Part I
Introduction

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Understanding the City

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The beginning of the twenty-first century is an exciting time for those wanting to understand the city. There is a growing realization that the "cultural turn," through its emphasis on meaning, identity and the politics of difference, for example, provides the cutting edge of urban research. At the same time the cultural turn has contributed to the fragmentation of urban studies and has had little impact on traditional urban investigations. When culturalist analyses of cities have directly engaged with political economy or the older urban ecology approaches, they have usually sought to move beyond those perspectives. Here we resist this tendency and explore the dynamic interplay between the cultural turn and political economy. We want to contribute to closing this gap through explorations of a middle ground where the traditional concerns within urban studies – restructuring, globalization, North/South urbanization, for instance – may intersect with culturalist approaches. In *Understanding the City: Contemporary and Future Perspectives*, we aim to provide the first concerted effort at addressing this emergent middle ground.

What, then, does "understanding the city" entail? In our opinion it does *not* mean a descriptive survey of contemporary epistemological and theoretical approaches to the city. Furthermore, we do not want to place ourselves within a unified body (school or paradigm) of scholarship frozen in a particular moment of time or based exclusively upon a limited range (i.e., Western) of cases. We prefer to define "understanding" as an ongoing and continual transdisciplinary practice: an enterprise which is both an individual process of scholarly research and writing, *and* a collective dialogue with other people's work. This is an enterprise which corresponds to changes not only in the social world (globalization, migration, etc.) but also within the larger theoretical advances that derive from those changes and seek to comprehend (and change) them, such as feminist theory, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism.

In practical terms, understanding the city consists of multiple and modest endeavors aiming to reconcile the ways in which urban social processes (comprised of the cultural as well as the political and economic) are constituted at

particular historical moments. At the same, this approach accepts that the reconciliation can never be fully comprehensive nor complete. It insists on an open scholarly awareness (recognition – but not necessarily full inclusion) of theoretical and empirical advances. It also calls for a conscious acknowledgment of the significance of structural forms of political economy and the indeterminacy of social and cultural processes to one's own work and to urban studies in general.

Perhaps most importantly, the perspective affirms that the initial issues of power, conflict, and social resistance in the urban context, which defined a paradigm shift three decades ago, remain critical. Those concerns are clearly political economic as well as cultural and social. The work of understanding the city is, therefore, not to fix and define, once and for all, the relationship between (or hierarchy among) the social, the cultural, and the political economic. Rather, it needs to problematize these connections in particular cities and time periods and continuously strive to develop new and innovative ways to comprehend their intersections.

The theoretical acknowledgment of the importance of signification and of the indeterminacy of the social to urban studies has, if anything, heightened the need for careful empirical work that produces situated knowledges (as opposed to static models or all-encompassing theories) about the city. While no single epistemology or related methodology appears comparatively better suited for understanding the city, the approaches taken by the contributors to *Understanding the City* identify a valuable set of prescriptions and precautions for urban studies. They examine the need for:

1   reconceptualizing scale beyond the simplified micro/macro (global–local) and, consequently, the city as a process as opposed to a fixed and defined object;
2   developing a more comprehensive conceptualization of agency as constitutive of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and their intersections, as well as the dynamic and fluid nature of their formation;
3   integrating the analysis of rhetoric and urban discourses in the production of urban spaces and consequent struggles over representation, signification, and meanings of the city;
4   analyzing the important role played by memory and the imaginary as interpretive schema by which different social groups experience and know the city;
5   paying careful attention to everyday practices and experience to gauging the relevance of structural processes (and vice versa);
6   rejecting the conventional positivist inclination to devise models or exemplars based on a single case;
7   being wary of any simplistic adaptation of Western-based theories to study cities outside the West and affirming historical specificity and the

distinctiveness of cultural and ideological processes as relevant to the understanding of cities – non-Western and Western.

Yet before we proceed to a detailed introduction to the chapters comprising this volume, we want to develop our view of how we have come to this current, exciting, and emergent juncture in urban studies, where the city stands as a central subject of debate and research.

Symbols, Signs, and Discourse

The aftermath of the political and social upheavals of 1968 prompted a dramatic critique of urban studies in the West and hastened along a paradigmatic shift in the epistemologies, theories, and methods of studying the city. This shift crystallized over time as a considerable body of scholarship linked various aspects of cities and their historical and contemporary formations to capitalist political economic processes. Influenced by Karl Marx's writings (and, to varying degrees, by Max Weber's), post-1968 urban studies in the United States and Western Europe was committed to understanding processes of accumulation, including real estate speculation, investment, and disinvestment and the importance of state intervention in urban processes such as private development. The built environment of the city was a social construct subjected to dominant power relations, exploitation, and conflict always in play in capitalist social formations. Simultaneously, mounting a critique of mainstream urban studies (particularly, human ecology) and addressing social justice concerns, these structural approaches sought to disentangle the political and economic processes producing uneven development within, and between, cities and, for that reason, the debilitating effects upon the housing conditions, employment opportunities, and overall lifestyles of the urban poor and ethnic and racial minorities. Underlying most writings was a strong normative affirmation of the potential for emancipatory class politics or social movements.

Despite the intellectual legacy of such key figures as Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, whose writings on culture and the city are extensive and influential, the (re)emergence of and subsequent challenge from culturalist perspectives came relatively late to urban studies in comparison to other disciplines. Interestingly, the point of entry for most discussions of the centrality of cultural representation and signification to city life was through established concerns fundamental to critical political economy approaches. Following on the heels of David Harvey's influential work, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), in which the interrelationship between cultural changes (postmodernism) and political economic changes (post-Fordism) are clearly articulated, urbanists in North America and Western Europe embarked on

efforts to integrate analyses of cultural production and consumption into urban theories. Sharon Zukin's work in the 1990s, in particular, provided the theoretical armature and empirical foundation for the now-accepted claim of cultural signification as intrinsic to the economic structure of the modern city (Zukin 1991, 1995). Significant changes in capitalist accumulation – namely, the shift toward the production of services and spectacle – have placed the analysis of symbols and imagery to the fore of studies of urban development (see King 1996).

New "cultural" fields that have since been instituted in the academy include "tourism/leisure studies" and "consumption studies," but American urbanists have largely approached such studies in the context of political economic considerations. Mark Gottdiener, for example, has developed his notion of "theming" from European and American theories of semiotics and argues that the deployment of cultural forms as place themes is a development strategy in an era of increasing economic competition between cities (Gottdiener 1997). Recent work in a similar vein argues that prevailing discourses and representations about the city are intrinsic to the political economy of urban change, serving as key sources of legitimation and social control over processes such as community abandonment and redevelopment (Mele 2000; Reichl 1999).

Such approaches are evidence of considerable synthesis. As Kian Tajbakhsh notes, they nudge political economic approaches a significant step beyond the orthodoxy of Marxism, especially with respect to the theorization of culture (2001: 20–5). Within such work, the challenge has been to incorporate newer understandings of the symbolic and the cultural without doing away with the traditional focus on the state, class, and urban accumulation. Drawing on poststructuralist theories, it is increasingly apparent that the forms of discourse used to describe, analyze, and construct the city are central to social, cultural, political, and economic processes that produce the city and occur within it. Although material processes, such as the development of the urban built environment and the effects on urban employment, are not ignored, the analytical focus is shifted to the production and interpretation of their meanings. Tactics deployed within the real estate industry, including skillful use of language and the use of symbols to evoke particularly desirable themes, require textual and semiotic analyses. Yet the implications of these symbolic manipulations for material practices within the city are quite clear.

The embrace of the symbolic and discursive within urban studies has, as one would expect, moved beyond reference to political economic implications. The urban imaginary has become viewed as a constitutive element in the social production of the city. Within such conceptualizations, the built form of the city and the interpretive schemas of different social groups are in active engagement. Individuals and social groups make sense of and experience the places where they shop, socialize, and live, thereby shaping and being shaped

by past, present, and future urban environments. These imaginings are as diverse and manifold as the social groups inhabiting the city. The ability of certain powerful urban stakeholders (e.g., planners, state bureaucrats, developers, and other city builders) to "realize" their notions of the city over others is not denied. Nonetheless, the focus upon the imaginary illuminates the multiplicity of experience and as such downplays any one notion of the city as defining or overly influencing all others. The imaginary, then, acts and is acted upon through the production of the city.

James Donald has problematized the relationship between the physical and the imaginary – between the vast arrays of city structures and their meaningful articulation in the everyday lives of city dwellers. He shifts toward the subjective experience of the city. Consciousness, memory, and processes of imagination rise to the fore of analysis. Consequently, his approach eschews a linear, causal connection between structure, experience, and action and embraces instead contingent and opaque relations. The city, as Donald writes, is understood as "a historically specific mode of seeing" (1999: 92), narrated and described and represented by different sets of actors with corresponding interests. These imaginings and other experiential processes have consequences for the type of social, economic, and cultural practices and structures that occur within the city and vice versa. Novels, cinema, and other mass media forms mediate these interrelationships between structure and experience.

The Indeterminacy of the Social

As explained earlier, urban studies' approaches in the critical political economy tradition have capably absorbed an analysis of cultural forms into a theory of social production of space. While clearly these approaches were concerned with the city as a force that shapes the everyday lives of urban dwellers, their main intent was to add much-needed complexity to an understanding of the structural forces that produce the city itself. An expansive notion of cultural processes – one that includes a broad range of identities and subjectivities in addition to class – was not a central epistemological concern but was viewed as a contemporary or postmodern condition emanating from materialist conditions (see Harvey 1989).

There were important and early efforts among urban theorists to account for new forms of social difference and identity within the political economic paradigm. Katznelson, in *Marxism and the City* (1993), sought to explain the emergence of new forms of group identities (ethnicity, race, territory) not by moving beyond Marxism but pushing and stretching the theoretical framework to include these new realities. Castells, particularly in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983), sought to incorporate new forms of social identities (other

than class) by going even further and moving beyond conventional Marxist frameworks, through an emphasis on consumption processes and their role in the reproduction of labor.

The limitations of these approaches within political economy were laid bare in feminist theoretical advances, which questioned the emphasis placed on economic factors, especially by class-based theories. Among other things, feminist theories of difference have pointed toward the inadequacy of efforts to "capture" or fix the complexity of social life, to freeze various aspects of identity and subjectivity into categories, and the inability to allow for inter-sections, fluidity, and hybridity of social relations. Approaches wedded to a structuralist epistemology exclude subjective processes of becoming (what we are calling social indeterminacy) from understandings of the social and the cultural. Feminist theories draw our attention to the ways in which knowledge about the city and our study of that knowledge is created by discourses that reflect gendered power relations. The privileged representation of the city as site of, and for, capitalist reproduction is criticized as both narrow and ex-cluding (see Deutsche 1991). Feminist critiques of the political economy of gentrification, for example, challenged the exclusive focus on the class rela-tions in urban restructuring, arguing that it renders silent (and therefore insignificant) the powerful gender dimension inherent in the production and consumption of the city.

Along with feminist theory, postcolonial perspectives, which we address more fully in the following section, have questioned the normative assump-tions implicit within political economy analysis and critiqued essentialized conceptions of class, race, gender, and sexuality. Their attention to the multiple and complex constitution of subjectivities seeks to challenge more conventional analyses of urban enclaves, "ghettoes," local communities, and the First World/Third World dichotomy. Work in this vein has called atten-tion to the connections between social difference (defined both in its repre-sentational forms and in terms of subjectivity formation) and spatial practices. While retaining interest in the material consequences of these practices, these works tend to focus on revealing the larger power dynamics that the deploy-ment of representations tap into, such as marginalization and exploitation. Cities, then, may be seen as the materialization of practices which are not simply political economic but also cultural. Likewise, spatial forms and the design of the built environment have considerable influence upon the consti-tution of social identities and subjectivities – the city as productive.

Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Globalization

Analytical interest in social difference and cultural heterogeneity has intensi-fied as scholars whose work intersects or overlaps with postcolonial and

transnational studies have turned their gaze to the study of the city. Postcolonial and transnational studies have had a profound influence upon contemporary urban studies, prompting a critical interrogation of many of the field's earlier theoretical assumptions. Postcolonialism and trans-nationalism represent a multiplicity of disciplinary focuses and related epistemologies and methodologies. Nonetheless, there are certain premises which these approaches share and which have a direct bearing on the study of the city. Both perspectives point toward the narrative of a privileged center infused in representations of the West and its relations to the "other" and the system of binaries that have historically categorized and essentialized subjects. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990), for example, dismantles and unmasks the constitution of the colonized world by the West – conceptions which define the Third World as unidimensional and naturally subordinate.

Such unmasking is part of a larger project of recognizing how given truths (nations, authorities, etc.) have been produced historically and how categories of social difference and identity have been accorded the appearance of stability and permanence. Both postcolonial and transnational studies call for analyses which destabilize (oversimplified) binaries and examine interstitial, in-between (borders) and overlapping (hybrid) spaces where subjectivities and identities are negotiated. Race, gender, sexuality, and class, for example, do not exist as discrete categories in isolation but come into being through conflict and negotiation with each other. Arjun Appadurai's ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes, for example, constitute nonhierarchical realms of experience which reflect the complex everyday realities of tourists, refugees, exiles, and immigrants, among others (Appadurai 1990).

This focus on the terrain of intersubjectivity and experience has direct implications for urban analysis outside the political economy tradition. There has been considerable recent interest in the stranger as a primary feature of urban society, prompting scholars to return to the works of Georg Simmel. Simmel's work on the stranger is relevant to the analysis of diaspora and other indeterminacies of the global migrant experience – of mobility, shifting frames of reference, and not belonging. Recent discussions of postcolonialism raise the issue of the relevance of 1970s and 1980s Weberian analyses of British urban conflicts in the context of both race and ethnicity, for example (see Rex and Moore 1967; Rex and Tomlinson 1979), as well as non-Marxist empirical analyses of urban politics and policy.

The concern with identity, borders, and hybridity in postcolonial conditions has led some scholars to analyze the social and cultural dimensions of globalization. They have focused on so-called global cities, where they have placed less emphasis on the political economic dimensions of flows and more on the impact (and feedback) on social and cultural relations at the local level.

The effect is a greater understanding of how globalization is locally expressed – not as an unambiguous effect of structural processes of globalization but as experienced and understood by various social groups within the city. The potential for further synthesis here is promising, because such approaches concede the importance of political economic theories of globalization and yet embrace the indeterminacy of the social. Flows of information, capital, and people heighten the indeterminacy of social relations at the local level.

Structural processes, such as accumulation, which further material inequalities, are no less apparent, but the range of meanings attached to such processes and the experiences of them by different social groups resist simplistic categorization. Instead, meaning and experience at the local level are increasingly mediated by transnational and global processes, further compounding the complexity of social relations (community organizing and resistance, attachments to neighborhood, the construction of diasporic communities, etc.) within the city. Local, bounded physical spaces of neighborhoods are not necessarily the spatial referent for new forms of identity and the multiplicity of social identities. For transnational migrants, for example, notions of home and community are inclusive of multiple and often contradictory spaces and are fused from an array of imaginations, personal memories, and mediated representations.

So far this complex fusion has been explored by relatively few urban scholars. The rich empirical research on transnationalism, supported by national funding in both the United States and Britain, has largely taken the city as the background to discussion of social and cultural processes among migrant communities. Many studies of Britain's "ethnic minorities," for example, are still framed within an anthropological tradition which affirms the determining role of kinship and marriage regulations, related to religious practices, in sustaining communal bonds across national borders (see Ballard 1994; Werbner 1997; Shaw 2001).

The limitations of this approach have been exposed by Brah (1996), Anthias (1998), and Eade (2000), for example, as well as by an emerging cohort of urbanists (Alexander 1996; Sharma et al. 1996; Fortier 2000) who have been inspired by the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, in particular. Critical work has also been developed by a group of scholars at Roehampton in the southwestern suburbs of the global city – London. Their blend of theoretical and empirical work was the basis for *Living the Global City* (Eade 1997), where they sought to locate global flows within the context of the social. M. P. Smith (2000 and chapter 6 in this volume) takes forward their emphasis on the social, while the work of Fincher and Jacobs (1998 and, with Anderson, chapter 2 in this volume) and Marcuse's critique of Castells (see chapter 7 below) also develop this area in quite different ways.

Toward Understanding the City

The more recent emphasis in critical social theory on identities and differ-ence has problematized the assumption within political economy approaches that structural processes order – in ways both obvious and unambiguous – social relations and conditions within the contemporary city. Influenced by feminist and poststructuralist theories, the focus upon the construction of social difference demands an examination of the social world from varied per-spectives of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identifying social attach-ments in which social positions do not reflect a stable range of interests. There are always practices and related identities that exist outside the gaze of social structure, that exist "in the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of proprietary powers" (de Certeau 1984: 37).

Recent work on the complex ways in which social difference, subjectivities, and identities are constituted and mediated problematize positivist-oriented efforts to demonstrate patterns of (structural) cause and (social) effect. The wide range of different subject positions within and among social groups who inhabit the city can never be bundled together as singular, all-inclusive categories that operate simply in relation to social structures. Following, it becomes necessary within an analysis of the city to map subjects (in short, to specify their formations and linkages to structural processes). These approaches suggest identities are terrains in which various social processes (in addition to economics) are imprinted (if temporarily) in complex, over-lapping patterns (Fincher and Jacobs 1998; Featherstone and Lash 1999; Yon 2000).

In the problematizing of the constitution of subjectivity, the city – as site of multiple differences – becomes pivotal as the location where identities are constituted: the city transforms and is transformed by these processes. This, in turn, has led to newer and different meanings of the object of urban studies, the city itself. The city is conceived less as something found or simply "out there" and more as something constituted partially through representation and discourse and as a site of interlocking and conflicting meanings of cultural, political, and economic relations. The wholeness of the city (often presented uncomplicatedly in conventional urban studies, using geographic boundaries to demarcate and define) is viewed not only as a physical entity but also as a narrative device and as a plethora of signs and symbols infused with power relations. These newer approaches are less a critique of political economic modes of urban studies than a plea to move beyond them, to disentangle the processes of social experience and articula-tion from (the essentializing tendencies of) more materialist-oriented approaches.

About this Volume

This volume has been shaped around the theoretical and substantive interests of people from various disciplines, who are working on urban issues around the globe. We invited people who had not only already contributed to the intersection between culturalist and political economy approaches through edited volumes and single-authored work, for example, but also those who were beginning to examine the impact of these approaches within their area of urban research.

From the individual responses to our invitation a volume of six parts has emerged. After this Introduction, which comprises Part I, Part II brings together those who have mostly worked outside the confines of American urban sociology. Drawing on feminist perspectives, Anderson, Fincher, Jacobs, and Watson have made highly influential contributions to the development of cultural geography during the last twenty years. Issues of urban social justice in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa have been a major theme of D. M. Smith's work, while Body-Gendrot has focused on urban violence in both the United States and Western Europe.

The opening chapter in Part II carefully explores the emergence of a middle ground between political economy and the cultural turn. The influence of the cultural turn on their approach is evident as Ruth Fincher, Jane M. Jacobs, and Kay Anderson begin by discussing the ways in which the "study of cities produces scripts of their coming into being, their logics and their inhabitants." Difference-directed rescriptings have "opened out important new questions that enhance our understandings of cities, implore us to pursue new trajectories of inquiry, and offer invigorated scope for constructing more just cities." These rescriptings reveal the limitations of three highly influential contemporary scripts – global city analyses, the "un-natural" city, and the "disorderly" city.

Yet their analysis of difference leads them toward, rather than away from, the concerns of political economy. They conclude that "difference perspectives protect against indifference to the subtle and diverse ways that injustice can be perpetuated" and provide the political means to uncover varied discriminations. These perspectives help "define new ways to be politically effective, as well as producing significant situated knowledges."

In chapter 3 Sophie Watson emphasizes the cultural turn's critique of early political economy approaches toward the public city. She examines the ways in which "the 'public' in all its various guises has been subject to a series of radical transformations during the last two decades." The attempt by Orthodox Jews in north London to establish an *eruv* is examined to support her argument that the "new approaches have opened up, or in some cases excavated, different terrains which extend the boundaries of what it means to construct

a more fully democratic public realm." The case study reveals that "how to live difference in the city, especially when it is awkward to address rather than easy to celebrate the exotic, has to be a central focus of urban research and action over the following decades." Moreover, the power of symbolic space is revealed through a clash between the rational city of planning discourse and a symbolic city constructed through an ancient Jewish text. The cultural turn produces new understandings of the material inequalities and divisions highlighted by earlier political economy approaches. A more just city can be created through the new ways of thinking about the public city and public space.

The issues involved in creating a more just city are also investigated by David M. Smith. Focusing on the city and urbanization in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, he reviews the debate about social justice and the city during the last thirty years. He draws on such influential figures as Harvey, Rawls, Walzer, and Young, as well as making vivid use of his own experience and fieldnotes, to argue that "the challenge ahead is . . . not so much social scientific as ethical: to help devise a new theory of the good, incorporating inclusive material standards combined with an ethic of responsibility to the weak and vulnerable, persuasive enough to be a source of moral motivation as well as of social understanding. This would be progress in 'urban studies.'"

The theme of social justice is continued in chapter 5. Sophie Body-Gendrot considers changing views concerning urban violence from the perspective of the criminal justice system. She outlines the development of urban violence and its causes during the 1980s and 1990s through a comparison between French and American cities. She tracks the movement toward the contemporary "politicization of the crime issue" and the role played by "politicians, the media, and public opinion spokespersons [in taking] advantage of a global feeling of insecurity to pursue their own strategies." A new situation has emerged where elites are more willing to legitimate repressive policies than support preventive measures. This process is not globally uniform since it is shaped by local conditions across the United States and Europe. France and many other European countries subscribe to "social prevention" and reject policies articulated initially in America. Moreover, across Europe the symbolic unity of civic life is "often more valued than the expression of differences," and urban violence is seen as avoidable. She ends on a more upbeat note than David M. Smith, calling for a "new urban literature" which can tell us "the good news" – presumably, where our understanding of urban violence in America can draw on European traditions rather than the other way round.

In Part III we bring together three American urbanists who advance a critique of highly influential contemporary perspectives in order to propose future directions for research. Michael Peter Smith sets out an urban research

agenda for the twenty-first century through a theorizing of the local and global. He challenges two approaches: (1) understanding locality as an embedded community where personal meanings, cultural values, and "traditional ways of life are enunciated and lived," and (2) where the global replaces the urban "as a metaphor for the central outside threat to the primary social ties binding communities." He questions both the structuralist "grand narratives of macro-social development" advanced by Harvey and Castells, for example, and the postmodern celebration of local ethnography, "partial truths," and the postcolonial subject.

Through a reimagination of the politics of everyday life, Smith moves toward "a transnationalized mode of ethnographic practice." Setting out the deficiencies of various perspectives, he argues for a careful analysis of "the intricacy involved in sorting out the social interactions and processes at multiple spatial scales that constitute the complex politics of place-making under contemporary conditions of transnational interconnectivity." Smith wants to move beyond not only the structuralist formulations of such leading urbanists as Harvey and Castells, but also the postmodern cultural studies and the study of the politics of everyday life. He advocates an analysis of "transnational urbanism" where the social is reintroduced and where the focus is on "power relations and meaning-making practices."

We then move to Peter Marcuse's critique of Castells's recent work on the "information age" which has had such a deep impact on the issues discussed by Michael Peter Smith. Marcuse argues that Castells has abandoned his neo-Marxist stance of the late 1960s and 1970s as he has been caught up in the contemporary enthusiasm for the study of the information age and globalization. Although he eagerly acknowledges Castells's vital contribution to urban studies over the last four decades, Marcuse regards his more recent publications as an implicit depoliticization where power and conflict disappear, classes play a subordinate role, and capitalism is ambiguously conflated with globalization. Powerful "groupings, actors and agents," shaping contemporary globalization, are replaced by a highly generalized "we" who can only hope to persuade "those in power" to respond to "our" interests. Castells remains committed to changing society but in ways which suppress the political. Marcuse's critique leaves us with a challenge – how to reformulate political economic perspectives in ways which embrace the ambiguous complexity of transnational linkages, global flows of capital, goods, information, and people, and local transformations where class solidarities decline in the face of fragmentary identity movements.

The cultural turn during the 1990s has been deeply influenced by geographers working at the University of California's Los Angeles campus. Ed Soja's publications have made a major contribution to postmodern investigations of space, while Soja's colleague, Michael Dear, has outlined an agenda for cultural geography's study of postmodern urban society in *The Postmodern*

Urban Condition (2000). There have been some moves toward a battle of the schools, with the Chicago School's approach toward the modern city being contrasted with its apparent successor – the LA School – and its study of Los Angeles as the archetypal, postmodern, "edge" city.

Mark Gottdiener seeks to cut the LA School down to size. In an impassioned critique, he challenges what he sees as the media hyping of particular LA academics. More generally, he questions the promotion of Los Angeles as "the exemplary suburban auto-era city" and the attempt to replace the Chicago School. Both moves fail to take into consideration the course of history. Suburbanization characterizes all American cities while the "Chicago School paradigm has been dead and buried for decades." The "new urban sociology," developed across the United States since the late 1970s, has directed attention away from the "bounded, centralized city that organizes its hinterland" toward multi-centered metropolitan regions where centralized cities are absorbed "in a matrix of increasingly personal, political, and business decisions." Indeed, some areas of the country have no centralized cities at all. Orange County, for example, is typical of areas which are "neither suburbs nor cities, yet they are fully urbanized." Hence, for Gottdiener, Las Vegas, rather than Los Angeles, exemplifies the multi-centered metropolitan region, as well as the decentered, postmodern cultural forces highlighted by Soja and Dear. Having said this, Gottdiener also claims that we must move beyond looking at particular cities as exemplary; rather, research needs to examine "the processes that have worked and reworked settlement space."

The contributors to Part II indicate the immense influence exercised by American urbanists upon research around the globe. The Chicago School and its later rivals have made a deep impact upon debates concerning urban structures and processes in Europe, the Pacific Rim, and the Middle East, for example. In Part IV we are able to follow these debates, as well as track research pursuing different directions, largely in response to particular historical, political, and ideological conditions. We want especially to draw attention to socialist and postcolonial perspectives, which resist American preoccupations and developmental models based on the assumption that – put crudely – "what America does today the rest of the world will do tomorrow."

Chris Pickvance's contribution to the "new urban sociology" has already been acknowledged by contributors to the previous sections. Here he reviews research undertaken in Central and Eastern Europe "as a context for theorizing about state socialism and post-socialism, and their associated urban patterns." During the 1970s state socialism and urban development became a central theme of international urban sociological debates while research focused on "the pattern of urban development, the allocation of housing, and urban spatial patterns."

International models of industrialization and modernization led to analyses of the degrees to which Central and Eastern European societies were underurbanized. A generic pattern was identified which was "directly attributable to state socialism in its forced growth phase" and which could be applied beyond the region to other state socialist societies and China in particular. Housing allocation was another major theme and a third research question focused on "whether there was a specifically socialist residential social pattern."

Since 1989 the combination of political and economic changes in Central and Eastern European has "provided a unique natural experiment." Rapid transformation challenged the explanatory capacities of social scientists. Pickvance contends that reliance on the "ubiquitous concept of 'transition' has concealed the fact that social science as a whole did not have ready a set of theories capable of understanding the process of macroscopic change" taking place across the region. Although theories of transition have provided limited explanatory purchase, "it remains to be seen" whether the application of "culturally based theories . . . will prove to have a parallel capacity for a comparative understanding of the questions they address."

In the next chapter in Part IV we move to China. Dorothy J. Solinger and Kam Wing Chan claim that urban research here "has not been driven by trends and fads in scholarship so much as it has been shaped by the nature of China itself as fashioned by the state (and later the market), and by the momentous shifts the nation has weathered because of political decisions." The study of Chinese urban processes by Western social scientists has been patchy. Economic geographers and planners have been more in evidence than anthropologists, for example, while cultural issues have only recently been examined. This situation is explained in terms of local exigencies where "three decades of fairly idiosyncratic socialist ideology and practices in China have made a big difference." The late arrival of cultural studies, for example, is partly "a function of the homogeneous nature of Chinese life, at least up until the early 1980s," and urban studies only emerged as a substantial subject during the 1980s and 1990s.

The trends reviewed by Solinger and Chan lead them to suggest two future directions for urban research in China. One locates the country along the same path trodden by "other industrializing, modernizing societies (such as Taiwan)," while the other suggests a much more bumpy journey characterized by conflict and serious social problems. Researchers will need to "develop theories that encompass and interrelate the new urban vitality, as citizens thrive on the new consumption, along with the various types of social breakdowns that accompany the evisceration of past and ruptured solidarities."

The contributors so far have written from the perspective of sociology, planning, criminology, and geography. J. S. Eades (not related to John Eade)

introduces an anthropological approach in his survey of urban developments across East and Southeast Asia. He moves quickly from such well-established themes as the contrast between rural and urban society, aging, labor, education, and the family to more recent research, especially consumption, popular culture, and the environment. Analyses of how the global becomes local through consumption, personal choice, and the media have been complemented by research into the political economy of high-speed growth. The interweaving of consumption and the political economy can be seen most strikingly in the urban environment of eastern Asia.

The "rich empirical diversity in urban life," especially in Japan, leads Eades to explore changing theoretical interpretations and Castells's contribution in particular. His discussion of Castells's recent publications concerning the information age leads toward Gottdiener's earlier argument about American cities – "the more advanced, informational, and globalized a society becomes, the more the divisions between town and country become blurred, and the more the concept of what constitutes the city begins to disappear."

Understanding this process has encouraged researchers to work across academic boundaries and to ground analyses of urban culture more firmly in political economy processes than many contributors to the cultural turn would like. This deconstruction ensures that there is no such thing as the "Pacific Asian city," despite the similarities between what has been occurring in Japan and other cities across the region. Looking to the future, Eades suggests that globalization, however defined, has moved researchers toward new subjects and methodologies. The analysis of cultural processes, such as consumption, will go hand in hand with the exploration of the urban environment, leading toward a multi-faceted activism promoted through cyberspace and cybercultures.

In Part V we explore the ways in which the processes outlined in the previous sections operate within different urban contexts. We begin with Smriti Srinivas's chapter on the Indian city of Bangalore, which lies at the heart of the country's "Silicon Valley." She wants to build on "subaltern histories of the sociological discipline" so that she can advance beyond political economy and culturalist approaches. Since Indian urban sociology has been seriously hampered by the disconnection between sociology and history, Srinivas wants to analyze "discourses of return, 'quest' stories that tie institutional and personal biographies together" in the context of five models of the city. These narratives are related to the "creation of new metropolitan fringes" which occupy sites "abundant with spatial and ritual memories." Discourses of return use the languages of a "sacred quest" which are explored through a case study of the Sai Baba cult and three religious sites on the fringes of Bangalore. Through a mnemonics of space and an analysis of embodied memory, Srinivas reveals "a reorientation within the city, recovering spatially peripheral tracts and older axes of the city from a zone of urban amnesia, and also

using contemporaneous axes and institutional sites in other patterns of meaning." In the process she seeks to reveal the lacunae in models of the city and stage "other possibilities of the urban tied to the inner, affective, cultural, and spiritual worlds of the subject of the metropolis."

History is also the focus of Shlomo Hasson's investigation of urban morphology, culture, and power. In the context of Jerusalem he examines the relationship between different cultures and landscapes, the relationship between cultures, and the relationship between landscapes over time. Through a discussion of "urban morphology and design, cultural landscapes, political relationships between landscapes, and the factors that shape these relationships," Hasson shows how the city's landscape embodies three main cultures shaped by (1) religion, (2) nationalism and modernity, and (3) national conflict, consumerism, and globalism.

The premodern, early, and late modern periods in Jerusalem's history refer to specific morphologies of the city which are, in turn, related to religion, the nation-state, and a more recent consumerist society. Roads, residential areas, land-use patterns, public and private space, and the city's outskirts are shaped by these different forces, leading Hasson to ask how the three cities of Jerusalem relate to one another today. Responses to this question take two forms – a dominant, closed-hegemonic discourse and a subordinate, open-dialogical discourse. The dominance wielded by the closed-hegemonic discourse is explained in terms of three power systems (political, economic, and cultural), but Hasson also explores the resistance strategies adopted by Arab residents and the factional divisions among their Jewish neighbors.

In this struggle the religious premodern city and the nationalist early modern city are dominated by the late modern, outer city. This dominance offers "the potential to reduce tensions and create a city that is less clannish, fanatical, less steeped in ceaseless conflict." At the same time Hasson urges decision-makers to appreciate Jerusalem's other cities and their unity "which lends the city its unique character and image." Urban development depends, therefore, upon understanding and respecting each city's "rules and resources, which crystallized during the course of history."

The final chapter in Part V examines Muslim cities in the Middle East and elsewhere in the context of civil society, social movements, and globalization. Paul Lubeck and Bryana Britts consider the future of the Muslim city where "Muslim discourses and civil society groups coalesce to launch a diverse stream of urban social movements united in their opposition to what they view as an illegitimate and failed postcolonial order." They outline the historical emergence of Islamism or political Islam – a "modern urban movement empowered by a profound discursive shift" across society which challenges the postcolonial nation-state weakened by "neo-liberal global restructuring." This shift is analyzed within the context of political economic

structural factors, the Iranian revolution, the development of Islamism in Egypt, "the contradictory positions expressed by women representing themselves in urban public space," as well as "the novel discursive practices of Muslim feminist groups."

The future of Muslim cities will, therefore, be deeply influenced by Islamism because "globalization, state withdrawal, and rising urban inequality create a social milieu ideally suited for the efflorescence of Islamist civil society groups." Islamists' observance of democratic practices once they have acquired power will depend on how far their interests are included by existing regimes. Urban theorists and policy-makers need to engage in dialogue with Islamist movements "and include them in their policy and planning agendas."

In Part VI we focus on three American cities (New York, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles), as well as South California's Silicon Valley. As the other chapters have shown, any discussion of a particular city has to account for both its unique characteristics and the commonalities it shares with other cities. Furthermore, transnational and global processes ensure that the issues investigated are not necessarily bounded by specific administrative and political structures of the city, region, or nation-state.

Consequently, when Michael Indergaard comes to explore new media circuits of innovation, speculation, and urban development in New York, the urban locality is the site for a cyberspatial transformation where the global interweaves with the local. He raises a question already examined more theoretically by the contributors to Part I, in particular: "Can a just and coherent city emerge amidst a swirl of financial, cultural, and technological forces?" Indergaard shares the view of others in this volume – a critical urban theory needs to answer this question by confronting "the problem of reconciling material and cultural analyses." New centers of power will be required to control and explain the relationship between real and virtual business spaces. We must rethink the assumption that "financial flows are divorced from, and antagonistic to, culture and social relations" and explore the ways in which "Silicon Alley has served as an institutional nexus for weaving together circuits and a matrix of power for making relationships, identities, and spaces."

Lower Manhattan illustrates how entrepreneurs have sought to eliminate boundaries between virtual and real worlds. They have broken New York's traditional role as a supplier of venture capital to other parts of the country by organizing district circuits through social networks. Rather than global capital flows shaping local fortunes, Silicon Alley actors were able to connect "the dot.com segment to the bull market." New media stock options and images formed a currency which led to a real estate boom in Manhattan which threatened to displace "not just individual firms but entire sectors" in

the older economy – a threat alleviated by the Spring 2000 crash. However, images of Silicon Alley are employed by real estate developers as the focus shifts to the Times Square area.

Venture capitalists and real estate developers have "mobilized power through their ability to create and link circuits, and convert 'currencies.'" As for the question of social justice, imagined cyberspace has played a key role "in transforming real space and in creating new forms of inequality." City government has encouraged this process through supporting a "development that is neither inclusive nor sustainable" and a strategy which promotes the "hypergrowth of a new monoculture in the short term, but depletes the city's rich milieu."

The relationship between cultural processes and political economy is also the principal theme of Alexander J. Reichl's study of sex, political economy, and public space. He locates the cultural turn within "a long tradition of drawing on the urban landscape as a blueprint to the circuitry of power." Culture does not simply provide "ideological support for the capitalist order" but plays a crucial role in producing economic wealth. However, more clarity is required concerning "how new cultural forms of urban development might serve as an instrument of political power." Recent political developments in the United States make it even more important to understand "the impact of spatial practices on democratic political life."

Reichl pursues this argument through an empirical study of "sex-related adult entertainment" in Las Vegas and New York. Sexual practices promise new insights into the relationship between culture and urban political economy because they are a contested terrain. A prominent feature of this contestation in both cities is the institutional "desire to control public space." This conflict is expressed through different political strategies in the two cities: "Adult entertainment circulated differently into the symbolic representations of each city, reinforcing the seductive appeal of Las Vegas and the perceptions of disorder and decline in New York."

Reichl concludes his chapter by linking his empirical analysis to theories concerning the political value of public space. This space should be understood as a "forum for open political expression" where sex-related businesses, for example, should be governed by standards concerning the use of that space. Reliance should be placed on local political action rather than zoning laws. Democratic, First Amendment public space "presupposes nothing about who should be present or what they should be 'saying'; but it does presuppose a limited degree of corporate or state control, such as that exercised by the casinos of Las Vegas or the public–private authorities in charge of Times Square. Above all, a valuable public space must be a place of possibility."

Leonard Nevarez also wants to engage the poststructural (cultural) turn through his training as an urban political economist. He focuses on reassess-

ing corporate elites in the light of two developments: (1) the challenge presented by sociospatial and poststructural perspectives to assumptions concerning urban elites and (2) "recent changes in corporate organization associated with the new economy." Nevarez pursues his reassessment through a discussion of how the elite concept has been used since the 1960s. The recent collapse of cohesive urban elites with the expansion of rootless capital and its management has led scholars to question "whether urban agency, urban politics, and, implicitly, urban elites matter any more." Yet although poststructuralist critiques appear to "undermine the theoretical value of the urban elite concept as constructed by urban political economy," they also create a theoretical space where urban elites as objects, not subjects, of representation can be investigated. The role of new economy executives can still be analyzed through an analytical framework which "infuses the urban political economy problematic of urban elites with the poststructural focus on local meaning."

Empirically, the chapter rests on a study of new economy executives, business leaders, and political activists in Santa Monica, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. The executives can be described as ambiguous and inarticulate urban elites "because their local interests are illegible to themselves and to others." A new structural mechanism has emerged – "the capacities of labor markets to organize production and capital investment in new economy sectors" – which "gives elite workers a political economic stake in the quality of life district different from the conventional corporate interest in 'pro-business' social relations." Because these workers are unaware of this mechanism, a crisis has emerged in the representation of their local interests to both themselves and others, ensuring that their political future is unclear.

We remain in California for the last chapter by Jan Lin. He investigates the relationship between mass culture, symbolic sites, and urban redevelopment in Hollywood. Like others in this volume, Lin draws on the "new urban sociology," especially the critical cultural perspective shaped by Sharon Zukin and Mark Gottdiener, in particular, and its examination of "how metropolitan fortunes under postindustrialism are increasingly derived from the fabrication of thematic sites and symbols." Hollywood provides Lin with an analytical window through which he can "augment our understanding of Los Angeles as a world city, while contributing to our theoretical and empirical understanding of the connections between globalization, consumption, and urban sociology."

An outline of the historical development of Hollywood as a machine of mass cultural production leads to a discussion of dream palaces, mass spectacle, and urban iconography. Recent redevelopment schemes center around the proposal to build a $388 million complex at the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, which would greatly encourage tourism. The proposal was challenged by local residents and businesses on

environmental grounds, as well as by those who "drew attention to the host of social problems besetting the low-income population of Hollywood."

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