a common culture, unmasking the underlying structural inequalities, including the histories of slavery, racial discrimination and violence that have characterised US history, both domestically and internationally. In the British context, it has been argued, in addition, government

discourses on common cultures and community cohesion open the way for increasing surveillance, with a new moral authoritarianism to promote and enforce this common culture (Baron 2004).

Since then, community cohesion agendas have become even more problematic, along with the initiatives that have been developed to promote them. Such programs have been criticised for targeting Muslim communities, for example, rather than focusing more widely on preventing violent extremism in all its forms, including racist violence and xenophobia from the political right (Jones 2013). And programs have been criticised for failing to take account of the underlying structural inequalities that give rise to such frustrations in the first place, along with the frustrations arising from British foreign policy interventions including the Iraq War, launched despite massive popular opposition in Britain in 2005 (Kundnani 2009).

Whilst such criticisms have relevance, it has been argued, government interventions to promote community cohesion can have varying and more positive effects in practice (Bruegel 2005). Solidaristic networks can enable disadvantaged groups from differing backgrounds to challenge inequalities, and these networks can provide resources for the benefit of wider communities. Bruegel uses a case study of women's community action via New Deal for Communities in East Manchester, for example, illustrating the ways in which women challenged a particular urban development issue, enabling the space in question to be used to provide facilities for the whole community, including local youth, across ethnic boundaries (Bruegel 2005). Community cohesion is not simply to be equated with agendas for social control, then. Social movements depend upon such networks of solidarity, mutuality and trust, it has been argued, and participation in social movements can further strengthen such networks (Della Porta and Diani 1999)—whether in ways governments intend or not.

There have been potentially positive as well as negative aspects to these preoccupations with community cohesion, then. There have been inherent tensions as policies have attempted to balance respect for diversity and difference and the promotion of social solidarity, on the one hand, with agendas for increasing integration and social control on the other—just as there have been tensions inherent in policies to control immigration and to limit the flow of refugees and asylum seekers whilst failing to control international arms trading and pursuing foreign policies that exacerbate conflicts elsewhere. There are parallels here with some of the tensions inherent in policies towards citizenship in general and citizenship education more specifically. Whilst formal citizenship tests, for example, have been the subject of some controversy and criticism, previous New Labour governments also developed far wider, more flexible and more participatory approaches to citizenship.

Meanwhile the urban crisis has become increasingly evident, as the housing situation in many major cities has been illustrating. London, for example, as a global city and financial capital, has been experiencing the impacts of neoliberal marketisation in extreme forms. The lack of genuinely affordable, good quality housing has been exacerbated by the effects of social welfare reforms, squeezing low and increasingly also middle-income households out of the inner city. Communities are being fragmented as people are being displaced (Mayo and Newman 2014). The

richest regions of countries are also often the most unequal as a result (Shout 2014), and increasingly so as urban regeneration programs compound these problems.

Estate redevelopment programs have been increasingly market-led in recent years, as social housing services have struggled to find the resources to fund them themselves, given the dearth of public resources available. As a result, the balance between tenures has been changing, with fewer homes for social rent, but proportionately more homes for private sale and/or private rental. Between 2004 and 2014, estate redevelopments in London led to a net loss of 8296 social rented homes, losses that have been continuing with gathering momentum as the London Assembly's report *Knock it down or do it up* has recognised (London Assembly 2015; Koessl and Mayo 2015) and a think tank report has confirmed (Adonis and Davies 2015).

The London Assembly report recognises the importance of involving tenants and residents at every stage, working with them in partnership to ensure that they are fairly treated. But they are up against formidable market forces, as tenants and residents themselves have been increasingly appreciating. There has been an upsurge of tenant and resident mobilisations as a result, engaging activists in learning about the underlying issues involved as well as learning about the organisational skills that they need for campaigning in the process.

Whilst communities can and do, of course, learn for themselves, through their own activism, as I have already suggested, there have also been significant contributions from elsewhere, including trade union and other social movement organisations. The community organising program that Unite the Union has been promoting has been particularly relevant here, supporting tenants and residents and providing research as evidence to support their arguments for alternative approaches (Koessl and Mayo 2015). These inputs have been all the more remarkable, given the pressures on trade union and other social movements' education, training and research programs.

As the Workers' Educational Association, amongst other social movements, has been experiencing, there have been increasing challenges in relation to the provision of political education, including critical education for active citizenship (Caldwell and Templeton 2015). Reflecting on these pressures to focus upon far narrower skills agendas, Caldwell and Templeton (2015) conclude that despite all these challenges 'there is still local activity and people continue to turn to education to make sense of things' (p. 51). These people are reaffirming their commitment to the value of adult political education and working persistently in local communities, locally, regionally and nationally.

Continuing Contradictions?

These examples illustrate some of the complexities, contradictions and challenges inherent in learning for and learning from experiences of urban regeneration and community cohesion initiatives, even in less austere times. In the current context,

capitalist globalisation would seem to be exacerbating these challenges, undermining the promotion of mutuality, cooperation and the pursuit of social transformation. As I argued in the previous section, communities are being fragmented and dispossessed in increasingly alarming ways, displaced as a result of the housing crisis, compounded by marketised strategies for urban regeneration, coupled with drastic reductions in the provision of social welfare in global cities.

Activists can and do learn their own lessons from their experiences of urban regeneration, but there is no reason to suppose that this learning automatically includes a deepening understanding of the structural factors involved, let alone a sharpened analysis of the scope for linking the local and the global in solidarity—learning 'how to smell a rat', in the words of one community activist, as well as learning how to identify the spaces for effective action. That, as this chapter has argued, requires popular education, in the Freirean tradition. It requires really useful knowledge, rather than merely useful knowledge: active learning for active citizenship. And this learning needs to be adequately resourced. Despite the inherent contradictions, governments have provided valuable initiatives, with at least some spaces for creative learning, in the past. Without such resources, the case for increasing support via social movements, including trade union as well as voluntary and community-based organisations, becomes even more pressing (Mayo et al. 2016).

Education for citizenship, as Ralph Miliband (1994) defined it, 'means above all the nurturing of a capacity and willingness to question, to probe, to ask awkward questions, to see through obfuscation and lies'; 'the cultivation of an awareness that the request for individual fulfilment needs to be combined with the larger demands of solidarity and concern for the public good' (p. 56). This takes the discussion back to Raymond Williams' concerns to affirm these values of connectedness and mutuality whilst valuing education for social change, holding on to a wider vision of education, beyond education's potential for instrumental gain and individual advancement. As this chapter has argued, these concerns remain central to debates on community-based education, urban regeneration, community cohesion and the promotion of social solidarity and social justice.

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Chapter 15
Afterword: Reading the Book Through the Lens of 'Bildung'

Stephen Dobson

This book seeks multiple kinds of reader who are willing to adopt multiple optics as they learn cities. It brings together those interested in teaching, activism, research and consumerism and those forming or cocreating their own identities in a multisensorial, multimodal manner. In short it speaks to those interested in *bildung*, that is, identity formation, as a richly woven tapestry of city experiences. In reflecting on its contents, I posed questions as guides to a discussion of the issues that emerge from author's explorations.

If learning cities is 'bildung', haven't the authors sought to communicate the desirability of bildung? Have they sought to show the potential of bildung, more so than as a project of dystopia where we are destined to become anonymous cogs in an urban machine?

The word *bildung* is notoriously difficult to translate into English. If it is translated as 'education', as it sometimes is, it has too institutional a connotation. If translated as 'upbringing', it is too quickly associated with children and in so doing excludes adults. *Bildung* understood as an eighteenth century Enlightenment project sounds too philosophical and recalls spokespeople, often men, for this movement, such as Voltaire. Sometimes it is translated as 'identity formation' or more correctly 'identity self-formation'; but these terms sound so cumbersome that some simply use the term 'cultivation' which evokes an ever-broadening civilising process which occurs as manners are refined, and there is a gradual emergence of new kinds of social codes and accompanying restrictions in cities (Elias 1978). Alternatively, *bildung* can be understood in a narrow sense and associated with so-called high culture such as classical music, art and opera. So, what does it mean in German and why might

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it be so important to have an understanding of it in a book exploring how to learn cities?

As Guess (1996) has noted,

> Bildung is not to be confused with building: Bildung comes from Bild (sign, image) and so means the process of imposing an image or form on something, or the results of such a process, whereas 'build' comes from a completely different Indo-European root having to do with 'dwelling.' (p. 153)

It can refer therefore to the process and the product whereby an image is not only imposed, but taken into oneself, through a process of imitation or imprinting. (Steinsholt 2011) But it can be more than an image in the strict sense of the term, and can be interaction with another person(s), sensory experiences of cities, a moment or a string of moments over months or years. The interaction could be passing the same street corner on a daily basis, reading a novel in a city cafe, listening to music on your personal device as you move through city spaces and so on. As conceived by McFarlane (2011), a geographer who has explored Mumbai and São Paulo, learning cities entails understanding how they are assemblages of tactile experiences, at once intimate and felt.

If bildung is understood as the development of self-identity through the cultivation of both rational thought and the senses, is it not central to the work of each of the authors in their respective chapters?

It might appear that the authors are intoxicated by the city images they conjure up in words, photographs and through their senses. In Walter Benjamin's list of urban experiences, the National and World Exhibitions of nineteenth-century Europe occupied a particular place in a project of *bildung*: 'The world exhibitions were training schools in which the masses, barred from consuming, learned empathy with exchange value. "Look at everything; touch nothing"' (Benjamin 1999, p. 201, G16, 6). From such a point of view, *bildung* represents a form of discipline and training, such that the working classes of his day, and also us as members of mass culture in the present day, are expected and directed to 'buy' into commodity lifestyles and the values of capitalism.

Are the authors talking of a world of isolation in cities or its opposite: over-connectedness? Paraphrasing Sartre's famous play, perhaps hell is not so much other people, even in populous cities across the globe; hell is forever being connected? Or is Sartre completely wrong - not a hell, but a joyful experience of cities as connectivity?

A new form of *bildung* has made itself increasingly relevant in cities. It is what Løvlie (2002) has called a form of techno-cultural *bildung*, where the individual is less a self-autonomous entity, and more a decentred node in a network of connections. This network mediates contact with others through different forms of electronic communication, such as the cellular phone and the Internet. The individual's image/voice/emotion/body/presence becomes multi-contextual, present in more than a single place at any one moment in time, continually in flux and restlessly on

the move. Put more radically, the individual is now more a cyborg joined irrevocably to technology, and, when this technology malfunctions or is turned off, the person no longer feels they are living and 'connected'. One can wonder if it is even possible to be cocooned from contact with others nowadays, despite their close proximity in urban space. In this new form of *bildung*, the techno-cultural *bildung*, the goal is not the cultivation of clearly defined autonomous subjects. But this debate is far from decided, and there are still many supporters of a more traditional understanding of *bildung* in urban spaces. Simmel's (1950) famous essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* is still widely read and discussed, with his belief that living in cities requires autonomous individuals to cultivate rational strategies to protect the inner emotional, and ultimately vulnerable, self.

Can the chapters in this book be read as the search for where the 'action' is in cities? Have the authors been searching for the memorable in the everyday and the everyday in the memorable? With such an action-based perspective can it be premised that we can learn in ever new ways?

In each Australian state, a Chief Scientist is appointed for a period. They are public figures advocating for science in different practices by different professionals, such as in schools, policy, industry and so on. The first Chief Scientist of Queensland Peter Andrews [1] is apt to say: 'you have to go where the action is, and it is always at the intersection'. This in many ways summarises the electric attraction of cities for many. It is the place where things happen, the intersection, the marketplace, the arena, the scene of the crime, the accident, the celebration. If you are not there you might easily feel you are missing out. Even those adolescents who are just 'hanging' seem to be waiting for something to happen. But even the place of action and how we access it changes; if you are not present you might receive a live stream from those who are. Or, we can create our own action by searching for the digital markers of knowledge as we move through cities and touch on GPS nodes put down by others to explain the noteworthy or the historical. Are we not all looking for self- or other-experienced moments of voyeurism?

Are the readers of the chapters in the book expected to become city researchers, teachers or activists, if they aren't already?

It was a common point of debate in the 1970s to argue that every teacher in the classroom should be a researcher, researching the learning of the children. Today's version is that the teacher should always be evidence driven and always be up to date on the latest in classroom learning and teaching. In the context of this book, there is an expectation or a hope that the reader will turn into such a personage willing to inquire, learn and then teach others or themselves of cities in a research-informed manner. When I write the words researcher and teacher and add the word activist, I think of them embodied in one and the same person, and it is indicative of the reader as a moral person. To be in cities is to become in the sense of Aristotle (1981) in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, a certain kind of person who is encouraged, successfully or

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Andrews_(scientist)

unsuccessfully, to take responsibility and advocate for cities and the learning directed actions they offer. Of course, I am not restricting my comment to the formally trained school teacher, but any person or professional motivated to teach and learn cities. Such an understanding is closely aligned with the debate on public pedagogy (Sandlin et al. 2010), which seeks to reach out and move beyond the classroom, intervening and critically engaging with city spaces and culture.

I am struck on re-reading these chapters by the proposition that keeps echoing in my mind: 'the more knowledge and experience I have of new cities, the harder it might become to understand and conceptualise them'. It is harder to reach a point of satisfaction, even if momentarily, in such an endeavour. Is it because I resist looking to interdisciplinary knowledge, preferring the safety and security of disciplinary knowledge?

Adorno (1973) once wrote that our experience always risks being richer than our concepts.[2] This suggests that we continually seek to close this gap by refining our disciplinary knowledge or, alternatively, cultivate a form of knowledge that is hybrid rather than mono-disciplinary. The latter might thus hold the promise of more closely fitting the different and varied mosaic of people's lived experience in cities. The editors have encouraged the exploration of such knowledge.

In advocating interdisciplinary approaches in this book, we are not seeking to generate a new, unified view of cities that integrates knowledge from separate disciplines and creates a more general, rather than specialised, form of knowledge. I am not advocating the dissolution of disciplines, a fear held by scholars such Young (2008, pp. 6–7, 64). On the contrary, the resources of different disciplinary approaches are still very much in focus and continually to be drawn upon. I am reminded of a classic article on this matter by Nikitina (2007) who talks of the humanities who understand interdisciplinary work as a continual contextualisation that draws together knowledge from ideology, history and culture. The sciences view it as a bringing together of concepts from different knowledge areas, and if the task is product development or applied science, the interdisciplinary entails problem-based and inquiry-based learning and integration of knowledge.

A metatheoretical example is found in Bhaskar and Danermark's (2006, pp. 289–290) understanding of critical realism where multifaceted knowledge emerges from a dialectic in a 'four-planar social being': (a) material transactions with nature (the effect of urban development on the physical environment), (b) social interaction between agents (e.g. decision-making patterns among actors that impact upon urban social structures), (c) social structure (e.g. the housing market's impact on residential patterns) and (d) the stratification of embodied personalities of agents in terms of self-esteem, motivation and values.

In a recent visit to the city of Skopje in Macedonia, I was able to envisage how such a social being might generate interdisciplinary knowledge. The self-esteem of

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[2] 'If thought is not measured by the extremity that eludes the concept, it is from the outset in the nature of the musical accompaniment with which the SS liked to drown out the screams of its victims' (Adorno 1973, p. 365).

the population was deeply affected by a troubled history in which Greece, the southern neighbour, has historically sought to claim the country for its own. The housing in many parts still bore the marks of a time under socialism, where the lack of investment was noticeable. But, and most importantly, the social interaction between all exuded warmth, and there was strong motivation to survive, even though some suggested as much as 25% of the adolescent population would leave to work in Germany or other European countries.

This book is for me and hopefully for the reader a guidebook, a source of hints, images, (his)stories, experiences to inspire, explore, discover, map and learn the experiences and lives of cities.

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