12 Associational rights-claims, civil society and place

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Introduction

Much of the recent work on rights and citizenship has been a response to the dramatic consequences of the related processes of globalization and transnationalism on the complex relationship between the nation, identity, community, territory and the state. Rapid and large-scale migrations of people from Asia, Latin America and Africa to European and US megacities, their impact on cultural, economic and political relationships, and the construction, interpretation and representation of these as perceived threats to the maintenance of the cultural ground of national identity, have altered the basic institutional configuration of these societies to such a degree that the discourses of modern citizenship, with conceptual roots in the seventeenth century, have been unable to satisfactorily address the range of issues that have resulted. Yet, despite the fact that the need to rethink citizenship arises from changes in institutional relations, political theorists addressing the issue have focused remarkably little attention on the issue of how to conceptualize the linkage between the theoretical and philosophical parameters of citizenship and its institutional embeddedness. This chapter proposes a particular formulation of the relationship between rights-claims, civil society and place as a strategy for responding to this concern.

Theorizing rights-claims

The foundational assumptions of long-standing conceptions of the nature of rights, as well as the relation between the modern ‘subject’ and the ‘subject of rights’ have been challenged on different grounds by the recent works of rights scholars. Somers, for example, argues that the underlying basis of the conceptions of citizenship developed in most traditions tend to define citizenship as a status or attribute of a category of persons. This leads to static analysis, which in turn makes it extremely difficult to understand the ways in which citizenship practices emerge and the fact that they are dependent on the particular and historically specific articulation of several institutional relationships related to citizenship. She considers citizenship as an instituted process, as a set of institutionally embedded social practices (Somers, 1993, p. 589).

Thus, citizenship is reconceptualized as the outcome of political, legal, and symbolic practices enacted through universal membership rules and legal institutions that are activated in combination with the particularistic political cultures of different types of civil societies. As such, citizenship practices are also a source of political identity – the translation of this identity into a rights-based positive citizenship identity depends entirely on the contexts of activation. ... Quasi-democratic citizenship rights can emerge only in certain institution-specific relational settings and only in the context of particular social practices, namely practices that support popular public spheres. ... Theorizing about citizenship must ... include a sociology of public spheres and their relationships to the associational practices of civil society.

(Somers, 1993, p. 589-90)

The institutional sites of civil society are most effectively construed, Somers contends, in terms of a ‘relational/network and institutional analysis’, in which institutions are understood as ‘organizational and symbolic practices that operate within networks of rules, structural ties, public narratives, and binding relationships that are embedded in time and space’, and in which the relational approach ‘disaggregates social categories and reconfigures them into institutional and relational clusters in which people, power, and organizations are positioned and connected’ (Somers, 1993, p. 595). Instead of using the concept of ‘society’ to frame the issue of citizenship, Somers proposed the term relational setting, which she defines as a patterned matrix of institutional relationships among cultural, economic, social, and political practices. ... A relational setting has no governing entity according to which the entire setting can be categorized; it can only be characterized by deciphering its spatial and network patterns and its temporal processes.

(Somers, 1993, p. 595)

This approach generates a different way of linking citizenship to the dimensions of subjectivity and agency. Instead of ‘categorical’ attributes being the source of legal and political standing and action, ‘identity’ becomes the axis for conceptualizing the source of political action. Identities are not derived from attributes imputed from a stage of societal development (e.g., pre-industrial or modern) or a social category (e.g., traditional artisan, factory laborer, or working-class wife), but by actors’ places in the multiple relationships in which they are embedded. ... It is no longer...
assumed that a group of people has any particular relationship to citizenship simply because one aspect of their identity is categorized as the ‘working class’. Social categories presume internally stable properties such that, under normal conditions, entities within that category will act appropriately, whereas ‘identities’ embed the actors within relationships and stories that shift over time and space. Social action thus loses its categorical stability, and class embeddedness becomes more important than class attributes. Thus, citizenship identities are investigated by looking at actor’s places in their relational settings.

(Somers, 1993, p. 595)

Somers argues instead that rights-claims must be understood within specific and local institutional relations, and that these relations mediate between the state and civil society, i.e. they constitute the articulations between state and civil society. As such, the framework provides a way to assess at least in a general way, the degree to which various social and cultural practices, or, more specifically, ‘associational practices’, within civil society might claims to rights. The forms and modalities of activities and practices that express claims to citizenship depend on the institutional mix of factors, so it allows for the possibility (and likelihood) that there are different forms and expressions of making these claims. Somers focuses primarily on the set of practices that constitute the ‘public sphere’, understood as ‘a contested participatory site in which actors with overlapping identities as legal subjects, citizens, economic actors, and family and community members, form a public body and engage in negotiations and contestations over political and social life’ (1993, p. 589). She thus establishes the theoretical basis for linking the various dimensions of civil society to the institutional axis of citizenship.

Like Somers, McClure argues that our understanding of and discourses on citizenship and civil society must be historically and institutionally grounded (McClure, 1992). But her emphasis is more focused on historicizing the intersection of our notions of the ‘subject’ who makes rights-claims and the claims of sovereignty on which the state rests, and on situating this within the problematic of the ‘new’ pluralism, more often known as multiculturalism. McClure argues that modern political theory since the rise of the nation-state has privileged both the ‘sovereign subject’ as political agent and the state as the legitimate locus of political action. What this obscures is the actual historical development of rights-claims which is characterized by ‘the displacement of a range of diverse and contradictory localist and participatory constructs by centralized national and statist codifications of legal discourse. Thus the modern form of the ‘subject of rights’ can itself be understood as an effect of the practical and discursive struggles of modern constitutionalism ‘under very specific historical and geopolitical conditions’ (McClure, 1992, p. 111; Rocco, forthcoming b).

Now the emergence of new social actors making political claims on the basis of race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in the current period has challenged established notions of the subject, identity and agency. In particular, the notion of a ‘sovereign subject’ has been critiqued as a contingent construct masquerading as a universalist category, which then obviously undermines any universalist notion of a ‘subject of rights’ or citizen. But these challenges do not necessarily signal the disappearance of the ‘subject of rights’. Instead the ‘subject of rights’ is reconstituted in such a way that the issues and questions regarding political identity and agency are reconfigured. Thus, as McClure argues,

we might question rather than presume its [‘subject of rights’] relation to contemporary assertions of rights on the terrain of “differences”, for these may themselves significantly transform or exceed the conventional figuration of the subject, especially as this has taken the formal character of individual citizenship in the modern state.

(McClure, 1992, p. 112)

In historical situations where the emergence of these ‘differences’ are closely related to transnational or non-national primary linkages and solidarities, what this calls into question is the degree to which existing discourses and practices of citizenship, limited by modernist conceptions that assume the coincidence of the boundaries of state, territory, nation, sovereignty and citizenship, are capable of providing either theoretical or institutional spaces that can respond effectively to the new basis of rights-claims.

While there are a number of scholars rethinking the problematic of citizenship within the context of the new terrain of difference and multicultural societies, the most well-known effort is the series of arguments put forth by Kymlicka (1995a; 1995b). His work seeks to provide a way to bridge the two major seemingly irreconcilable perspectives on citizenship and advance a theory of citizenship that can account for the reality of multiculturalism. The first of these positions, the liberal approach, is organized around the primacy of individual rights, and citizenship is construed in terms of the individual as the bearer of these rights. These rights insures that private individuals can pursue their self interests through the protection of the state, whose primary function is to mediate conflict and regulate activities. The opposing view is that proposed in the communitarian formulation, and although there are several versions of this approach, what is common to each of these is the conception of rights as a function of membership in a historically specific society, community or state, as well as the emphasis on the formative role that cultural context plays in defining the nature and significance of claims to rights. It is only within the context of the specific configuration of social relations, institutions and culture that the idea of rights can be understood and realized.

Kymlicka’s goal is to advance a new ‘distinctively liberal approach to minority rights’ that preserves the basic principles of individual freedom but that is not limited by the traditional liberal conceptualizations of citizenship that all rights must be ‘difference-blind’ and which refuse to allow for any form of group
rights (Kymlicka, 1995a, p. 7). He notes that modern societies are increasingly ‘multicultural’ but adds that the ways in which this is formulated are exceedingly vague and ambiguous, primarily because the concept has not been grounded in an analysis of ‘how the historical incorporation of minority groups shapes their collective institutions, identities, and aspirations’ (Kymlicka, 1995a, p. 11). In order to overcome this lack of specificity, Kymlicka proposes four types of difference: separate nations within an existing state; immigrant ethnic groups; refugees and exiles; and the special circumstances of African-Americans. The rights-claims of distinct cultural groups need to be understood and evaluated in terms of the different institutional articulations that define each of these categories. But it is the first two that are really the focus of concern.

In developing and examining the situation of diversity that arises from the multinational position, the nation is understood as a ‘historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture’ (Kymlicka, 1995a, p. 11). The second source of cultural difference is immigration, a situation where groups seek affirmation of their ethnic identity but do not intend to establish a separate ‘nation’, and instead aim to ‘modify the institutions and laws of the mainstream society to make them more accommodating of cultural differences’ (Kymlicka, 1995a, p. 11). Kymlicka identifies these as ‘two broad patterns of cultural diversity’ and the specifics of the incorporation of these multinational and polyethnic groups require three forms of group-differentiated rights for these groups to acquire effective citizenship status: self-governmental rights, polyethnic rights and special representation rights. Far from rejecting the incorporation of the cultural distinctiveness of these groups as a basis for rights-claims, Kymlicka argues instead that the meaning of liberal freedoms can only be realized in the context of a cultural context of choice. Central to the concept of freedom that is the basis of the liberal tradition is the premise that individuals have the right to choose how to live their lives, to live according to their beliefs about what gives meaning and value to their existence. But determining the value and meaning of different options and choices depends on, indeed requires, the existence of a societal culture that provides the context without which these determinations cannot be made. It is ‘a matter of understanding the meanings attached to it by our culture’ (Kymlicka, 1995a, p. 83). Thus the cultural disjunction that characterizes the circumstances of the historical incorporation of multinational and immigrant groups require that they be given certain ‘group-differentiated’ rights (although different for each type) that incorporate and protect their cultural distinctiveness as the indispensable means that enable them effectively to pursue the freedom that is the foundation of the liberal form of citizenship.

Yet nowhere in his book is there a systematic analysis of multiculturalism as a set of specific institutional social practices that are part of a broader process of social transformation. Even more problematic is the lack of specification of the processes of globalization that Kymlicka acknowledges is a crucial factor in producing the particular pattern of cultural differences that are now so much contested. And it is not simply that a more ‘complete’ analysis of these phenomena would fill out the argument, for an accurate understanding of globalization at the level of institutional specificity of the practices that constitute it would in fact alter the very way in which the issue of citizenship in a multicultural context must be conceptualized (Rocco, forthcoming a). What needs to be addressed then, is how to ground the analysis of the practices of rights-claims within specific institutional sites of multicultural societies, how to incorporate adequately the dimension of institutional specificity in the formulation of both the theory and practices of rights-claims, which constitutes the contested terrain of citizenship.

Beyond multiculturalism

The most effective approach to this needs to theorize these institutional sites, spaces or places, as constitutive of multicultural social relations rather than simply a contextual or additive dimension. One of the formulations of the constitutive role of the spatial dimension is reflected in attempts to theorize these spaces of difference as third space, hybridity, borders, the ‘in-between’ or margins. These constructs have emerged from efforts, often but not always under the rubric of post-colonialism, to rethink the disjunctions between Eurocentric and Third World constructions of cultural formations and configurations so as to capture the complexity of the conditions of articulation.
These attempts to theorize the complexity of these relations in terms that reject the privileging of the West and which delineate the nature of institutional locations of Third World peoples. While not arguing for the reductionist conflation of these terms and the complex theoretical frameworks within which they have been elaborated, and without assuming a sameness of content, it is nevertheless clear that these operate within a field of constructs that overlap considerably. This overlap is noted in a recent essay on boundaries.

A jumble of cultural-political practices and forms of resistance have emerged that have variously been named hybrid, border or diasporic. The most creative and dynamic of these resistances are located on the borders of essentialism and conjuncturalism. They refuse the binarism of identity politics versus post-modernist fragmentation. ... We name this terrain of practice and theory, this zone of shifting and mobile resistances that refuse fixity yet practice their own arbitrary provisional closures, the third timespace.

(Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996, p. 154)

In his most recent book, Soja reviews a group of affiliated positions that he designates ‘third-space’, and provides the following description, which, although advanced in the discussion of bell hooks, nevertheless captures the central thrust of his own conceptualization. He states that a book ‘attempts to move beyond the modernist binary oppositions of race, gender, and class into the multiplicity of other spaces that difference makes’ (Soja, 1996, p. 96). In their study of popular culture in Latin America, Rowe and Schelling propose a useful definition of cultural hybridity as ‘the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices’ (Rowe and Schelling, 1991, p. 231). But this deceptively simple definition does not convey the complexity of both the processes involved and the modes of theorizing them. Works by theorists such as Bhabha, Spivak and Said have sought to delineate these in great detail and with great sophistication. These conceptualizations all reject binary theoretical constructions and the privileging of mono-causal factors, and insist instead on the notions of multiple subjectivities and voice, on complex modes of positioning.

However, these concepts and the frameworks they are nested in, are clearly not without difficulties. They have been the subject of a Berkeley, CARanging critique from a variety of positions and the shortcomings of these formulations have been amply delineated. One line of critique is particularly relevant to the focus here. A position advanced by Hall, and by Frankenberg and Mani maintains that while the notions of the margins, borders, hybridity and third space seek to address fundamentally important phenomena, these relations are even more complex than many formulations maintain (Hall, 1996; Frankenberg and Mani, 1993). What is called for is careful attention to and delineation of problems that arise in applying these concepts to issues of, for example, periodization, historical appropriateness and correlation, and both historical and institutional contextualization. For those of us exploring these themes within the context of the USA, one of the most helpful efforts to delineate the difficulties in applying these notions is found in the critique of post-colonial theorizations advanced by Frankenberg and Mani. They point out that terms such as post-colonialism and affiliated ideas need to be situated within the specific and particular historical circumstances and experiences that are being addressed. And they specifically focus on the issue of the appropriateness of the concept of post-colonialism in comprehending the US situation. They provide a summary of the historical and political elements for which such an endeavour would have to account:

White settler colony, multiracial society. Colonization of Native Americans, Africans imported as slaves, Mexicans incorporated by a border moving south, Asians imported and migrating to labor, white Europeans migrating to labor. US imperialist foreign policy brings new immigrants who are 'here because the US was/is there', among them Central Americans, Koreans, Filipinos, Vietnamese and Cambodians. The particular relation of past territorial domination and current racial composition that is discernible in Britain, and which lends a particular meaning to the term 'post-colonial', does not, we feel, obtain here. Other characterizations, other periodizations, seem necessary in naming for this place the shifts expressed by the term 'post-colonial' in the British and Indian cases.

(Frankenberg and Mani, 1993, p. 293)

They suggest the use of the term 'post-Civil Rights' as a possible way to talk about the US case, but immediately indicate their reservations of its adequacy:

Let us emphasize at the outset that we use the term 'post-Civil Rights' broadly, to refer to the impact of struggles by African Americans, American Indian, La Raza and Asian American communities that stretched from the mid 1950s to the 1970s. ... However, the name, 'post-Civil Rights', would only grasp one strand of our description of the US. The term would have to be conjugated with another, one that would name the experience of recent immigrants/refugees borne here on the trails of US imperialist adventures, groups whose stories are unfolding in a tense, complicated relation — at times compatible, at times contradictory — with post-Civil Rights USA.

(Frankenberg and Mani, 1993, p. 293)

It is in these substantially different, particular (local) historical and institutional circumstances that one of the major difficulties is encountered in finding ways of characterizing and theorizing notions of borders, margins, third space and hybridity. There are two dimensions of this problematic, in particular, that need to be addressed and disentangled: the connection between the colonizing-decolonizing contexts and histories that are the root of much of the theorizing
about these concepts; and the connection between the long-standing populations from formerly colonized countries and the most recent immigrants from the same countries, as well as others from distinct regions and with substantially different cultural contexts. Again, Frankenberg and Mani put the issue succinctly and clearly. In referring to recent immigrants to the USA, they state that

Their travel to the US has been occasioned by a history related to, but distinct from, that of people of color already here. Their historical experiences stretch existing categories – ‘Hispanic’, ‘Asian’ – inflecting them with new meanings. Relations between recent immigrants/refugees and those already here, whether whites or people of color, are constituted through discourses that draw heavily on colonial and racist rhetoric both in form and content. … Nothing but the most complex and historically specific conceptions of identity and subjectivity can sufficiently grasp the present situation and articulate a politics adequate to it.

(Frankenberg and Mani, 1993, p. 302, emphasis mine)

Multiplicities of identity and place

The question arises as to whether the notions of these spaces have been theorized in ways that can adequately account for the realities of the substantive experiences, particular networks, modes of engagement and relations of political configurations that revolve around substantive historical and institutional axes and moments. To repeat, nothing but the most complex and historically specific conceptions of identity and subjectivity can sufficiently grasp the present situation and articulate a politics adequate to it. My premise here is that while some of the formulations of citizenship in multicultural societies move in the right direction and articulate positions that are adequate at one level of theory, they are still incomplete in terms of elaborating and providing for the institutional grounding for these concepts. To borrow a phrase from an Argentine theorist, Walter Mignolo, they have not for the most part established a theoretical basis for elaborating the multiple institutional configurations and manifestations in terms of which ‘colonial legacies [are] at work in the present’. As an empirical example, I confronted this dilemma in developing my analysis of the processes of transformation of Latino communities in Los Angeles, where one of the most difficult dimensions to explain is the dynamic between recent Latino immigrants and earlier generations of Latinos, who have a long history of engagement with US culture and systems of subordination and power. These are two different yet complexly related trajectories or axes of engagement, and these in turn provide conditions and opportunities for cultural and political strategies that have qualitatively distinct centres of gravity.

In addition to this aspect, we need to suspect that some of the accents, emphasis and limitations of theorizing third space have to do with another factor that is less often discussed. It is clear that the critical examination of both colonialism and decolonization is hardly a new focus of attention, particularly in decolonized Third World countries. But it appears that the reason that this concern has become a major preoccupation in the present historical moment of the Eurocentric academy has less to do with theory than with demographics. It is the enormous and rapid migration of Third World peoples into the heart of Euro-US cities that has burst the boundaries of canonical paradigms. The pervasiveness of radical cultural differences in the major Euro-US metropolitan centres has sounded a dissonant chord for some, brought welcome decentering for others, but it can hardly be ignored by anyone.

The world has changed and sooner or later theory had to confront it. The grounding of this particular theoretical enterprise in this reality requires not only that the parameters of these spaces be delineated but, to paraphrase Michael Kearney’s critique of ethnography, that the theorizing ‘must situate the production and consumption of representations of’ subaltern spaces ‘within the relationships that join’ the theoretical self to the subaltern ‘other it presumes to represent’ (Kearney, 1996, p. 3). There needs to be, in other words, an accounting as well of the ways in which the theorizing itself may function as what Jameson calls strategies of containment.

Both of these dimensions, expanding and deepening the boundaries of the conceptions of third space, and including the self-reflexive moment as part of that enterprise, can be advanced by specifying their specific institutional grounding. With regard to the former dimension, the necessity to move in this direction is reflected in the following:

Third spaces, third texts, third scenarios are concepts articulated in the interdisciplinary field of Minority Discourse through usage of Cultural Studies methodologies. Thus the cultural materials currently analyzed by using the modalities of ‘the third’ are highly stylized domains of knowledge, framed as dramatic, literary, cinematic, artistic and musical texts. Bridging Ethnography, Cultural Studies, and Minority Discourse will be possible if we return to the primary daily realities from which such textual representations are derived. We call for reconceptualization, from lived identities and physical places, not just from texts, of the multiplicities of identity and place. As they are forced into constantly shifting configurations of partial overlap, their ragged edges cannot be smoothed out. Identity and place perpetually create both new outer borders, where the overlap has not occurred, and inner borders between the areas of overlap and vestigial spaces of non-overlap.

(Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996, pp. 168–9)

The ‘lived identities’ and realities of these hybrid and third spaces, of the margins, the borders, of the spaces ‘in-between’, are not random, epiphenomenal or transient. They are institutional spaces, structures of cultural, economic and political practices, that simultaneously limit and enable the parameters, conditions, strategies and options for social and political action. And their
quality as spaces of the hybrid, border or margin are directly linked to the variety of changes in the nature of the relationship between territory, space, identity and community that have resulted from the processes of globalization and transnationalization. This is not a simple, linear causal relationship, but a complex set of interdependent and multidimensional constellations of institutional practices.

The theorizations of third space, then, must be reconfigured to incorporate these institutional spaces as necessary, inherent and internal dimensions of the organic discursive and material complexes that constitute societal relations. It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity (Bhabha, 1995, p. 208).

In other words, the articulation of theorization is not reducible to nor dependent in a mechanistic or reductive manner on empirical ‘reality’. Rather, it is a constitutive element of that reality (constitutive and not causal, which would return us to the tradition of idealism), and as such it is not sufficient to situate third space within the ‘transnational’ or ‘global’ context. Instead, the modes of discourse and frames of representations of third space themselves need to be part of that same process of contextualization.

Thus, for example, Dirlik argues that

with rare exceptions, post-colonial critics have been silent on the relationship of the idea of post-colonialism to its context in contemporary capitalism; indeed, they have suppressed the necessity of considering such a possible relationship by repudiating a foundational role to capitalism in history.

(Dirlik, 1994, p. 331)

Similarly, Benita Parry points out that post-colonial writers like Spivak and Bhabha share a ‘programme marked by the exorcisation of discourse and a related inquisitiveness about the enabling socioeconomic and political institutions and other forms of social praxis’ (Parry, 1995, p. 43).

Now the characteristics of fragmentation and cultural disjuncture, and the emergence of these third spaces that contest US-Eurocentric representations and dominance, are indeed constitutive of the social relations in large urban centres in the USA, Canada and Europe. The theoretical formulations reviewed above are useful precisely because they establish a discourse that enables the analysis of the complexity of the consequences of the transformations in social patterns, now characterized by a series of elements that have either emerged or intensified within the last thirty years, referred to by a number of terms, including globalization, restructuring and transnationalization. The literature on these processes has demonstrated the centrality and importance of the pattern that has characterized the globalization and transnationalization of both capital and labour since the late 1960s (Cox, 1997; Featherstone et al., 1995; King, 1996; Knox and Taylor, 1995; Sassen, 1988; 1991).

The specific institutional grounding, then, for the field of forces, practices and theorizations that are the axes of these theoretical constructions of third space is the particular configuration of interrelated processes of the restructuring and transnationalization of global capitalism. To recognize the centrality and influence of these processes does not necessarily privilege them not reduce the theorization of third space to mere ideological expressions. It is precisely to avoid this facile dismissal of the complex reality for which theorizations of third space account that a more structurally rooted elaboration of these relations is needed. For to ignore them, or to construct them in institutionally ungrounded ways, leads to an incomplete analysis at best, or the obfuscation of the reality of domination at worst.

Margins, borders and third spaces need to be framed and contextualized as components and expressions of how these processes of social transformation, of globalization and transnationalization, are being lived. Nederveen Pieterse observes that

Hybrid formations constituted by the interpenetration of diverse logics manifest themselves in hybrid sites and spaces. … Global cities and ethnic mélange neighborhoods within them (such as Jackson Heights in Queens, New York) are other hybrid spaces in the global landscape.

(Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, p. 51)

The emergence of these new types of institutional spaces or sites challenges traditional ways of understanding and explaining culture, identity and community, primarily because they are expressions of a different relationship between space and place that characterizes the dynamics of transnationalism. The degree, extent and pervasiveness of the changes in patterns of social relations, cultural configurations and forms that are part of the processes of transnationalization have disrupted long-established boundaries that assumed specific representations and constructions of those populations that were constructed when ‘they’ were ‘there’, and ‘we’ were ‘here’. But the viability and adequacy of these constructions have been undermined now that ‘they’ are ‘here’ and challenged the notion of who the ‘we’ are. Hence, although the focus of analysis of these concepts of third space has been on those marginalized in different ways, in fact the emergence of transnationalism has impacted long-established populations as well. Thus the meaning of, and hence the stability and orientation provided by, established notions of ‘here’ and ‘there’, of ‘we’ and ‘them’, have been fundamentally problematized.
Theorizing space and identity

Gupta and Ferguson have advanced a convincing critique of contemporary forms of cultural analysis that continue to assume an isomorphic relationship between nations, territory, space and identities:

In a world of diaspora, transnational culture flows, and mass movements of populations, old-fashioned attempts to map the globe as a set of culture regions or homelands are bewildered by a dazzling array of post-colonial simulacra, doublings and redoublings, as India and Pakistan apparently reappear in post-colonial simulation in London, pre-evolution Tehran rises from the ashes of Los Angeles, and a thousand similar cultural dreams are played out in urban and rural settings all across the globe.

(Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p. 10)

And while they appreciate the effort to describe this dislodging of identities from a fixed and stable territorial 'place' through the notion of deterritorialization, they opt instead to characterize this dimension as 'reterritorialization' to avoid the connotation that space and place are no longer significant dimensions of social formations. Space and place still matter, but in a different way.

Incorporating 'place' in the study of the processes, dimensions and manifestations of transnationalization and globalization, then, means that we must rethink the concept of what constitutes a nation, what role territory plays, as well as the nature of the claims of sovereignty and citizenship, and how these are related to the processes of community and identity formation. And as the particular configuration of these change, so too must our conceptions of the complex ways that these dimensions are incorporated in the institutional structures of the state and of civil society. But in developing this reformulation, the central role of institutional specificity expressed in and through particular places must be incorporated. One way of addressing this project is found in the more recent work of the urban theorist Saskia Sassen, who, after concentrating on explaining the specific dynamics of globalization for several years, has joined the effort of a growing number of scholars who have focused on analysing the implications and consequences of these processes for both the discourse and institutional arrangements of citizenship (Sassen, 1996a; 1996b; Garcia, 1996; Holston and Appadurai, 1996).  

Let me very briefly outline that part of her argument most relevant to the issues being discussed here. One of the major objectives of Sassen's most recent work is to use the notion of situated space, or 'place' as she calls it, to ground the specific processes that constitute globalization. Sassen argues that as she develops it, the concept 'allows us to recover the concrete, localized processes through which globalization exists and to argue that much of the multiculturalism in large cities is as much a part of globalization as international finance' (Sassen, 1996a, p. 206). By examining the actual, situated practices that constitute globalization, she demonstrates that the latter is defined by a very specific configuration or pattern of transnational relations and actors, but points out that it is primarily the role and activities of transnational capital that are focused on as constitutive of globalization in many analyses. This is understandable since the new forms of transnational legal regimes 'privilege the reconstitution of capital as an internationalized actor and the denationalized spaces necessary for its operation' (Sassen, 1996a, p. 217). However, these formulations obscure the fact that it is not only the configuration of capital that has changed, but that the spaces and places that serve as the necessary basis of their practices and activities have also been altered fundamentally because the nature of what binds people and places together in these spaces has changed, as have the corresponding forms of the claims made on the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of these spaces.

As a result, these conceptualizations or theorizations of globalization have overvalorized the role of capital and undervalorized that of labour as a necessary and constitutive element. The phenomena of immigration and ethnicity that are in fact constitutive of globalization are construed and positioned theoretically by theorists such as Kymlicka, who uses these factors as major elements in his attempt to reformulate citizenship, in ways that limit the ability to perceive the reconstituted spaces that emerge from this process of globalization wherein different types of claims to citizenship are pressed by the cultural others that typically inhabit these spaces.

What we still narrate in the language of immigration and ethnicity, I would argue, is actually a series of processes having to do with the globalization of economic activity, of cultural activity, of identity formation. Too often immigration and ethnicity are constituted as otherness. Understanding them as a set of processes whereby global elements are localized, international labor markets are constituted, and cultures from all over the world are de- and reterritorialized, puts them right there at the center along with the internationalization of capital as a fundamental aspect of globalization.

(Sassen, 1996a, p. 218)

Hence, while the new claims of transnational capital on the state are represented as a major component of globalization, both the spaces and the claims being made within them by immigrants and other disempowered sectors, are either erased, ignored or construed in terms of a discourse that is anchored in figuration of social and economic relations long ago eclipsed by the forces of globalization. Instead, what must be acknowledged is that the spaces created by the complex and multidimensional processes of globalization have become strategic sites for the formation of transnational identities and communities, and for the corresponding emergence of new types of claims within these transformed spaces (Rocco, 1999).

Others have offered similar arguments, proposing that new and different types of citizenship claims are part of restructuring and globalization, and that these claims are difficult to conceptualize or reconcile with the assumptions of the liberalism that underlies efforts like Kymlicka's. For example, Holston and
Appadurai argue that the transnational processes constitutive of globalization have generated claims to 'new kinds of rights outside of the normative and institutional definitions of the state and its legal codes' (Holston and Appadurai, 1996, p. 197). And in her essay on 'Cities and Citizenship', Garcia reviews the debates on the 'rapid changes in the practice of citizenship' and argue that these require the development of new forms of conceptual and empirical analysis (Garcia, 1996, p. 7). From this perspective, it is crucial that attempts to reformulate our conceptions of notions of citizenship incorporate the contending claims of all the actors that occupy different spaces in the new globalized city, a process of political contestation that is likely to change the boundaries and parameters of the discourse of sovereignty and citizenship.

The challenge that emerges from these analyses that either suggest or explicitly call for the reformulation of the parameters of citizenship, is to develop a theoretical framework that allow us to perceive and examine these types of new claims and their relationship to the processes of globalization, one that enables us to ground the social practices of these sectors and the processes that produce them within specific institutional sites, 'spaces' or 'places'. Such a framework can be formulated by drawing on some of the insights and arguments found in the various ways that the discourse on civil society configure the relationship between citizenship, the state and democracy.

Civil society and associational citizenship

The claim advanced here, then, is that existing conceptions of citizenship are limited in their ability to recognize as such, rights-claims that arise from within marginalized social, political and cultural locations, and that by taking seriously the notion of 'place', at least some of these limitations can be addressed. Even work that is sympathetic to this effort remains at a level of abstraction that makes it difficult to clarify and assess the nature and significance of these claims. However, a question remains about how to incorporate place as a theoretical opening that facilitates inclusion of these new types of claims into the field of discourse on citizenship and rights. One approach that addresses this is suggested in the critiques and formulations of Somers and Sassen reviewed earlier, which argue that rights and citizenship claims arise from the associational practices and activities of communities.

Now since the nature and role of associational practices and activities that take 'place' outside the sphere of the mechanisms of the state is the primary focus of recent analysis and debate regarding civil society, we might find here an approach that expands the conceptions of rights-claims and citizenship in a way that allows them to account more adequately for changing realities of globalization and transnationalism. This associational basis of civil society is reflected in Walzer's description of it as 'the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology – that fill this space' (Walzer, 1992). But the reason behind the turn to civil society is the actual or potential role of this associational sphere in promoting more inclusive and responsive forms of democratic governance and citizenship.13

A particularly relevant conceptualization of this relationship is provided in a recent volume on social movements in Latin America (Alvarez et al., 1998). The authors adopt the discourses of civil society to advance a conception of citizenship and rights-claiming practices that expands the parameters of both democracy and the public sphere. This position is based on a series of case studies that document the central role of associational behaviours and practices based on relations of trust, reciprocity and mutual exchange in the development of new forms of rights-claims and modes of citizenship. The introductory essay states that these chapters 'call attention to the cultural practices and interpersonal networks of daily life that ... infuse new cultural meanings into political practices and collective action. These frameworks of meaning may include different modes of consciousness and practices of nature, neighborhood life, and identity.' (Alvarez et al., 1998, p. 14)

These practices have come to articulate claims about rights within society, and not solely against the institutions of the state. Sites or 'places' normally construed as apolitical were transformed in these cases as re-articulated public spaces, where 'market stalls, local bars, and family courtyards' served as localities where both processes of political affirmation and contestation were enacted and resulted in rights-claiming practices (Rubin, 1998, p. 155). Similar conclusions are advanced in a recent volume that focuses on examining civil society in non-western societies, arguing that 'there is ... a need to shift the debates about civil society away from formal structures and organizations and towards an investigation of beliefs, values and everyday practices' (Hann, 1996, p. 14).

The central role of these types of associational behaviour in promoting democratic practices is also supported in the work on social capital. Putnam, for example, contends that 'networks of civic engagement' and norms of reciprocity are crucial to promoting the expansion of democratic participation and 'good' government (Putnam, 1993; 1995).

Networks of civic engagement, like the neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, mass-based parties ... are an essential form of social capital: the denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit.

(Putnam, 1993, p. 173)

Thus social capital, which Putnam defines as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks' (Putnam, 1993, p. 167) that establish relations of reciprocity, is activated by social trust, which, according to Putnam,
arises from 'two related sources – norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement' (Putnam, 1993, p. 171). Thus, as in the social movement literature referred to above, the fostering of democratic social relations and forms of government require a broad network of activities and practices that are rooted in 'the submerged networks of daily life' (Alvarez et al., 1998, p. 14). This of course argues for a much broader concept of the political than that found in much traditional political science and sociology, which is defined primarily in terms of the primacy of formal, institutional apparatus of governing. The implications for understanding the dynamic nature of the processes that define the boundaries of the 'political' are summarized by Roniger in his study of civil society and clientelism:

the ‘construction of reality’ hinges on social interaction and exchange as a contextual, pragmatic phenomenon. It is at this level of interplay between the logic of modern constitutional democracy and the praxis and pragmatics of everyday life and social action that moral obligations and commitments are enmeshed and can be reformed in recurrent patterns of action and exchange through a complex web of movements, communities, associations, and interpersonal relations.

(Roniger, 1994, p. 8)

These approaches, then, suggest a way of expanding the theoretical and conceptual parameters of the notions of citizenship and rights-claims which enables a level of analytic and empirical specificity that can account for the new strategies of political inclusion and rights-claims rooted in the associational strategies and practices characterized by relations of trust, reciprocity and mutual exchange developed within the sites of civil society in response to the effects of globalization. These associational networks function within very specific institutional sites or ‘places’ that mediate the relationship between the household and the institutions that control the primary resources of economic, political and cultural power. Referring to the political significance of the relationship between the state and civil society, Chandhoke argues that

states invariably seek to control and limit the political practices of society by constructing the boundaries of the political. The state attempts in other words to constitute and contain the political discourse. However, politics as articulatory practices which mediate between the experiential and the expressive are not only about controls and the laying down of boundaries. They are about the transgressions of these boundaries and about the reconstitution of the political. The site at which these mediations and contestations take place; the site at which society enters into relationship with the state can be defined as civil society.

(Chandhoke, 1995, p. 9)

While agreeable, this position requires the inclusion of the mediations not only with the state, but with the macro institutions of economic and cultural power as well. These sites of mediation are the ‘places’ of everyday life, where individuals and groups engage and encounter the norms, boundaries, customs and networks that define institutional relationships, where they experience the consequences and effects of economic and political policies. Schools, churches, the workplace, parks are all sites where not only the activity of everyday life is carried out but where the effects of the practices of power are experienced, where the boundaries set by the configurations of privilege, status and access are encountered as the limits of action. And these are sites where the impact of globalization take effect and where strategic community responses to these consequences are developed. But they are also the sites of association, where individuals and groups establish a wide variety of relatively stable networks of activities that not only sustain their survival, identity and sense of worth, but which have also served as the basis for the development of practices and activities that are concerned with the direction of community and collective life, with the constitution of a ‘public sphere’.15

Incorporating this notion of ‘place’ allows for concretizing the categories of the civil society construct so that the nature, range and validity of rights-claims advanced within the marginalized lived spaces of civil societies that have undergone the transformations entailed by globalization can be addressed and assessed. My contention is that arguments that seek to address the issue of citizenship within multicultural societies remain limited and incomplete as long as the constructs of the marginalized ‘others’ they have adopted are relatively ungrounded. Claims to citizenship are not isolated phenomena, they always take place within a specific ensemble of relations that enable those claims. Forms of civic association that strengthen solidarity and trust in a community may not in themselves constitute citizenship claims, but they can be vital in leading to the activities that do. Hence these forms of association that support the development of strong identities enhance the degree of mutual trust and solidarity, and promote a stronger sense of participatory rights and responsibilities in traditionally non-political spheres, while not themselves constituting citizenship claims, can nevertheless provide the necessary conditions for these to emerge. The point is that the discourse on citizenship is likely to be inadequate without grounding rights or citizenship claims within the associational contexts that enable them.

Without incorporating this dimension, analysis of the normative parameters of citizenship will resonate only with the lives of those in communities that have already gained political visibility within the dominant cultural landscape, and cannot possibly perceive, much less address, the needs and experiences of those that lie outside that vision. The result, unfortunately and ironically, is that the partial and distorted image on which these analyses are based is likely to undermine the very notion of the just and democratic politics that these theories seek to promote.
Rights-claims, civil society and place

me to present it simply as an assertion in the hope that the remainder of the argument provides a general idea of the reasons for my adoption of it. See Habermas (1989) and the discussion by Cohen and Arato (1992), particularly pages 211–31 and 241–51.

Bibliography


Part IV
Globalism, politics, city
13 Urban citizenship

Robert A. Beauregard and Anna Bounds

Societies require a variety of integrative devices. From without, the allure (or the aggression) of other societies, whether real or imagined, threatens. From within, smaller-scale affiliations such as families and over-arching affiliations such as ethnic groups erode the strength of societal commitments. The integrative devices might be coercive, remunerative or simply functional, but they cannot be effective in the absence of moral ties. Integration is more effective when people identify with and feel a moral obligation to society.

Citizenship is one of these morally based, integrative devices (Alexander, 1992; Habermas, 1996): it has both political and cultural meaning. Though its roots are in the Greek city-states of the fourth century BC, its full emergence paralleled the rise of the nation-state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1996, pp. 82–97). National citizenship was its initial form.

Today, the nation-state is under assault by globalization from without and identity-based social movements from within (Castells, 1997). In response, political theorists have mounted a search for new forms of citizenship. Committed to globalization, one group has set its sights on a citizenship that transcends national boundaries and nation-state restrictions. Another group has targeted a sub-national citizenship. Convinced of the need for strong, place-based affiliations at a scale below the nation and influenced by the ‘rights revolution’ of the last quarter century (Schudson, 1998, pp. 245–73), it calls for an urban citizenship.

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate a normative model of citizenship that takes its meaning from the urban public realm. The public realm is ‘the city’s quintessential social territory’ (Lofland, 1998, p. 9). It is where people of diverse backgrounds engage each other on a daily basis in a variety of activities and associations. There, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are exercised, civic sentiments are formed and identities are realized. Consequently, we propose a normative and bounded (Miller, 1999, p. 69) model of citizenship that establishes a ‘thick’ relationship (Bosniak, 1998; Hutchings, 1999, p. 28; Isin, 1999a) between the users of cities and the public realm of cities. We propose an urban citizenship.
Citizenships

The most common citizenship is national citizenship. One is a citizen of, say, Canada or South Africa; that is, of a nation-state that commands a political territory. This ties citizenship to a sovereign political entity and to a socially and spatially bounded political community.

Although nation-states and their citizens were often created in coercive ways, national citizenship has endured. Reinforced externally by economic competition, wars and ideological confrontations (for example, the Cold War between Russia and America) and internally by identification documents, taxation and the teaching of history among other mechanisms, national citizenship remained a strong affiliation for most people in most countries through to the 1970s.

Rights and responsibilities are the key to nation-state citizenship and neither has remained static over the last two centuries. In western democracies, initial civil rights (for example, liberty of the person) were successively augmented by political rights (for example, enfranchisement) and social rights (for example, guaranteed healthcare) (Marshall, 1964; Hirschman, 1991). These new rights came with new obligations; the provision of social rights required more extensive taxation, for example. This elaboration of a basic citizenship did not occur in all nations or include all who resided there. Neither did it come about without political struggle. Nevertheless, the extension of citizenship rights strengthened the functional and moral ties between the nation and its citizens, and in this way strengthened the nation-state.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the nation-state is no longer as dominant as it once was. Two forces have brought this about: globalization and emergent cultural diversity. With the increasing power of transnational corporations, spread of telecommunication links and heightened international migration, the importance of nation-states has waned (Linklater, 1998). Trade barriers are less defensible, emigration and immigration less controllable, and nation-state influence over the behaviour of transnational corporations has diminished. Even though nation-states have become stronger in other ways (Sassen, 1996) and nationalism still functions as a powerful force supporting them, many nation-states are less able to command the sole political allegiance of their citizens (Smith, 1999).

Simultaneously, nation-state dominance has been eroded internally. In the last half of the twentieth century, ethnic and racialized populations and affinity groups based on religion, gender, sexuality and historical trauma (among other bases of affiliation) became more politically prominent. The women's movement, environmental activism, ethnic rebellions, and struggles for racial identity have been central, and independence movements on the part of colonized peoples have contributed to the weakening of existing nation-states, even as they increase their numbers.

In response to these circumstances, and thus to the need for new integrative mechanisms, theorists and activists have begun to consider alternative forms of citizenship. The quest is bifurcated along the universalism/particularism divide.

One group of theorists (Beiner, 1995; Linklater, 1998) focuses on commonalities. Another gives prime emphasis to difference; that is, to a citizenship that will enable an heterogeneous public to thrive - differentiated citizenship in Iris Young's (1995; 1999) terms. The former rejects radical pluralism and the localization of civil society; the latter rejects cultural conformity. They share a concern with the formation and quality of political communities.

One of the most prominent of these alternative citizenships is cosmopolitan citizenship (Hutchings and Dannreuther, 1999; Linklater, 1998). Cosmopolitan citizenship is motivated by a concern for vulnerable groups and oppressed communities, respect for the profound multiplicity of the world, and the recognition that national citizenship places obligations to fellow citizens above obligations to humanity. The last is particularly important. Proponents claim that national citizenship weakens popular and political inclination to intervene outside the nation and thereby precludes a global distributive justice (Beiss, 1979, pp. 143–53). Cosmopolitan citizenship is designed to counteract the parochialism of national citizenship with a transcendent set of obligations. From this perspective, sovereignty resides in the whole human race, not just in the nation-state (Linklater, 1998, p. 27).

Linklater's (1998) version of cosmopolitan citizenship draws from Jürgen Habermas; its premise is that one can expect people to be reasonable and empathic, as well as honest and forthright, when interacting with each other. His cosmopolitan citizenship is dialogic, requiring communicative communities that have the power to 'refuse and re-negotiate offers' and to contest unjust social structures (Linklater, 1998, p. 28). The goal is to replace power and coercion, defining characteristics of nation-states, with dialogue and consent. The primary function is 'to institutionalise the normative commitment to limitless communication through participation in diverse global communities of discourse which reflect the heterogeneous quality of international society' (Linklater, 1998, p. 36).

A variation on this approach is transnational citizenship (Smith, 1999). Unlike cosmopolitan citizenship, which is dismissive of national ties, transnational citizenship recognizes that the nation-state has been transformed but not seriously weakened, and that people will continue to claim national affiliation. In addition, the numbers of migrants who circulate between the country of origin and destination, and the numbers of elites who live and work in multiple global cities are expanding. These groups have commitments to more than one country. A need thus exists for a citizenship that will give them rights in all the countries with which they identify and where they have familial and group obligations. In its rudimentary version, transnational citizenship bundles together national citizenships. It requires each nation-state to recognize multiple citizen affiliations.

The strength of cosmopolitan and transnational citizenships is in the rethinking of our relationship to the nation-state. In an era of transnational corporations, fluid financial markets, weak trade barriers and robust migration flows, common people have multiple allegiances and countries are more
dependent on each other. Citizenship tied to the nation neither adequately recognizes these non-national or cross-national allegiances, nor has the institutional underpinnings to respond to environmental and humanitarian crises that require intervention across national boundaries.

These citizenships, however, suffer from an over-reliance on the goodwill of individuals and nation-states (Miller, 1999). They assume transnational interests and moral bonds; that we are all part of humanity is often the premise, but it is a premise whose idealism greatly exceeds its substance. Relatedly, too little attention is paid to the ways in which such citizenships threaten nation-states. Some nations might well welcome dual citizenship, but cosmopolitan citizenship is meant to attenuate national commitments.

In addition, the inherent individualism of the citizen relationship is retained. Although some citizenship rights (for example, the immigration of family members) have extension beyond the single person, individuals - not groups - become citizens. Neither cosmopolitan nor transnational citizenship responds adequately to the group-based claims that emerge out of cultural pluralism.

This is not surprising. Citizenship has its roots in liberal political theory and capitalism, for which liberalism was justification and ideology (Beiner, 1995, pp. 1–2; Hutchings, 1999). Individualism is central to it. In general, citizenship is a weak social category for dealing with the group-based nature of social life. This is reflected in the universalism that is a strength of citizenship status (Young, 1995). It is manifested in the bourgeois public sphere that fails to recognize the embodied way in which people - as women or immigrants - act as citizens (Fraser, 1990; Isin, 1997). When combined with a nation-state stripped to its service functions, citizens are turned into clients. Virtue is displaced by interests and citizenship is depoliticized (Bender, 1996).

Transnational citizenship does hint at a more collective formulation. Group migration and transnational relationships are central; immigration, at least in America, has always had a strong group dimension - national quotas have been common. Still, cosmopolitan citizenship remains deeply individualistic, common. Neither particularly in its dialog conceptualization (Linklater, 1998). Neither cosmopolitan nor transnational citizenship breaks cleanly from the essential individualism and individualism based in the nation-state.

An interesting response to individualism and to the quest for a sub-national citizenship is Engin Isin's (1997; 1999a; 1999b) proposal for a citizenship rights negotiated within the political space of the city are necessarily mediated by professions. However, the professional-citizen is loyal not to the city but to the professional associations that are organized across boundaries.

This line of reasoning has its origins in the historical claim that citizenship began in the city, a reference to the early Roman and Greek city-states (for example, Athens) and the sixteenth-century European city-states (for example, Amsterdam and Venice). To this is added a more contemporary motivation: the supposed ascendance of city-regions as the primary economic units in the global economy. When coupled with the lessened identification of peoples with nations and the devolution of state policy to the local level, an urban citizenship begins to make sense.

Thomas Bender (1999) has pointed to one version of urban citizenship. Looking back to the late nineteenth century in America, when the public debate over the fate of cities was quite robust, Bender (a historian) discovered a number of intellectuals (such as Charles Beard and Frederick C. Howe) who defended the city as a locale of political engagement. At a time of rapid industrialization and urbanization, with the attendant social and environmental problems, local governments were under siege. These intellectuals argued for an urban citizenship. The city was 'closer' than the nation to the issues that people faced in their daily lives. People identified more with it than they did with national or state governments. Hence, the city could be a significant locus of citizen activity.

For an urban citizenship to be realized, citizenship status had to be expanded beyond those who owned property and paid taxes, and the city government had to be given 'home rule'; that is, more powers and greater autonomy from other levels of government. At the same time, the city government would have to resist being turned into a public works corporation dominated by the delivery of services and run by experts. It had to remain a political body.

Eventually, voting rights were extended, but 'home rule' was not widely granted. In addition, the federalism that emerged in the twentieth century weakened the city relative to the nation and the state. City governments professionalized around service delivery. Although politics did not disappear, public debate regarding civic life was reduced to the jockeying of government claimants for attention. An urban citizenship was not realized.

James Holston's (1999) urban citizenship moves away from the conflict between city and the nation and examines the influence of civil society on the development of citizenship. Of central concern is the gap between formal citizenship status and substantive citizen rights. When this gap becomes intolerable - that is, when state-building displaces social welfare and dominant elites constrict the lives of the masses - people search for insurgent spaces where they can manage their daily existence and their history. City residents use their knowledge of and access to the city to evade surveillance and control. In doing so, they create a new urban citizen.
The public realm

Our focus on an urban citizenship is not a move to pre-empt other forms of citizenship. In complex and dynamic societies, multiple forms of integration, and thus multiple forms of citizenship, are necessary to maintain cohesion and stability. At the same time, these multiple affiliations can also challenge cohesion and stability. The point is to recognize that people’s moral ties are multi-stranded, with no one fully displacing the others.

The form of urban citizenship we propose is tied to the public realm of the city; that is to the spaces where social life takes place. In these spaces, people gather to interact, to observe others unlike themselves, and to shop, gossip, talk and play. Two types of spaces comprise the public realm: public and parochial. Public spaces (such as sidewalks, greenmarkets and plazas) are where people unknown to each other (strangers) congregate. Parochial spaces (for example, neighbourhood playgrounds and church halls) are where people who are acquaintances and neighbours (that is, who are part of the same social networks) come together. In the public realm, everyday life is enacted (De Certeau, 1984).

This distinction is not just between strangers and acquaintances. It also has a political component. In public spaces, individuals and groups publicize their interests and identities to city-wide and even national audiences. They hold rallies, give speeches and parade. Union workers stage symbolic protests or street vendors march down city streets to protest onerous city regulations. In parochial spaces, they craft their interests and identities. Here, for example, urban citizens meet in community centres to discuss the issues that concern them. People have more in common than they do in public spaces and this enables more substantive deliberations.

The public realm is central to urban citizenship for two reasons. First, most people in the city pass through or linger in these spaces on a weekly or even daily basis. These are places where many of the tasks of daily life are performed. People enter them to shop, worship and work; they linger to observe and to talk. If citizenship is to be forged, it will only be done here.

Second, it is within the public realm, particularly in parochial spaces, that people debate shared concerns (Sennett, 1977). These are places where a democratic society is rooted and nurtured. They are places where differences are resolved, or not, through deliberation and collective actions (Bohman, 1996; Fraser, 1990; Young, 1996). One cannot separate democracy from the public realm where democracy happens (Bender, 1983).

Nonetheless, the possibility of non-democratic activities in the public realm cannot be ignored. Over the centuries, public and parochial spaces have served as places where anti-democratic regimes solidify their control. Using political rallies, parades and symbolic displays (such as large posters of state officials), they assert their power. Public spaces can also be places of violence, whether by states and their surrogates or by groups opposing the regime and meeting armed resistance. One cannot assume that the public realm, because it brings the public together, will necessarily result in democratic and consensual outcomes.

An urban citizenship does not have to be grounded in the public realm. The local government could serve as the base, although we reject it. This would put too much emphasis on an entity that is dominated by its service-delivery function. Citizens are turned into voters or clients of government programmes and the cultural richness of public life is marginalized.

Although not the anchor to our urban citizenship, the local government still plays a role, albeit a peripheral one. The public realm cannot function or remain open and inclusive in the absence of a regulatory and service-providing body that maintains (not by itself) the public and parochial spaces of the city. Without a strong (and democratic) state, civil society suffers and urban citizenship is at risk (Fainstein, 1997; Young, 1994).

A citizenship of the public realm is thereby distinct from a state-based citizenship but not independent of the state. One might say that this urban citizenship is situated in civil society, except that civil society is often confined to private, civil and political associations (Young, 1997). The public realm, however, contains the whole range of social collectivities, from households to affinity groups; it is an expanded civil society. It offers a fluid arena of social relations, one where deviance and conformity, resistance and acquiescence, innovation and routinization co-exist.

Our goal is to develop the social nature of citizenship, deflect its identification solely with political community, and resist its inherent state-centredness. We emphasize the moral rights and responsibilities that people have as participants in the social activities of public and parochial spaces (Hutchings, 1999, pp. 2–11).

Rights and responsibilities

Five clusters of rights and responsibilities strike us as central to an urban citizenship. They can be arrayed around the themes of safety, tolerance, political engagement, recognition and freedom. Each is specific to the public realm. Each is also a practice, requiring an active citizen (Hutchings, 1999, p. 6).

A citizenship anchored in the public realm has to begin with personal and group safety. People have a right to expect that they will not be harmed in public, whether that harm comes from demented individuals, marauding gangs, police action or vigilante groups. If people do not feel safe, then the public realm will atrophy. Too dangerous to linger, citizenship is diminished.

When public spaces become unsafe, elites often react defensively. They withdraw to fortified enclaves – gated communities, for example, and ‘secure’ office buildings – that give them protection but that also make public spaces more dangerous (Caldeira, 1996). By turning away physically and psychologically, public spaces are devalued, investment is discouraged, and fewer people venture into them.

Safety is not only a right but a responsibility shared by both the state and citizens. The local government is obligated to use its police power to maintain public order. Streets and sidewalks, public parks and government plazas must be
protected from deterioration, encroachment by commercial activities, uncivil behaviour and excessive state presence. Important in this regard are the physical and design qualities of public and parochial spaces that can encourage or discourage lingering and conversation.

More importantly, the responsibility for safety must be internalized as a social norm. Citizens can exercise this responsibility through their physical presence. The potential for violence and criminal behaviour is diminished when public spaces are vibrant with people performing their daily tasks. Withdrawal into fortified enclaves and excessive privatization diminish this responsibility.

A second pair of rights and responsibilities focuses on tolerance. While safety refers to violent behaviour, tolerance addresses the kinds of non-violent behaviour that are permissible in public and parochial spaces (Kahn, 1987; Lofland, 1993). To be tolerant is to refrain from blocking activities and forms of expression with which one disagrees. Street preachers, for example, often express controversial positions, yet citizens can be expected to tolerate opposing viewpoints and even participate in debate. Tolerant people make room for men and women whose beliefs they don’t adopt, whose practices they decline to imitate; they coexist with an otherness that, however much they approve of its presence in the world, is still something different from what they know, something alien and strange.

(Walker, 1997, p. 11)

Tolerance thus enables difference; it is a responsibility (and an expectation) of a multicultural democracy.

There are limits to tolerance. When actions and expressions are physically harmful to others, they should not be tolerated. When they are psychologically harmful (for example, hate speech), they should be criticized. When they violate generally accepted norms (for example, intrusive noise, lewd behaviour), they should be discouraged. Punitive actions might or might not be taken.

Citizens have a responsibility to engage in debates about tolerance’s limits, to negotiate themselves and speak out against intolerance. Tolerance only becomes pervasive, however, when supported by political arrangements (Walker, 1997). Here, once again, the government plays a role.

The state’s responsibility is to support tolerance and enforce its limits. Support comes from educational policies, official persuasion, the sponsoring of public forums and the subvention of cultural activities. Police action and legal sanctions should be a final option. Enforcement must always be a second choice and must always be open to democratic direction. In general, the regulatory mechanisms (for example, social norms) of the public realm are preferable to state interventions.

A third component of urban citizenship concerns political behaviour (Bahlman, 1996; Young, 1994). People have the right to organize and congregate in the public realm for political reasons. They also have a responsibility to be politically engaged. The right and the responsibility reinforce each other.

When political action is carried out by a small minority of activists and the bulk of citizens act politically only when they vote, democracy can become a tyranny of minorities. All urban citizens have to be politically engaged. This does not mean that all are obliged to join political organizations or take to the streets. Rather, it means that everyone has to establish a connection to the realm of politics. Everyone has to maintain an interest, even if it consists simply of staying informed and voicing one’s opinions to others (Schudson, 1998, pp. 310–12).

The government can play an important, enabling role. It can show tolerance for political activity, remove barriers (for example, residency requirements, financial costs) to elected office, encourage voting, open up government to broader citizen participation, and publicize the importance of political engagement. Civic organizations can also contribute. Nurtured in these ways, wider involvement deepens democracy’s legitimacy and reduces apathy.

Fourth, urban citizenship is not just about politics. It is also about recognition of, and moral responsibility to, others. One of the dominant forms of expression in contemporary societies is that of identity (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 193–230; Young, 1990). Under an urban citizenship, citizens have the right to express their identity and to expect that those expressions will be recognized (Young, 1999, p. 246). This ‘difference’ is what enriches the public realm. Suppression substitutes sterility and conformity for vibrancy and fluidity. It weakens democracy by confining political behaviour only to interests (Fraser, 1995).

What takes the right to recognition beyond simply an issue of tolerance is the moral responsibility attached to it. Because identity differences often stem from conditions or feelings of marginality and because marginality is frequently associated with unequal or unjust treatment, societal integration is threatened when identities are suppressed. The persistence of inequalities, injustices and disrespect have deleterious consequences for democratic interaction. Marginalized people, feeling that the political process is illegitimate, are likely to withdraw from the public realm or disrupt it. Recognition and inclusion are antitheses to this, as are collective actions (particularly through and by the government) that redistribute valued goods, resources and recognition (Appiah, 1997).

The responsibility attached to the right of recognition is the moral obligation to respect others and act, beyond one’s group, to bring about more equality and justice. Moral commitments that are built over groups and places can energize just politics and support the diversity that makes cities such vibrant places. Without this, the right to recognition suffers.

Finally, urban citizenship is about freedom. In the public realm, citizens should expect to be free from the intrusion of both commercialism and political manipulation. Their presence makes public spaces interesting and their
complete absence would be undesirable. Nonetheless, there must be parochial and public spaces in which advertising and shopping are subdued and political symbolism and state presence are minimized. This enables other types of activities and dialogues to occur; people come to these spaces for other reasons, reasons that they deem important.

Equally important is the fact that urban citizens have the responsibility to fill these spaces with ‘other’ activities. They might include grassroots political activities (those not orchestrated by the state), but should mainly consist of socializing and play, activities which nurture social relations. If citizens do not organize the public realm, capital or the state will.

Reflection

This version of urban citizenship is an ideal. It is a first attempt to craft a place-based citizenship that is relatively independent of the nation-state and local government.

Our formulation takes as one of its constituent elements the public realm of the city. It aims to capture what is unique about city life: the multitude of parochial and public places and the negotiation of the public realm by people unknown to each other. We rejected placing the local government in this position. It is too confining. Instead, we opted for an object of citizen orientation embedded in the myriad social groups and relationships of an expansive civil society.

The local government is incorporated as a supportive institution with its own rights and responsibilities regarding urban citizenship. The relationship of the citizen to the state is a mediated one; indirect rather than direct. It is the active and engaged citizen, however, who defines urban citizenship, not the state.

An urban citizenship encourages people to act collectively. All of its rights and responsibilities are relational and their exercise requires interaction with others. This is one benefit of privileging the public realm rather than local government. Safety, tolerance, recognition and moral obligations situate people in social relationships in which they have to acknowledge others. Urban citizenship that is becomes less individualistic. Citizens are not turned into consumers or state clients and they are urged away from the passivity intrinsic to national citizenship.

This approach to urban citizenship is both political and cultural. Citizenship is an integrative mechanism that relies heavily on moral obligations. To highlight this, we grounded urban citizenship in the public realm where the behaviours and interactions of people are governed less by remunerative or legal compulsions than by common bonds and identities, voluntary associations and a sense of mutual belonging. Rights and responsibilities make sense in the absence of moral ties.

These positive, even if contestable, qualities of urban citizenship co-exist with unresolved issues. First, the public realm does not have the cohesiveness and solidity of the nation-state or the local government. The latter are formal organizations with well-defined tasks and capacities; the former is not. Rights and duties can easily slip away, becoming the responsibility of everyone and no one. To prevent this, the local government has been introduced to guarantee and enforce them. That the local government might opt to occupy the void, thereby becoming a core element of urban citizenship, is a distinct (and undesirable) possibility.

In addition, the collective side of urban citizenship is only weakly realized. Within the world that we have imagined, people can act individually and live quite well by doing so. They can also withdraw into parochial groupings, thereby weakening democracy. Individualism lingers.

Nothing has yet been said regarding the criteria for urban citizenship status (Dahl, 1989, pp. 119–31). Broad enfranchisement – universalism – across class, gender and ethnicity is the premise, but when dealing with the contemporary city there is also the issue of whether only residents are eligible. Commuters, temporary visitors such as tourists, international businesspeople and global elites are hypothesized to be an increasing proportion of those who use the city (Martinotti, 1999).

Rights and responsibilities clearly lose all meaning if criteria are non-existent, vague or excessively flexible. Citizenship is a matter of inclusion and exclusion. This gives it value. Because the public realm is so open, people are so mobile, and government, corporate and associational spheres overlap each other and political boundaries (Frug, 1999, pp. 97–111) our citizenship criteria must include all those who use the city and benefit from it.

Inclusion, as Young (1995) has convincingly pointed out, leaves two important issues unresolved. One is the tendency for group differences in capacities, histories and behavioural styles to produce privileges in the public realm. Individuals from some groups are advantaged and equal treatment only perpetuates those advantages. The second is the need for ‘special rights’ that recognize, rather than suppress, group differences. Neither of these issues has been addressed here.

Lastly, we have not considered how such a citizenship might be realized. The public realm is not an act to: it is incapable of creating the urban citizen. To allow local government to do so is fraught with the potential for an urban citizenship to be centred on the state. Still, it could be argued that the meanings of an urban citizenship are already in place (Hall and Lindholm, 1999). Most of the rights and responsibilities are available in democratic countries in one form or another. What is lacking is their attachment to the public realm; that is the recognition of an ‘urban’ citizenship. This presents the problem differently: not as one of generating rights and responsibilities but one of articulating their interdependence.
Conclusion

In the search for new forms of citizenship, the city cannot be ignored. Even transnational migrants and global elites – rootless cosmopolitans in Kuhn's (1987, p. 12) phrase – live in and identify with specific places. For most people, these places, these cities, are the meaningful spaces of their existence. If we are to resist the disarticulating tendencies of contemporary societies, urban citizenship is a necessity.

As an integrative device, urban citizenship emphasizes the moral obligations that enable the public realm to nurture individuals, groups and democracy. The strengthening of social and spatial bonds stands in opposition to citizens as clients of the state or consumers and signals its grounding in a broadly conceived civil society.

Finally, urban citizenship is not meant to preclude other forms of citizenship but rather to exist in a world of multiple affiliations. In multicultural societies numerous integrative mechanisms are needed, and people are more than capable of negotiating a variety of relationships. That they will do so in relation to everyday life is the foundation on which our conception of an urban citizenship is built.

Notes

1. We use 'urban' in an expansive rather than exclusionary way. To wit, we do not confine urban citizenship solely to cities. Rather, 'urban' stands for communities of sufficient size and complexity to contain places where people congregate on a daily basis.

2. To be fair to Smith (1999) and others who write on transnationalism, we are extrapolating from their arguments to produce a concept of transnational citizenship.

3. Our understanding of the public realm, rights and responsibilities, state behaviour and citizenship comes from our experience in the USA. This is the point of reference for our argument.

4. We distinguish the public realm from political community, the usual focus of citizenship (Habermas, 1996). We would agree that political community is manifested in the public realm. The latter encompasses much more than the former.

5. Frug (1999, pp. 95–112) grounds his version of urban citizenship precisely in the service provision of local government.

6. Sentiments and identity have been set aside here. Our intent is, first, to establish urban citizenship as a social contract around rights and responsibilities.

7. Dagger (1997, pp. 154–72) argues that the size, cohesiveness and stability of political communities also mediate citizenship status.

Bibliography


The city as a heroic public sphere

Judith A. Garber

Introduction

This chapter reconsiders the dominant post-modern approach to politics and space in the city, suggesting how this approach works against the substantive vision of the urban public sphere to which post-modernism aspires. It focuses on the ways in which the post-modern understanding of politics in cities - as a contest over definitions or meaning - goes hand-in-hand with the dramatic shifting of spatial reference points from the physical to the abstract and metaphorical. This dual shift has left a noticeable impression on how post-modernists and other critical theorists think about a range of urban matters. Because the public sphere is widely regarded as the meeting point for politics and space in the city, the adoption of abstract politics and metaphorical space has especially transformed the context in which the urban public sphere can be conceptualized and theorized.

My argument is not that the post-modern approach to space and politics is wholly defective or useless from the perspective of encouraging an urban politics of difference. Rather, it is that the distinctively post-modern project of situating politics in the particularities of experience, embodiment and identity is crucial to any effort to validate difference in the urban public sphere. To this end, the reappropriation of space and politics for more figurative, subjective usage has rendered them vastly more sympathetic to the possibilities of difference than they have been in modernism’s less imaginative moments. Introducing specificity and subjectivity to urban questions has not only opened up the ideas of politics and space to a diversity of visions, it has also undermined the inherited, stagnant understandings of key urban notions like community, locality and publicity.2

Notwithstanding these achievements, abstract space and politics have considerably more complicated and unpredictable implications than post-modern students of cities acknowledge. First, over-abstraction can have perverse results, in that it works against the validation of politics, and especially political action, that springs from people’s specific positions. At the least, the kinds of political goals that are tied up with expressing difference in the city
cannot be realized solely or even primarily by means of a ‘politics of definition’, eventually, abstraction and specificity become frankly incompatible goals. Nor is it possible to appreciate the complex linkages between space and politics if they are removed from their material urban contexts, since many of the most important political referents in cities are located literally on the ground.

Second, post-modern formulations that work well for cultural critique are not infinitely extensible to the realm of urban politics because what goes on in the urban public sphere is distinct from the politics of culture. A politics of definition simply does not have much to say about central political matters such as what constitutes meaningful citizenship in the global city or how to democratize relations in the urban public sphere. Its capacity for conceptualizing or theorizing the public sphere is, in fact, quite limited. Ultimately, one of the most crucial political goals for the post-modern city - the sustenance of multiple, insurgent urban ‘publics’ (Fraser, 1993) — depends partly on articulating the connection between physical space and the public sphere of collective political action and interaction. By turning away from the desire to abstract urban politics and space as a corrective to modernism, it may actually be possible to reconstruct their relationship in a way that is conducive to the primary post-modern political aims of recognizing relations of difference, and embracing and empowering particularity.

Abstract politics

In the essays introducing and concluding their edited volume, Post-modern Cities and Spaces, Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson forcefully articulate a common post-modern perspective on urban politics. They write 'what interests us is how heroic visions of modernist politics, that of mass mobilization and emancipation of the oppressed, have eclipsed our own view of the many possibilities of a post-modern politics' (Gibson and Watson, 1995, p. 254, emphasis added). Modernist politics 'homogenizes' categories, fixes difference along rigid lines, fails to recognize the interplays and complexities of powers, and disallows a multiplicity of subject positions' (1995, p. 260). In contrast, 'post-modern politics ... defines an end to simplistic notions of class alliances or urban social movements' (1995, p. 262).

Watson and Gibson do not claim to be speaking for a unitary post-modern position on what constitutes politics (and, indeed, they do not). They also express tolerance for those who remain 'wistful' (Watson and Gibson, 1995, p. 9) for the old (i.e. modernist) political vision of cities as, in effect, latently 'heroic'. Nonetheless, their statements encapsulate a fundamental element of post-modern thinking about cities, politics and the politics of cities. Not only does post-modern urban politics reject the primacy of fixed categories such as class, but it often also attempts to move beyond - or, perhaps more accurately, above - the mere practice of politics to another, much more encompassing realm. Increasingly, in post-modern scholarship, to say simply 'politics' commits one to a distinctive, non-obvious usage of the word. With respect to cities, urbanity and space, politics is most typically articulated as the politics of culture, the politics of ideas or the politics of representation. These main strands of politics are explicitly defined with reference to one another; hence, they end up being treated as pieces of one, big, post-modern urban politics, because culture, ideas and representation are themselves closely interrelated. To take one well-developed version of this approach, Gillian Rose conveys, approvingly, the contribution of 'current social and cultural theorizing' in terms of the following chain of relationships that it elucidates: 'The politics of knowledge is understood in terms of the politics of representation, and the politics of representation is interpreted in terms of a geopolitics of location' (1996, p. 57). Politics exists, in other words, as an insight or entrée into various other phenomena.

Some political theorists have talked about the widespread use of the 'politics of x' formulation, worrying that its high level of abstraction can dampen the possibilities for concerted political action around gender, sex or other oppressions (Fuss, quoted in Phelan, 1994, pp. 98–9). This same concern lies at the heart of my discomfort with much of the post-modern usage of 'politics'. However, according to the predominant post-modern understanding, the politics of cities is, quite strikingly, a politics of definition or meaning. The politics of meaning is meant to stand in high contrast to liberal, socialist or communitarian politics. Although these forms of politics are certainly informed by grand theories and abstract ideas - about justice, the common good, rights, authority, equality, citizenship, and so on - they are in the end concerned with providing a guide for tangible aims and conduct in the world. Moreover, these aims and conduct have significance in their own right and in ways that may be readily perceived, as in the question of whether a local government's assigning policing and surveillance powers to a private company is a good or a bad thing, and for what specifiable reasons.

Another sample of the post-modern understanding of urban politics - as a 'site for contestation of meaning around ... images' (Ruddick, 1996, p. 141) - reveals a basic disparity between this form of politics and the others. What the actual substance of this politics would be, and why it would be significant, is elusive. It is difficult to envision how it could be given content over time, or provide either an instrumental or ethical guide to conduct in the city; it is even unclear how people would recognize this as politics. The politics of meaning may be expressed as action or material accomplishment: for Watson and Gibson, a crucial political endeavour in cities is 'to design and build post-modern spaces' (1995, p. 255), including physical places and structures. In actuality, however, it is unquestionably the representative, expressive or definitional force of these activities that renders them political for many post-modern urbanists. To count as political, 'designing and building' need not have any end other than whatever meta-statements they make in public space; they need not engage discussion or action in the public sphere. Again, this post-modern understanding of politics consists, at base, of the contestation over and
fluidity of cultural, social, aesthetic, psychological, sexual, linguistic and epistemological meanings.

The post-modern understanding of specifically urban matters is not solely a result of this desire to assert an actual or potential political role for the cultural, symbolic or ideational aspects of the city. It is, rather, a joint product of the overall move toward politics as a struggle over meanings or definitions, plus the abstraction of spatial referents from their physical aspects. Together, abstract politics and metaphorical space determine the nature and size of the role attributed to the urban public sphere within the overall schema of post-modern city politics.

Metaphorical space

Lying behind the post-modern reconception of politics-as-definition is, of course, an attentiveness to difference, contingency, movement and multiplicity, as basic facts of social life, and also as the highest aspirations for it. Politics, definition and difference are connected in numerous ways. Difference is largely determined by who makes and applies definitions – in the USA and Canada, households with either zero or two adult males signify (within the dominant discourses) ‘different’ kinds of families; in most countries throughout the world, immigrants from elsewhere are often assigned the status of ‘different’ from citizens. Not surprisingly, defining itself is a politicized act with real political consequences, and difference is political precisely because it is a product of definitional moves taken from disparate positions of power. Further, if we believe that politics is (or should be) an open struggle over meanings, then it is through politics that multiple and competing meanings of difference and other matters might come to the fore.

Both the post-modern condition and the post-modern ideal are widely seen to be epitomized by cities, because cities, more than other geopolitical forms, foster variety, disorder, embodiment and strangeness. Indeed, as the quotes from Rose and Ruddick show, the politics of representation, culture and ideas are frequently packaged with the politics of space. Since space retains an undeniably strong and generalized association with cities, cities are vital to post-modern concepts of politics. This remains true despite concerted efforts in feminist and other critical theory to disrupt the perception of congruity between space and in particular, local places.\(^4\)

The debate over space

To begin to appreciate the spatial elements of this post-modern understanding of urban politics, it is necessary only to conjure up the truly impressive array of space-related terms that have been abstracted from their physical (and urban or local) referents for the purpose of destabilizing their meanings and, hence, politicizing them. There is the now-ubiquitous use of ‘space’, as in ‘spaces of power’, ‘spaces of production’ or ‘spaces of discourse’. A look through recent critical work turns up these additional metaphors related to two-, three- and four-dimensional space: geography, terrain, territory, landscape, topography, topology, plateau, (dis)place, (dis)hetero(u)topia\(^5\), site, situate, venue, boundary, border, frontier, horizon, (back)ground, margin, interstices, wall, bridge, architecture, mobility, navigate, travel, tourist, nomad, diaspora, migrant, exile, reside, homeless, lost, (dis)orient, (dis)location, local, locale, position, intersection, standpoint, map, chart, cartography and scale. Many of these words are employed in multiple, and sometimes playful, forms that evoke subtle variations in the metaphorical possibilities of space.

The marked popularity of spatial metaphors at this time is not a coincidence; it is a critical mass. This extended family of metaphors helps support the wave of interest in matters spatial/spatial\(^6\), an interest that Margaret Farrar (1997) labels, metaphorically, ‘the spatial turn’ and ‘going mobile’. It is undeniably the case, as Neil Smith and Cindi Katz observe, that ‘spatial metaphors have become a predominant means by which social life is understood’ (1993, p. 68). This now appears to be true for an overwhelming proportion of academics who have any truck at all with post-modern ideas. Janet Wolff has summed up the impetus behind the use of spatial metaphors:

Theoretical developments in urban studies have questioned the sociological assumption that the starting point of the study of space is the existence of physical spatial structures which, though themselves the product of earlier social processes, confront social actors and affect (constrain, determine, allow, facilitate) their actions.

(Wolff, 1995, p. 106)

Metaphors liberate space from ‘physical spatial structures’, of course; perhaps more importantly they also give actors leave to affect (reconceive, reform, enter/exit, empower/disempower) space at will.\(^7\)

Those who revel in (Rose, 1996), or at least accept (McDowell, 1996; Wolff, 1995), the vast possibilities of the metaphorical turn are equally likely to discuss it as those who are more cool to metaphors (Smith and Katz, 1993; Soja and Hooper, 1993; see also Soja, 1997). As a result, there is more and more debate in urban studies concerning the practice, meaning and consequences of employing spatial concepts in figurative ways. The debate has yielded three fundamental observations in support of the omnipresence of spatial metaphors in urban studies. First, no space is static, essential, sealed or asocial. Second, there is some temptation to ascribe to both physical and non-physical space characteristics that reproduce and ‘perform’ race, sexuality, class, gender, age, citizenship and other relations of dominance. Third, metaphorical space is no less ‘real’ than physical space (and, relatedly, the distinction between metaphorical and physical space is always unclear). The first and second points have been more or less conceded by all current metaphor-sceptics; the last point remains subject to the epistemological gulf separating post-modernism from modernism, despite creative efforts to step completely outside of such dualisms.
Representing the politics of representation of urban politics

In an article entitled 'Establishing Ground: Representing Gender and Race in a Mixed Housing Development', Myrna Breitbart and Ellen-J. Pader (1995; see also Pader and Breitbart, 1993) recount and interpret an instance of urban political action around physical space. This political engagement concerned the private redevelopment in the 1980s of a Boston public housing project (Columbia Point), which was in receivership, into a new, mixed-income development (Harbor Point). Breitbart and Pader's article focuses on the group of Columbia Point tenants, mostly African-American and Latina females, who were largely responsible for instigating, designing, directing, and implementing the redevelopment (1995, p. 6). The women, who were elected by fellow tenants, had previously organized to address conditions within the housing project (1995, p. 13). Their insistence on participating in the redevelopment was, moreover, an outgrowth of their recognition that their housing was sitting on very valuable waterfront real estate in a city that is high up on the global urban hierarchy (1995, p. 14). They were not, in sum, wholly naïve in the ways of traditional politics. Accordingly, through negotiations with city agencies and the private developer, the women participated in establishing the agreement to turn Columbia Point into Harbor Point, in choosing an architect and lawyer, in setting up technical development guidelines, in guaranteeing that no existing tenants would be displaced, and in selecting new tenants. As members of the Harbor Point Task Force, former Columbia Point residents and market-rate tenants manage the new housing.

Breitbart and Pader's primary aim is to resurrect the residents' accomplishments from the misleading media coverage of Columbia Point's redevelopment. To this end, they point out numerous instances in which, in covering the redevelopment process, the Boston media primarily ignored, trivialized or misrepresented the involvement of the tenants; glorified the mixed-income housing concept; and pathologized public housing and its residents. A section of the article is devoted to analysing how the coverage of the Columbia Point redevelopment fitted into pervasive media images of African-Americans, as embodied by Rodney King, Anita Hill and generic 'welfare queens' (Breitbart and Pader, 1995, pp. 11-12; Pader and Breitbart, 1993, pp. 36-7). The Columbia Point residents were well aware at the time of this negative coverage of public housing and of scepticism about mixed-income, ethnically diverse housing, and some thought that they were 'set up by the media to fail' (Pader and Breitbart, 1993, p. 39).

Breitbart and Pader focus on 'the tension between what the women were accomplishing and what the media were willing and able to see' (1995, p. 14). This mismatch is striking, and it is indeed uncomfortably reminiscent of the controlling political discourse in America. Ironically, though, this tension is also reflected to a certain degree in Breitbart and Pader's own discussion, insofar as they insert their own priorities about what was significant and compelling about the situation (abstract politics) for what seemed to be the residents' own priorities (collective political action towards concrete ends). As related by Breitbart and Pader, the women's accomplishments are impressive, especially given the extreme power imbalance between the residents and the city and developers. However, the tangible accomplishments end up taking a backseat to the theme of the article, which is representation and images. In their analysis of media images, for example, the authors speculate that the women sought fewer subsidized (compared with market-rate) units in Harbor Point because 'they implicitly recognized the negative impacts that gendered and racialized stereotypes of public housing had had on their living conditions and self-esteem' (1995, p. 15). Perhaps this is true, but Breitbart and Pader present no evidence that the residents chose to manipulate the media as a political strategy in furtherance of their housing goals, or that they attempted to control how they were being publicly portrayed as a goal in and of itself. In other words, there is no evidence that the women contemplated engaging in a politics of representation or definition in this instance.

One might gather that the residents came together to act because they hoped to assert some control over the physical spaces – over the actual real estate – where they lived, to accomplish something in the political arena created by the housing conversion project, and to exercise the same sorts of powers and privileges of citizenship that other groups rely on when they act politically in the city. They certainly looked like people who were acting from some combination of material conditions, which were intertwined with race, gender, class, motherhood and geography. This assessment of the political goals of this group of women does not require the mythologizing of them, or all poor women of colour; nor does it require us to deny them a keen appreciation of how they are portrayed in popular and political culture. It does make the modest assumption that they expected that something noticeable would happen as a result of their efforts, that their material conditions would improve,
that they would be taken seriously as political actors, and that they could achieve, from engaging in collective action in the public sphere, the kinds of results that they could not get from participating in either electoral politics or a symbolic ‘politics of’.

From the perspective of metaphorical space and, especially, of abstract politics, however, this interpretation presents a problem. The problem stems from the fact that the political acts of the women powerfully intimate the ‘heroic’ political forms that Watson and Gibson reject as merely modernist. At the same time, the women were clearly acting from a context of locality and particularity, which is what many feminists and post-modernists so strongly value. It could also be said that the women of Columbia Point were ‘occupying political space’ and ‘charting their own images’. But this is surely the least satisfying way of summing up the story of an organization of poor women of colour who managed to divert some – any – of the benefits of economically valuable property to people who are excluded from virtually all benefits of urban space. There is, in short, something wrong with this picture.

Political theory and the city

What is asked in the preceding picture of urban politics has a lot to do with the difficulty of working out the appropriate relationship between the forms of political activity and the ends of politics. Numerous questions about this relationship arise: Is there a genuine problem in wanting, as a theoretical and practical project, to marry modernist political forms with post-modern political visions? Why does the desire to theorize, conceptualize and analyse urban politics at the level of meaning and representation work against the impetus towards specificity and locality? How integral is space to the public sphere? What version of the urban public sphere cultivates the substantive political vision of post-modernism as well as the political tools of modernism?

Some tentative answers to these questions can be found in Peter Howell’s (1993) consideration of public space, the public sphere and locality. Howell has taken to task geography, and by extension most of the social sciences, for being carried away by social theory while yet being inattentive to political theory. Normative political theories of the city and locality have hardly been a common concern during most of this century in any field of study, including political science and urban studies. But as Howell argues, serious theorizing about public space and the public sphere demands engagement with normative political theory. The imperatives of political theory lie in the realization that it entertains a distinctive set of concerns, that it has a language that is uniquely suited to the discussion of these concerns, and that it admits the continued existence of politics as a distinct human endeavour and area of inquiry.

Howell insists, persuasively, on the distinction between social theory and political theory. His articulation of the distinction places into sharp focus why social and cultural theorists tend to understand politics so abstractly. The social theory that interests Howell primarily is positive and modern – in other words, he is talking about postwar sociology. He criticizes its ‘lack of a convincing political and normative theory’, as well as its ‘unmitting opposition to the idea that an autonomous and viable sphere of political action could survive in modern times’ (1993, p. 307). Beyond the observation that post-modernism has brought the politics of theory to the fore’ (1993, p. 306, emphasis in original), Howell has not much directly to say about how critical social theories deal (or do not deal) with politics or political theory. It is enlightening, however, to realize that Howell’s characterization of mid-twentieth-century social scientific efforts to make sense of the world also applies perfectly to post-modern and other late-century forms of critical social theory, including a significant part of feminist, queer and cultural studies. Both modern sociology and critical social theory gravitate inexorably towards an understanding of politics as simply another wing of social relations. It is undeniable that critical theories are usually motivated by self-conscious and transparent normative visions; however, those visions are less reliably trained on recognizably political questions, that is questions about matters that have integrity apart from the social and cultural sphere (1993, p. 306). Paradoxically then, under the ‘politics of x’ approach heavily favoured by social theorists, everything is generally political but nothing is specifically political.

Howell is quite right when he concedes that it is ‘difficult indeed … to disentangle the social and the political substantively’ (1993, p. 305). Although this very large task is beyond the scope of this chapter, there are feminist political theorists, such as Anne Phillips (1993), who make compelling claims about recognizing the boundaries between the political, social, cultural and economic without trying to seal hermetically any of those categories (compare Benhabib, 1992, pp. 90–5). With respect to the city, there are identifiable political matters bearing directly on publicity that are not well served by relentlessly abstracting politics into the realm of the social or cultural. A list of these matters would be headed by justice, equality, collective action, community, representation, participation and citizenship. Their persistent relevance to post-modern urbanity can be traced back to the fact that they speak most closely to what is political in and of itself and probably more importantly, to what is generally recognizable as political. Citizenship, rights and the rest of the list remain ripe for the picking by normative political theorists who will take them seriously in the urban or local context, as very few recent writers have done. This approach would be especially valuable to the extent that it contributes to normative theories of the urban public sphere, which is the political crux of cities but which is vastly under-theorized and largely ignored. (Conversely, sustained normative consideration of the urban public sphere would also advance wider-ranging political theories of citizenship and the like.)

Drawing on Hannah Arendt, whom he corresponds to Jürgen Habermas, Howell (1993, pp. 313–18) argues for the integral relationship between geographical, local, public space and the public sphere. Arendt’s conception of public space has been contested – Seyla Benhabib (1992, p. 92), for example, points out that her ‘topographical figures of speech’ do not suggest that the
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By Howell's discussion of Habermas - the premier contemporary theorist of the public sphere - does that remind us of the strong tendency in modern political theory towards a public sphere that is primarily discursive, procedural and ideal, and public space that is only metaphorical. Feminist and other critical theorists have effectively attacked the ancient public sphere for being overly confined (to the participation of male citizens) and the modern public sphere for being overly universalized (to male standards of citizenship), but the broadening and contextualizing of the public sphere to account for people, actions and issues that have been relegated to the private sphere are oddly spasmodic. The normative linkages between the public sphere and public space, and certainly urban public space, remain to be explored.

Thus, within the dominant academic discourse about cities, and especially for those who argue at base that modernism is exhausted theoretically or historically, there is no obvious starting point for normatively theorizing the urban public sphere. It is impossible to carry on a creative normative conversation about publicity and other political matters because they are either conceptually submerged or simply incoherent. Since the urban public sphere is seen as simultaneously spatial and political, it suffers the most from the dual shift to abstract politics and metaphorical space, and it all but fades into the conceptual wallpaper of post-modernism. Questions about conceptual issues must therefore precede questions about the role of the urban public sphere in advancing citizenship, equality, identity difference or any other normative political ideal.

Conceptualizing the urban public sphere

Making sense of the urban public sphere proves to be more easily said than done. In the city, the public sphere has a highly complex relationship with public space, and thus it is always a slippery concept. The politics-space shift instigated by critical theorists has further complicated the task of conceptual clarification. Among the limitations posed by the shift is that its overarching 'politics of space' formulation provides little impetus to think about the public sphere as having conceptual (or practical) integrity apart from the vast field where politics and space, very generously defined, interplay. Because abstract politics and metaphorical space are assumed to cover so many of the relationships of power that are played out in the city, and because they are viewed as supplying a vital antidote to merely modernist understandings of urban politics, the public sphere holds no special interest as a distinctly political slice of urban life.

Public spheres/public spaces

This chapter has emphasized that an urban politics flowing from particularity often arises from material conditions and physical spaces (both public and private), and thus abstract politics and metaphorical space may work at cross-purposes to the goal of promoting the interpretive and normative roles of particularity. Metaphorical space ('the landscape of struggle') has no necessary relationship to the political core of the public sphere; it is contingent on what the struggle is about. By the same token, what abstract politics ('the politics of scale') says about the public sphere depends on how this politics is carried out. A related observation is that the public sphere is not identical to or co-terminous with physical space. They may coincide physically, as in the buffer/protest zone surrounding an abortion clinic or in neighbourhoods where queer political history is communicated on streetside markers (Hertz et al., 1997), and they may coincide virtually physically, as over a municipal Freenet. Quite commonly, however, the public sphere and space have a diffuse and contestable relationship that is not captured well by either liberal or post-modern expectations. A debate between candidates to represent a district in city council and guerilla environmental theatre staged at a public park can be presented equally as the intersection of space and politics, but exactly how they fulfill the definition of the urban public sphere would require some explanation. The point here is not to try to judge the substantive, democratic quality of the urban public sphere in any of these examples. Evidence of the unpredictability of the space-politics relationship simply reiterates the need for a more basic outline of what the urban public sphere really is.

Four public spheres

To conceptualize the public sphere means understanding it as the reflection of intentional, recognizable political engagements and, hence, as a matter of political agency as well as political space. Given the numerous possible combinations of the parameters of the urban public sphere, it is probably more helpful to talk about urban public spheres. Sketching out four general relationships between urban politics and space captures the principal variations of the urban public sphere as a political place, but it also shows how these public spheres differ in part according to how people approach space politically.

In the first public sphere, people act from space because their identities, experiences and interests are materially intertwined with space. Either these attributes predict how people will (be allowed to) occupy and use space, or the space that they occupy helps to form their attributes, or both. World-wide, urban history is the history of some groups being relegated to inconvenient, dangerous, unhealthy, barren, ugly, hostile or impermanent urban space because of who they are, while other groups claim the rest of the space. Space is always, then, a material effect of specificity or relations of difference. Thus it is not surprising how often people proceed politically from these material conditions to seek alternative distributions of space or power. Whether in Los Angeles or Bombay (Masseles, 1995), slum-based riots are public spheres in which people on all sides are acting from space.
The second public sphere is one in which people act on space by working to ‘own’ it, to shape its physical or symbolic character, or to control the scope of conflict over its ownership and character. The notions of ‘queer space’ and ‘queerscapes’ (Ingram, et al., 1997) suggest this version of the public sphere. They include the possibility that lesbians and gay men will act intentionally (through political, economic, social or sexual practices) to mark a physical space with an overt group or community identity. Attempts to render spaces fundamentally public or private – an ongoing preoccupation in post-modern North American cities – turn space into a political object and also help determine what is open for political discussion in the first place. Evan McKenzie’s (1994) study of home-owner associations in America demonstrates how their gaining the political and legal authority to be defined as private has consequences for the virality of the public sphere in the local spaces governed by the associations and in the surrounding municipalities.

Third, people act in space, in the sense that physical space supplies a temporary container for the abstract concept of the public sphere. This is the relationship that Don Mitchell is referring to in his work on local state suppression of speech and protest, when he connects citizenship rights to free use of ‘the material, physical public spaces of the city’ (1996b, p. 129). As he argues,

the fight to claim the streets, parks, court house, and other public spaces of the city is precisely the fight to claim ... rights as members of the polity, as citizens who have both the duty and the right to reshape social, economic, and political life after an image perhaps quite different from ... laissez-faire liberalism.

(Mitchell, 1996a, p. 172)

In terms of providing platforms for politics – whether proclamation, display, debate, protest or violence – there is little at the level of the nation-state that is truly analogous to the spaces that Mitchell lists.

In the fourth urban public sphere, people make space, providing a link between metaphorical space and politics. Here, public sphere activity is the creation of opportunities and incentives for the expansion or multiplication of the public sphere itself. This public sphere is also characterized by the development of political efficacy, or the encouragement of people to see themselves as having the capacity to act as citizens, even in the face of prevailing attempts to make citizenship exclusionary and monopolistic. What the urban public sphere looks like here is suggested by Caroline Andrew’s (1995) work on policies in several Canadian cities to stem violence against women. Andrew’s study shows how the women’s organizations and city officials who initiated the policies and instigated the recognition of violence and safety as policy issues succeeded in making a political ‘space’ for those concerns. Once in use, new political opportunities take on greater significance because they may fundamentally transform the public sphere, making room for other participants who are acting from multiple positions of particularity.

Concreteness, particularity and materiality

Drawing on the depictions of the four urban public spheres, it is possible to fend off the likeliest results of dramatically abstracting space and politics: the guarantee that politics remains definitional, more or less contentless, and consequently above particularity; and the reputation of collective political action as hopelessly modernist, raced, sexed, gendered and otherwise unsalvageable. Under the first outcome, politics is denied its integrity as an endeavour that is not just a cipher for something else. Under the second outcome, the urban public sphere loses importance because the potential for politics to transform and transgress is denied. I disagree with the idea that a concretely political urban public sphere merits either of these dire assessments and, finally, with the idea that a ‘heroic’ urban public sphere is inimical to the substantive political vision of the city to which post-modernism aspires. ‘Modernist’ political forms are not only not irrelevant or harmful to the values of particularity and materiality, but in the urban context, modernist politics and these values can actually be drawn closely together.

Within my sketches of the four public spheres, citizen rights, freedoms and opportunities for political participation feature prominently. A central feature of these dimensions of citizenship is their intensely non-abstract, non-symbolic character, that is they are not simply contest over meanings or representations. Even such abstractions as the right to speak or to be left alone in the public places of the city manifest themselves as actual activity (assembling, loitering, kissing), or as dialogue that people could enter into and continue through activities such as speaking, listening, reading, writing or watching.

There is nothing in the public sphere composed of these actions and interactions that is inherently disruptive to a political vision of the city revolving around the recognition of specificity and relations of difference. Like the women of Columbia Point, citizens could be acting from any configuration of unhomogenized, unfixed and unsimplistic (see Gibson and Watson, 1995, pp. 260–2) positions of particularity. We should not expect to embrace or tolerate all of the positions of particularity that manifest themselves in concrete political forms such as protesting, but this is also true of abstract post-modern politics such as performance art.

It is also helpful to consider citizenship in the city as having material qualities in and of itself, and not just as reflecting people’s material conditions. This is especially evident with regard to rights. Whereas rights are always framed, awarded and wielded within a dense field of discourse, relationships, stories, symbols and ideas – as absolutely any post-liberal theory of rights would explain (for example, Rose, 1994) – rights manifest themselves, in the world and in the city, as things or tools. Rights only make a difference because people use and invoke them (or because someone believes that they can). This does
not assume that rights must be the liberal rights of the undifferentiated individual, for there are plenty of other models of rights to draw on for inspiration, or that rights are a sufficient tool of counter-hegemony; it does not even deny that rights lead a not-very-secret double life in service of both the powerful and the powerless. In the most important ways I am merely echoing Patricia Williams's powerful insistence that the tools that are rights, if fairly distributed to everyone, are requisite to rectifying the inequalities rooted in (racial and other forms of) difference (1991, pp. 3–14).

Finally, politics is unabstract if it can be identified by citizens as plausibly political in form. In the four public spheres sketched out above, politics is identifiable, including by those who are meant to benefit most from attention, to difference in the city. What is recognizable as political depends, naturally, on who is being asked – voter turnout in North American cities is low because some persistent non-voters find municipal elections insufficiently political to make participating worthwhile, while some gay men believe that reopening bathhouses closed in the 1980s constitutes important political action. Notwithstanding this caveat, it does seem fruitless to rest transformative politics on abstruse events, spectacles or structures of the sort that are peculiarly post-modern and urban. Concrete political forms such as group formation, collective action and debate have the advantage of being more open to recognition, participation and even critical response by diverse citizens. Since these forms do not limit or presuppose the content of politics – notably, they do not dictate the public-private split of either civic republicanism or liberalism – they can be seen as encouraging more politics and expanding the urban public sphere.

A heroic urban public sphere?

A useful ending point for a discussion of the urban public sphere is Gibson and Watson's reference to 'heroic' urban politics (1995, p. 254). Because they associate it with unitary tendencies in modernist political styles, Gibson and Watson worry that heroic politics inherently opposes the post-modern political vision of plurality, contingency and sublunary. A more elaborate, but related, critique of heroic politics has been made by Benhabib, who traces its roots to the classical Greek 'public realm ... in which moral and political greatness, heroism and pre-eminence are revealed, displayed, shared with others' (1992, p. 93). This heroic politics, as revived by Arendt (for example, 1958, pp. 50–8, pp. 199–207), is deeply unsuitable to modernity (and by implication post-modernity), in Benhabib's view. Heroism is unsuitable because it only makes sense in a community of equals who have a shared understanding of what counts as great political actions. Heroism fails difference for Benhabib, as for Watson and Gibson, because it presumes the universality of citizens' status, interests and norms.

Rather than assuming that heroic politics must obliterate distinct identities, interests and experiences in a quest to fulfil rigid community or class aspirations, we can ask how an urban politics flowing from the markers and effects of difference could not be heroic. Even the urban politics of definition, which on one level purports to shift politics to the realm of the unassuming and quotidian, on another level sees politics as nothing less than a means of disrupting the power relations – cultural, social, sexual, racial, ethnic, economic, territorial and political – that shape (global) urbanity. Benhabib's reference to the 'struggle for justice' (1992, p. 94) sums up nicely the scope of the task facing groups that might participate in post-modern politics (a task that includes culling and cultivating some shared purposes from among all of the positions of difference). Is this not a call for a frankly heroic politics?

Perhaps a believable urban politics of particularity and materiality requires a vision of a heroic urban public sphere in which there are plural heroes, acting as members of more grounded versions of the kinds of multiple, competing 'publics' that Nancy Fraser has proposed (1993, pp. 13–19). Heroic politics would not then be confined to either centralized efforts to remake the world in a single image, as Gibson and Watson imagine, or displays of prowess intended for the consumption of a closed community, as Benhabib fears. It would instead characterize the larger political project of expanding urban public squares, where people act from, on and in space, and where they make space. Conceived this way, the heroic urban public sphere is consistent with the substantive post-modern political vision of cities; however, the combination of abstract politics and metaphorical space is not enough to sustain a public sphere in which one of the most daunting goals is bringing particularity and difference to the fore.

Notes

1 The label 'post-modern' is infinitely problematic but cannot be ignored. The part of post-modernism I am interested in is work in which: (1) particularity (of identities and interests) serves as a theoretical framework, an analytical lens, a normative ideal or an instance of the contingency of meanings, and (2) there is a commitment to abstract conceptions of space or politics. 'Other critical theorists' refers to feminist, queer, race, and cultural theorists, who share with post-modernists some of these signs of a fundamental repudiation of modernism.

2 Annalise Acorn, Glenn Burger, Lesley Cormack, Susan Hamilton and Susan Smith suggested much of this paragraph and the next over tea and cookies at our writing group. I am most grateful for their insights and encouragement.

3 According to Watson and Gibson, 'one form of an urban post-modern politics' (1995, p. 255) is proposed by Benjamin Genocchio, who refers to 'multivalent public installation projects' that 'call into question the increasingly functionalist, repetitively replicated and electronically monitored spatial experience that constitutes post-industrial city life' (1995, p. 43).

4 It is with respect to space-place relations that a resurgent (and insurgent) feminist 'locality studies' (for example, Massey, 1994) has most radically altered the common usage of the concept of urban politics.

5 These are Michel Foucault's (1986) metaphors; their popularity and significance are explored by Genocchio (1995).

6 I employ 'physical' to characterize non-metaphorical space, or space that exists apart from somebody's idea or representation of it. This descriptor is somewhat less obvious (and also more precise) than 'real' or 'geographical'. Still, I admit that
this solution would not satisfy those who believe that efforts to dualize space or fix it conceptually are inherently exercises of "masculist power" (Rose, 1996, p. 58).

7 A plausible alternative explanation is that the residents simply acted expediently, figuring that Harbor Point would enjoy greater support if it contained more market-rate units, but also acted in the interests of their 'constituents', winning a guarantee that 400 of the 1283 units would be subsidized, so that no existing tenants would be displaced.

8 Although Breitbart and Pader do not report directly or specifically on the aspirations of the resident activists, interviews with Columbia Point tenants who remained in Harbor Point suggest that their goals revolved around things like 'making the community succeed' and 'basic security - of person and of mind' (Pader and Breitbart, 1993, p. 40).

9 Howell vaguely endorses feminist geographers for being more concerned with political theory than the Marxist (male) geographers that he discusses, but he cites feminist political theorists rather than geographers (1993, p. 365).

10 I appreciate Engin's point pointing this out to me.

11 The pieces in Calhoun's (1992) and Robbins's (1993) edited volumes are suggestive of this generally aspirational approach to the public sphere (but compare Ryan, 1992; 1997).

12 Metaphorical space of this type is obviously not uniquely urban, but it remains open to debate whether local politics provides a more conducive environment for this form of democratic expansion, and under what conditions.

13 Additional factors, including people's intentions, would come into play in answering the 'what is politics?' question.

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15 Who governs the global city?

Evelyn S. Ruppert

With unmistakable undertones, the rhetoric of freeing private-sector initiative and reclaiming the right to manage – in this case, the right to manage the city – is clearly central to both the self-image and the public representation of the new urban politics.

(Cochrane et al., 1996, p. 1325)

The global city is increasingly emphasized as a site for the enactment of citizenship for various social groups that have been marginalized and disempowered by the processes of globalization. Sassen (1996; 1999) now speaks about the global city as a new site for making claims. Fincher and Jacobs (1998) see the global city as a site of enacting a politics of difference. Sandercock (1998) sees the global city as a place for advancing multiculturalism. Iris Marion Young (1993) heralds the city as a place of being together with strangers. Borja and Castells (1997) urge that the global city is of strategic importance for socio-cultural integration and political representation. While these arguments are significant in highlighting the emerging modes through which the global city is being politicized, the global city has also become remarkably apolitical in its administration and management during the last twenty years. Under various neo-liberal regimes of central government, local government structures and institutions in the global city have been radically transformed from democratic and representative into increasingly professionalized, marketized, entrepreneurial and managerial forms. Making claims in the global city by marginalized social groups increasingly comes up against a complex machinery of special-purpose bodies, non-elected agencies, boards and commissions and a bewildering array of privatized, marketized and professionalized procedures.

Herein lies the paradox of the global city. While some declare the dawn of a new age of the city-state, the traditional powers and authorities of city governments have been significantly curtailed. The ostensibly new economic significance of global cities has not translated into greater political power as state practices and strategies for regulating and administering local governments have increased. Analyses of state–local relations in Australia and New Zealand (Jacobs, 1992), Britain (Cochrane et al., 1996; Stewart, 1994), Canada
opposed, the government implemented its agenda with only a few changes. However, assessments of the reforms have brought into question the claims regarding local democracy and suggest that state control of local government has increased (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998; Ison, 1998; Siegel, 1997).

Yet this hardly comes as a surprise to students of Canadian municipal government. While its two founding principles – service delivery and democracy – are often asserted as the main roles of local government as 'organs of local autonomy' (Higgins, 1977; Siegel, 1997; Tindal and Tindal, 1995), its service delivery role has been the major focus of provincial legislation and municipal restructuring initiatives. For example, local government reforms have typically placed an emphasis on municipal structures and the delineation of optimal boundaries for efficient service delivery (Sancton, 1994) rather than democratic goals and principles. Furthermore, both roles have been significantly constrained by provincial legislatures, as represented in a general pattern of gradually increasing provincial supervision and control over local governments (Tindal and Tindal, 1995).

Indeed, provincial legislatures have long asserted a natural and inalienable right over municipal governments (Ison, 1992). The Constitution Act of 1982 enshrines this concept of municipal governments as 'creatures' of the provincial governments that incorporated them. This has meant that municipal corporations in Canada have two essential features: (1) that they are created at the pleasure of the legislature and do not require the consent of the people of the affected locality, the act of incorporation not being a contract between the legislature and the local inhabitants, and (2) that the authority conferred on municipal corporations is not local in nature but derives from the provincial government (Ison, 1995).

In Ontario, it was the extent of this provincial control over both the incorporation and authority of local government that was exemplified in a number of municipal reforms introduced in 1997. Following patterns of government restructuring occurring elsewhere (the USA, Britain, New Zealand, Australia) and already under way in Ontario and Canada, the provincial government adopted a multi-pronged reform agenda that included fiscal, legislative and structural changes to the local government system. While these reforms were quite complex and numerous, the following discussion focuses on the reform of state–local finances and the amalgamation of the six constituent municipalities in the former Metropolitan Toronto into one 'Toronto megacity'.

Financial reforms centred on (contested) arguments of efficiency and cost savings, ignoring issues of political and democratic representation in decision-making. A process called 'disentanglement' was implemented, ostensibly to establish a clearer division of provincial–municipal financial responsibilities and increased municipal decision-making autonomy. However, the reforms ultimately represented a departure from these principles through the provincial take-over and control of almost $9 billion Canadian dollars of the local property tax base as well as an equally complicated arrangement of provincial and municipal responsibilities in Ontario (Ruppert, 1997).
This outcome reflected the underlying objectives of the provincial government, which had less to do with strengthening local government and more with reducing the provincial deficit by controlling the costs of local services and reducing social expenditures, particularly on education and welfare programmes (Ison, 1998). For example, the provincial government took complete control over the spending and redistribution of local education property taxes (which were formerly collected and allocated by locally elected school boards), thereby removing local control over locally raised revenues. In the case of the City of Toronto, this amounted to 37 per cent ($1.5 billion CAD) of locally collected property taxes for education being centrally controlled and administered (based on the 1998 City of Toronto budget). The provincial government now sets the rate of the property tax which is collected by municipalities and then handed over to the province to redistribute. In the case of welfare services, the province increased municipal funding responsibility for provincially mandated welfare payments, resulting in a further 7 per cent or $300 million CAD of locally collected property taxes being provincially controlled. In addition, policing services, which are fully funded by municipalities but governed by police service boards and regulated by the provincial government, account for another 6 per cent or $234 million CAD. Finally, the elimination of provincial transfers in the form of unconditional grants (for use at the discretion of municipalities), and of provincial funding for hard services such as roads and transit, resulted in significant costs being downloaded to municipalities without additional powers or own-source revenues to pay for the higher infrastructure costs demanded of large urban centres such as Toronto.

The provincial government also asserted its constitutional power over municipal government through the unilateral creation of the Toronto megacity. Against great local opposition and criticism, and without supporting studies and analysis exemplified in white papers that typically precede such decisions, the provincial government eliminated the largest municipality in the province, Toronto, and implemented a new structure, all with astonishingly limited public consultation and due process. This was achieved relatively swiftly and easily despite a long history of municipal structural reform founded on elaborate government commissions, tribunals, studies and debates. The new structure significantly reduced the number of local politicians and local structures for citizen participation and deliberation. Through its control of the legislation and legislature, and the appointment of professionals to oversee implementation, the provincial government was able to shape the new city of Toronto structure in a manner that reflected its fiscal and service delivery goals at the expense of democratic objectives.

In sum, the changes in state–local finance and the restructuring of Toronto have constrained the capacity of the city of Toronto as decisions on local services and finances are increasingly centralized in and managed by the provincial government. This severely limits and undermines the municipality's capacity to respond to citizen demands and local needs that do not meet provincial criteria and standards. Yet, the government defended these reforms because it claimed that they would make the city more competitive in the global economy. This obviously speaks to the paradox mentioned above. A neoliberal interpretation of global competitiveness obviously required the weakening of local democracy and citizenship and the strengthening of central control. The building blocks of this interpretation and the specific practices and technologies that it gave rise to need further discussion, which the following sections provide by focusing on fragmentation, entrepreneurialism and marketization of local government.

**Fragmented local governance**

Many analyses of state–local relations argue that there is a change under way from government to governance, implying a shift in the distribution of local power away from municipalities to other bodies (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998; Imrie and Thomas, 1995; Malpass, 1994). 'Governance' is now being used to denote the range of service delivery mechanisms at the local level, and expresses the shift from provision by local and central government structures to a number of fragmented agencies within the public, business, voluntary and private spheres (Malpass, 1994).

This proliferation of special purpose bodies has led to a decline in support for local government as a multipurpose service producing and providing structure, and to the fragmentation of services amongst a plethora of providers (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998). However, this is not a new phenomenon, but the expansion of a long tradition of establishing independent bodies to carry out local service delivery responsibilities. Most authorities on Canadian local government devote considerable attention to the role of appointed 'special purpose bodies' and to the problems associated with the fragmentation of local governance (Higgins, 1977; Tindal and Tindal, 1993; Graham et al., 1998). Again, arising from the focus on the service delivery as opposed to the democratic role of local government, special purpose bodies in the past were often created to insulate decision-making from 'politics' (Graham et al., 1998). More recently, they have been created to deal with a fragmented municipal structure which can stand in the way of delimiting optimal service boundaries for achieving economies of scale or containing inter-jurisdictional spillovers.

For example, an inventory of special purpose bodies in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) identified 400 agencies, boards and commissions (Stevenson, 1995). While many of them are controlled and funded by local municipalities, over 100 were identified as inter-municipal and inter-regional agencies funded and controlled by the provincial government. And despite the criticisms of these bodies, the most recent review of local government structure in the GTA continued to hail their benefits and even proposed new bodies to deliver municipal services, since 'different services have different optimal geographic and population thresholds' (Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996, p. 185). The report went further to recommend that services be delivered by specially
appointed boards or contracted out to private agencies, arguing that this would promote competition and innovation.

The multiplication of local bodies, however, has also been a product of retrenchment of the welfare state. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the regime of neo-liberalism, with its agenda of fiscal constraints, led to the abandonment of services which were picked up by numerous non-profit and community agencies which sought funding from alternative sources. For example, in Ontario, public housing programmes were replaced by a variety of municipal, charitable and cooperative agencies for which federal and provincial governments only provided token support (Magnusson, 1994). This increased the significance of the voluntary sector and community agencies in the delivery of social service programmes (Graham et al., 1998). Provincial funding eventually became one of the major sources of funding for these local agencies. In healthcare, for example, approximately 1,200 community agencies across Ontario provide visiting health professionals, homemakers and community supports funded in large part from provincial grants. Through these funding arrangements the provincial government is able to assert control over programme standards and delivery to the extent that in some instances agencies have become little more than delivery arms of the state.

Indeed, the focus on municipal governments as delivery agents, and the fiscal and legislative control over their activities have made much of what they do easily transferable to non-profit agencies governed by local boards. Consequently, during discussions of alternative models for delivering local services, municipal governments are often compared to special purpose bodies as simply one of many delivery options. For example, since the early 1990s the provincial government has been considering the transfer of responsibilities for delivering welfare services from municipal governments to provincially appointed boards. Programme delivery is already strictly administered, regulated, monitored, audited and evaluated by the provincial government, thereby making the transfer to a special purpose body relatively straightforward. While municipalities still deliver welfare, local employment training boards and long-term care access centres have already been established to assume these previously municipal government responsibilities.

In Britain, increasingly tight, centrally imposed controls over local government spending, and pressures to move away from direct service provision by local authorities have also led to a proliferation of locally based institutions outside electoral control, and a more fragmented provision of services (Cochrane, 1998; Imrie and Thomas, 1995; Jacobs, 1992; Malpass, 1994). Cochrane cites, for example, the establishment of Training and Enterprise Councils, health authorities, the expansion of the voluntary sector in housing, and the assumption of some responsibilities by the private sector. Similarly, Stewart notes the pattern towards a centralization of urban policy through the establishment of a number of initiatives which bypass the local political processes of planning, control and accountability, and fragment urban policy amongst a number of new organizations (Stewart, 1994).

This has also been manifest in requirements that local authorities partner with the private and voluntary sectors in order to receive state support (Malpass, 1994), thereby opening up a political space for businesses which can now sit directly on local governing bodies (Cochrane et al., 1996). Many funding programmes in Britain are based on a competitive bidding process between cities in which bids must come from partnerships involving business, local authorities and non-statutory organizations.

This kind of ‘corporatist localism’ seeks to involve a number of local interests in decision-making. Typically, an arms-length process is established for the development of local policies from which the majority of local elected politicians are distanced (Stewart, 1994). But, as a consequence, the institution of local government and hence the institutional means of citizenship have been weakened. The right to manage the city has therefore shifted to non-elected, locally accountable bodies which are mandated to focus on the cost-efficient delivery of services, not on democratic principles of representation, transparency, participation and accountability, and is well insulated from ‘politics.’

**Entrepreneurial local governance**

Globalization and economic competition have demanded that global cities redefine their roles in a global context and emphasize entrepreneurial or proactive strategies in order to be competitive and market their cities (Borja and Castells, 1997; Hall and Hubbard, 1998). Similarly, as cities have lost both provincial transfers and control over a significant portion of their finances, they have in turn become more dependent on economic development for revenues. Attracting investment and economic development have therefore become prominent foci of municipal government activity.

This is particularly manifest in strategies for urban renewal that focus on marketing cities. ‘Place marketing’, ‘urban growth coalitions’ and ‘urban regimes’ have become emblematic of a shift from a municipal welfare (bureaucratic, managerial) politics to that of a dynamic and charismatic (entrepreneurial) business leadership, an emphasis on potential gains from urban entrepreneurialism rather than the effective delivery of welfare services (Cochrane et al., 1996; Magnusson, 1994; Harvey, 1989). While local governments have long been involved in marketing their localities for business investment, the contemporary period is marked by a new complexity of issues, such as the mobility of capital, removal of trade barriers, economic restructuring, new telecommunications technologies, labour market adjustments, etc. (Graham et al., 1998). Old activities are therefore being repackaged, a repackaging which is no doubt a response to greater competition for business (Magnusson, 1994).

In Canada, competitive localism and the importance of cities in economic development have become central to arguments for restructuring Toronto which focus on taxation, infrastructure, service delivery and political fragmentation in terms of their implications for economic competitiveness.
make major planning, distributive and resource allocation decisions which will have long-term impacts on the public domain of cities, decisions that are well insulated from public scrutiny and debate.

Marketized local governance

Municipal governments have also developed strategies to increase their revenues and decrease costs through a greater reliance on the private sector in terms of service delivery and management practices. The adoption of these strategies has been spurred by a broader and pervasive shift in governing culture, in which the language and techniques of business management have become the answer for deficit-focused and cash-strapped governments.

The private sector has become increasingly important in the direct provision of services and the transfer of management practices to local government. Private sector firms have been delivering municipal services in Ontario for a long time, with contracting out being the most common form. Construction projects, water and sewage lines and treatment plants, professional services such as engineering, planning and legal advice, and waste management, tourism, recreation, transportation and administrative services are some of the major services which have been contracted out in Ontario (Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996). In the past, many of these services were delivered by local governments directly, but fiscal pressures resulting from reductions in provincial funding and perceived difficulties with raising property taxes have led to greater interest in increased private sector involvement.

Local government searches for cost savings have increasingly turned to contracting out as a solution. Greater reliance on funding services from user fees as opposed to general revenues has also made the step towards privatization easier. Once the full cost of a service (for example, water, waste) is covered by a fee, it is easier to resort to private sector delivery and collection.

The contract culture in municipal government has become instrumental in the adoption of new management practices. Various studies note that identifying cost savings through privatization requires the production of financial data for evaluating alternative delivery approaches. It is argued that in order to monitor and measure effectiveness and compare performance, defined outcomes and benchmarks need to be compiled (Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996). This requires collecting and analysing municipal service delivery data in order to provide benchmarks for comparison and the production of annual reports, requiring new accounting and measuring procedures and a data collection system that allows for auditing cost-effectiveness. These practices of enumeration, calculation, monitoring and evaluation are further examples of neo-liberal techniques of governance (Isin et al., 1998). The process of performance measurement has led to the adoption of private sector cost-saving programmes such as 'best practices'. This involves a process of competitive comparisons based on benchmarks or operating statistics that enable comparison of performance between organizations. For example, the new city of
Toronto's first budget exercise identified the introduction of 'best practices' - the most efficient ways to provide services' as one means of finding savings to meet the deficit caused by provincial funding cuts (City of Toronto, 1998).

Thus the new fiscal self-reliance has led to local government officials speaking the language of modern public management: 'they believe in reinvention, innovation, privatization, competition, strategic planning, and productivity improvements' (Eisinger, 1998, p. 320). The language of restructuring and streamlining is pervasive in local government: becoming more entrepreneurial, developing public-private partnerships, 'steering' instead of 'rowing', measuring results and rewarding success, introducing a competitive atmosphere, efficiency and effectiveness, developing a stronger focus on the customer, and defining your core business, are all popular slogans in local government today (see Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998; Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996; Tindal and Tindal, 1995).

Local governments have looked increasingly to business for ideas. Several influential authors and studies have popularized this kind of convergence of public and private approaches, including David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992), who advocate radically different ways of 'doing business' in the public sector. They provide numerous examples of innovative and entrepreneurial practices - defined as practices that use resources in new ways to maximize productivity and effectiveness - as evidence that their principles are practical and can be successfully implemented.

The adoption of these practices has contributed to the 'marketization' of the public sector through processes of contracting out or compulsory competitive tendering or privatization (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998). This contract culture has been accompanied by a 'consumerist' trend - the persistent search for increased effectiveness through a greater sensitivity to user needs, performance evaluations, and a changing relationship between the municipality and the individual.

In Britain this has been described as a kind of 'managerialist localism', represented in state programmes which direct local government bids to achieve strategic and operational objectives, identify measures of inputs and outputs, indicate milestones towards progress, and develop monitoring and evaluation techniques for assessing outcomes (Stewart, 1994). Local authorities are often required to open up to private competition services such as waste collection and street cleaning, as well as professional services which local authorities have traditionally provided in-house (Malpass, 1994).

Decisions to privatize the management of the city in these various forms are based largely on the recommendations of private sector consultants who have become prominent advisors to governments looking to 'reinvent' themselves in a global age. For example, reviews of local government often look to private sector consulting firms for advice on how to govern the global city, and are not surprisingly offered the answer: let the private sector manage the city (for example, Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996).

However, regardless of whether professionals work within the public or private sector, the same neo-liberal practices are employed that constitute a 'new public management' of governance at a distance through contracts, targets, performance measures or monitoring and audit, and where the emphasis is upon accountability, standards and measures of performance, contracts, competition and a budget discipline. Accounting and auditing have proven to be powerful technologies for acting at a distance upon the actions of others: whilst apparently devolving more decisional power to those actually involved in devising and delivering services in local sites it renders those activities governable in new ways' (Rose, 1999, p. 245).

This contract culture has shifted management of the city from the public sector to the private sector, both in terms of the privatization of local functions and the adoption of private sector management approaches. In both cases, these managerial approaches are represented as being 'apolitical' since they are focused on achieving objectives of efficiency and productivity and are based on accepted standards of enumeration, calculation, accounting and comparison. However, through both the direct provision of services and the transfer of management practices to local government the private sector has become more influential in the day-to-day decision-making and management of the global city. And through yet another mechanism, the institutional means of citizenship for influencing public policy-making have been undermined.

Who governs the global city?

The paradox of the global city - the coupling of a new age of citizenship with the curtailment of the powers and authorities of city governments - means that at a time when the importance of making claims in the city is ascending, the mechanisms of deliberative democracy are being dismantled, and local government is becoming a shell emptied of its content. This chapter has described how local decisions and control are being shifted elsewhere - to the state, other local authorities or the private sector. Given the decline in local government powers and authorities, the ability of local government to make public policy and serve as a site of local democracy is therefore being seriously undermined.

What are the prospects for the possibility of citizens governing their cities in the face of globalization, 'informationalization' and sprawling urban regions which are undermining the relevance and authority of local governing institutions? For Borja and Castells (1997), the answer lies in reinforcing local society and its political institutions, the site where the global and local come together: 'The strategic importance of the local as a managerial centre for the global in the new techno-economic system can be seen in three main fields: economic productivity and competitiveness, socio-cultural integration and political representation and management' (Borja and Castells, 1997, p. 3). However, at the same time they note that local governments are dependent on nation-states and have less power and resources to deal with global and
economic change. For them the question then becomes how to strengthen local
governing institutions and thereby bring together economic, participatory
Democracy and cultural integration. Yet, in the 1990s reviews of local
government have repeatedly spoken of globalization and the imperative of
reform to meet the challenges of a ‘new era’. They typically focus on economic
and fiscal considerations, while ignoring other significant challenges and
changes under way in the global city. They undermine the ‘other’ global city,
where various groups are claiming rights.

A new politics of difference, tolerance, recognition and affirmation is
receiving considerable attention, and not simply as difference but as a located
politics of difference situated in the city (Fincher and Jacobs, 1998). In the face of
this change, the city and region are argued to be where citizenship can be
located and where a shared vision of common destiny as a coming together, a
being together of strangers can be formulated (Young, 1993). Sandercock
(1998) turns to cities and regions as the answer, as the focus of citizenship in
the future which must nurture difference and diversity through a democratic
cultural pluralism based on social justice, difference, citizenship, community
and civic culture. If power is shifting from the nation-state to transnational
institutions and from the nation-state to the city-state, then cities are the more
important and relevant political-administrative units. They thus take on this
role in conjunction with their changing demographic and economic roles as
‘receptors of global movements of peoples as well as economic transactions’
(Sandercock, 1998, p. 182). For Borja and Castells, local governments are also
the institutional agents for achieving this kind of social and cultural integration in
territorial communities, and in this regard are better situated than nation-
states: ‘Without a system for social and cultural integration that respects
differences while also establishing codes for communication between the
various cultures, local tribalism will be the other side of the coin of global
universalism’ (Borja and Castells, 1997, p. 4). This link between local
government and citizenship and the direct involvement of diverse groups in the
making of public policy is recognized in a growing literature on cities and
citizenship (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998). The sense of citizenship as rights
to the city highlights the potential of local governments to create a public space
for debate and deliberation and the governance of diversity, as a means of
increasing equity, accessibility and political participation. This sense of
citizenship sees the local level as not merely a deliverer of services but also as a
democratic government.

While liberal local government structures and practices were far from
meeting the demands of democratic citizenship, this chapter has argued that
neo-liberal mentalities towards the city shifted power to professional,
procedural, performative and auditing techniques without democratic
mechanisms of deliberation, accountability and responsibility. This suggests
that the real question is not whether the global city is a ‘primary focus of
economic activity and power in today’s global context’ but how the right to
citizen the city is claimed, and how rights-claiming practices shifted away from
the institutions of local government to a field of fragmented management
practices. These questions are not about the rights of cities but rather of citizens
to govern their cities. For while local government is diminishing and being
fragmented amongst a plethora of local bodies and private sector organizations,
the city is indeed being governed. To enact any kind of democratic citizenship in
the global city requires working through these new governing practices and
institutions.

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16 Politicizing the global city

Warren Magnusson

Although conceivably surpassed by Tierra del Fuego or Outer Mongolia, Tasmania's geographical location makes it just about the perfect place from which to assess the extent of globalization. If one can sit here at the spatial edge of human society, looking northward across the vast desert continent of Australia and southward towards emptiness and desolation, knowing that one is thousands of kilometres from the 'global cities' of Tokyo, Frankfurt, or LA, and still feel that one is part of the world, then globalization is an impressive process.

(Waters, 1995, p. xi)

Like many, Malcolm Waters mistakes the rhetoric of the global city for reality. To pick particular locales like Tokyo, Frankfurt, and Los Angeles and award them stars for global influence is to engage in a mug's game. As Waters' own analysis reveals, the important thing about globalization is not that it creates centres of command and control - that is an old story - but that it de-localizes those centres and draws the most remote regions into a common way of life. Long ago, Louis Wirth (1938) described that way of life as 'urbanism'. Like many social scientists, however, Wirth wanted to de-politicize the phenomenon he was analysing. My purpose is precisely the opposite: to explore the means for politicizing the global city.

Nostalgia for sovereignty

This chapter argues that to comprehend the politics of such a global city, we need new categories, quite different from the ones we have inherited from the social sciences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The conventional categories tend to displace, repress and conceal the political. As such, they inhibit any understanding of global citizenship. We need to begin again, with a different ontology of the political. As Foucault put it, 'We need to cut off the king's head: in political theory it has still to be done' (Rabinow, 1984, p. 63). At present, we are caught within a discourse of sovereignty that leads us on a merry chase for the centres of power, and deludes us into thinking that there are commanding heights to be seized and fortified. If not the castle, why not the king? If not the king, why not parliament? If not parliament, why not the...
nations? If not the nation, why not the economy? If not the economy, why not culture? If not culture, why not the global city? Surely, the centre of power is somewhere. Is that not the expectation that flows from sovereignty-thinking? And, if we break from this pattern of expectation—if we refuse the temptation to model the political universe in terms of highs and lows, centres and peripheries, interiors and exteriors—do we not also have to de-centre the social sciences, cultural studies, and all the other disciplines that make politics into the great impossible?

In the popular imagination, politics is at once removed from human and responsible activity. It is parasitic on the social, the economic and the cultural. It is inherently uncritical and usually a source of corruption. At best, it is an activity that generates much sound and fury, while ultimately signifying nothing. At worst, it is like a horrid disease that destroys everything it touches. These popular understandings are not at odds with the ones entrenched in the academy: on the contrary. In the categorical structure of the social sciences, there is little room for politics except as a source of disorder and unreason: something that must be confined to the margins if rational understanding and rational action are to occur. Politics taps into the deepest, darkest regions of the human soul, and as such it can never be entirely rational: that is what political scientists generally teach their students. Indeed, the whole discipline of political science is designed to replace naïve idealism in favour of a ‘realism’ that specifies attainable ideals and recommends an attitude of calculative rationality. (Hence, the popularity of so-called rational choice theory, an approach that aims to save politics by turning it into a form of economics.) From this perspective, politics is an unavoidable evil: an evil to be controlled by calculative rationality.

Of course, there are people who advance a different understanding. The legacy of the ancient Greeks, the Roman republicans, the Florentines and the early modern democrats is still with us. From this tradition we get a positive conception of politics (see Arendt, 1961; Crick, 1962; Connolly, 1987; Skinner, 1998; and Tully, 1999). Nevertheless, this is a minor current. In the dominant version, politics is something to be reduced to a minimum, if not by suppressing it directly, then by bringing it into line with economic calculation or cultural expression. Salesmanship, diplomacy and dispute resolution can thus be presented as the highest forms of political activity. It is difficult, if not impossible, to express a different conception of the political on a discursive terrain that has already been fixed by the dominant social sciences. Those who pursue a different tack are caught between nostalgia for the polis (or its surrogate, the modern state) and a nagging suspicion that the social sciences have already explained politics away (see Held, 1991; Vincent, 1997). The polis, the republic and the state are spatializations of sovereignty, spatializations that only work under specific conditions (as Aristotle himself must have known). Nostalgia for the polis is a powerful motivator (not least for the discussion that follows here), but it will lead us to repeat past mistakes if we do not see that sovereignty itself (and the spatial imaginary from which it derives) creates the idealized polis and the mundane ‘political system’ as conditions of possibility for one another (Agamben, 1998). The ideal is the justification for the real (Walker, 1993). To break out of this mode of thinking, we need to rethink our ontological assumptions.

In this context I think it is salutary that we are now presented with the global city: the city that has become the world, the world that has become the city. To comprehend such a phenomenon, we have to dispense with the seventeenth century spatial imaginary that has given us our state-centric conception of government, and that has thus told us what form our politics should take if it is to be at all rational. This old spatial imaginary still grounds most political philosophy including work by Rawls (1971; 1996), Habermas (1984–87; 1989), Taylor (1989), and their many interlocutors and commentators. Ironically, the same imaginary also grounds the social sciences that relegate political philosophy to the margins, giving it a status equivalent to the wishful thinking that Hegel condemned so long ago (Knox, 1952). To think seriously about our political possibilities is to think through this spatial imaginary, and discover other ways of conceptualizing space, time and identity. There is much in twentieth-century philosophy (and indeed in the natural and social sciences) that can aid us in this task (see, for instance, Foucault, 1980; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; and Haraway, 1991). However, to focus on the global city is especially helpful, because it is a phenomenon that defies description within the old spatial imaginary.

Seeing ourselves politically

To politicize the global city is to make it into a domain in which we can act politically. The task is comparable to the one posed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In that era the modern state was formed. The early proponents of the modern state wanted to repress politics by making authority incontestable (see especially Bodin, 1576; and Hobbes, 1651). However, the republicans and democrats were able to claim the state as a domain for political action within a framework of sovereignty. The theory and practice of liberal democracy have come out of these early efforts (Macpherson, 1977). The challenge for us now is to come to terms with a different spatial order, one in which the state no longer has such a decisive place. Eighteenth-century political economy, nineteenth-century sociology, and their twentieth-century successors all gesture towards the need for decentring the state as a focus for attention. On the other hand, these social sciences leave the political behind (in the domain of the state) or project it into the realm of ethics (where it can be expressed in pious wishes or moral injunctions). To overcome these disabling practices, we must claim the global city as a political space. That cannot be done without challenging the tendency to represent the city or ‘urbanism’ as a natural phenomenon.

The naturalization of the city is an effect of social scientific thinking. It is worth remembering that the social sciences were developed in more or less
explicit opposition to Aristotelian political science. The Aristotelian approach was bound up with the ideal of a polis or republic: a self-contained community in which people could be active citizens (Barker, 1962). Although this ideal was long preserved in the western tradition by thinkers such as Cicero, Machiavelli and Rousseau, it was challenged effectively by the new 'social' scientists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who showed in various ways that 'political' self-government was not enough for genuine self-determination. The implication was that people who seemed to have political independence would still be subject to economic and social forces beyond their control. Moreover, these same people would act within the framework of a culture that largely determined what they would do. Thus, from the perspective of the developing social sciences, merely political activity seemed epiphenomenal. Attention was directed at the 'other' of politics: civil society. The social might be understood in terms of economic relations, biological necessities, cultural norms or whatever. The point was that it could not be comprehended by politicians or statesmen, let alone by ordinary citizens. Social science – or its 'other', cultural understanding – always trumped merely political science. Indeed, the only kind of political science that deserved the name was one that could be understood as just another branch of the naturalizing social sciences.

Often forgotten now, in the rush to demonstrate the aristocratic, ethnocentric and patriarchal assumptions of the classical political thinkers, is that the Aristotelian and later republican conception of political science was action-oriented. That is, the premise of this way of knowing was that the people who were fit for it had the responsibility for governing. Such people were rulers and had to decide what to do. The 'science' of politics was to help them get oriented and then to make the appropriate decisions. Such a science had to encompass philosophy, sociology, psychology, geography, history and so on: it had to be comprehensive, because everything was at stake in the matters at issue and anything might be relevant to the decisions at hand. In this context, political science had to be the study to which all other sciences contributed. The premise, of course, was that the people who used such a master science could and should take responsibility for the human affairs in which they were engaged. If they disclaimed responsibility – if they said that what was happening was determined by fate, or by nature, or by the requirements of God – they would be refusing to act politically. There have been many ideologies – Christianity and liberalism among them – that have encouraged such political passivity. One of the meritorious features of the critical social sciences and critical social theory is that they have exposed the ideological moves involved in such encouragement and shown how the quiescence of some has entrenched the political power of others. On the other hand, there has been much less clarity about the fact that political responsibility, like adulthood, is ultimately thrust upon every one of us. Either we behave like children politically – which is what many social and cultural theorists seem to recommend – or we take responsibility for ourselves and the world around us. If we opt for the latter, a political science of some sort is essential.

Unfortunately, the only sort of political science we have is disabling, insofar as it is focused on the state and on the political field constituted by the state. 'Policy studies' are the nearest modern equivalent to Aristotelian political science. The state-centricity of such studies is apparent. To develop a sociology or an economics or a geography or a cultural analysis of politics is not the appropriate alternative, because a move of this sort is vitiated by the depoliticizing assumptions of the discipline invoked. The terms 'culture', 'geography', 'economy' and 'society' were developed in opposition to politics. They were meant to denote a reality that was not the effect of politics, but that instead arose more or less naturally out of ordinary human activities. Having thus imagined human life as it would be without politics, we cannot then return politics to its place – as politically engaged writers would like to do – without making nonsense of the ideas that have underpinned the depoliticized social sciences. We cannot throw out 'the state' as a focus of our political attention (as some people would no doubt like to do), without also discarding 'culture', 'economy', 'region', 'nation', 'society' and all the other entities that we have invented as alternatives to the polis. In the end, the political is unavoidable, but it is no accident that we have such difficulty writing or even thinking about it, since we work within an intellectual tradition that is determined to put politics to one side.

Ultimately, a sociology of politics can only offer a naturalized account, which leaves the action-questions – the political questions – to be decided later. Other disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) analyses have the same effect: specifically political analysis is subject to infinite deferral. Taking a stance, proclaiming an allegiance or offering an ironic comment is not the same as developing a political analysis. And yet, these are the interventions we pass off as political, in response to the naturalizing accounts that dominate academic understandings of human possibility. This is not good enough, especially in an age which is supposed to be one of deepening democracy. Whatever else democracy means, it entails a broadening of political responsibility, in the sense that people who were once conceived as the innocent subjects of government now appear as agents of their own destiny. As political agents they need 'to think what they are doing' (to borrow a phrase from Hannah Arendt) and thus to take responsibility for their own actions. If we have learned anything from two centuries of social science, it is that the most innocent-seeming, depoliticized activities – caring for our children, disposing of our household wastes, purchasing the things we need, arranging for our own security – can have widespread political effects. Thus, to be responsible political agents, we need to think about our lives as a whole, relate what we are doing to the actions of others and consider our individual and collective responsibilities. It is not easy to do any of this well and it will be doubly difficult if we continue to substitute cultural commentary, pious moralizing, and pseudo-scientific description for political analysis.
Globalization as urbanization of politics

The question of the global city brings these issues into view in a particularly helpful way. This is because the globalization of an urban way of life gives a discernible form to the politics of the world as a whole – a form which is analytically familiar in various respects. Although the existing disciplines obstruct the effort to come to terms with this form, we do have resources in urban analysis that could be tapped in an effort to work out a new political science.

The concept of the global city has been most fully developed within the allied disciplines of urban geography and urban sociology (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Knox and Taylor, 1995). Geography has long been the least respected of the social sciences, because of the spatial determinism that seems implicit in its concept of human affairs. Urban sociology has been a bastard study because most of what is important in modern societies is urban, and the focus on that feature seems to beg the question of analytical significance. In this context, the concept of the global city is of some importance to both disciplines, because it suggests that there is a spatial form of the urban that bursts the bounds of particular societies. By analysing the hierarchy of cities in a globalized urban system and giving particular attention to the peak command centres – especially London, New York and Tokyo (Sassen, 1991) – it seems possible to analyze patterns of development and forms of social power in new ways. This elevates the status of the spatial sciences. On the other hand, sociologists and historians who wish to put the urban back in its place prefer the concept of ‘globalization’ – a lazier formulation that makes them to look at cultural and economic relations, without relating them to patterns of urban development. Sociology has been somewhat embarrassed by its lack of global theory, which has put this discipline at a disadvantage in relation to political science and economics (Robертson, 1992; Waters, 1995). The latter disciplines have the state and the market respectively to account for world order. Modernity – or, in more radical versions, capitalism – has been the closest analogue to a sociological concept of the global, but it is more useful for analysing the transition from then to now, than for specifying the dynamics of the present itself. This opens the way for a sort of revenge of the spatial sciences, in the form of a theory of the global city.

Unfortunately, existing analyses of the global city tend to focus our attention on centres of command and control, and encourage us to think of the global order as some sort of world system. Notions of hierarchy, centricity, and systematicity lead inexorably to the idea of sovereignty; that is, to the idea that there is a point from which the world can be (or is being) organized or ‘governed’. That the point should be conceived as a city, rather than as a state or a king, is not much of an improvement, since the same spatial imaginary is being invoked. Elsewhere in the geographical literature that spatial imaginary has been under challenge (see especially Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994; Soja, 1996; and Brenner, 1998). To bring a more complex understanding of space and time into the analysis of the global city is probably important to recognize that space and time are dimensions of one another, and hence that the distinction between geographical and historical analysis is ultimately untenable. The concept of the global city invites us to abandon a number of old distinctions: between the local (‘the city’) and the global; between the economic, the social, the cultural and the political; and between the static (‘structures’, ‘systems’, ‘space’) and the dynamic (‘movements’, ‘time’). However, these distinctions are bound to reassert themselves (as has occurred within the global city literature, when analysts have attempted to rate cities in relation to one another) if we are not attentive to ontological assumptions.

Within the existing discipline of political science, the concept of the global city has relatively little purchase, because there is already a powerful theory of the global, in the form of the ‘realist’ account of international relations (Walker, 1993). This account is deeply invested in the traditional spatial imaginary. It suggests that states are ultimately the dominant actors in global affairs, by virtue of their monopoly over the means of extreme violence, their command over popular loyalties and their legal supremacy in relation to economic, cultural, religious, social and other political institutions. One might well suggest that the dominance of states is not what it appears to be (and indeed this is a major theme in contemporary commentary on international affairs: see, for instance, Ruggie, 1993; Sassen, 1996). On the other hand, if municipalities are the political organizations on which the global city (or global cities) must rely, it is not clear how they are to match the power of states. Municipalities are conventionally understood as miniature states, stripped of sovereign authority. How can such stripped-down, miniaturized states be effective, when the organizations on which they are modelled seem to have lost control? An increasingly popular idea is that there is an emergent ‘civil society’ that brings people from different countries together (see, for example, Lipschutz with Mayer, 1996). However, to conceptualize world politics on the model of civil society is simply to project a familiar form onto a different scale (compare Shaw, 1994; and Walker, 1994). Something similar happens in current speculations about ‘global governance’ (see, for instance, Held, 1995 and Linklater, 1998). To think differently about world politics is extraordinarily difficult, because we are so used to the idea that there is a centre from which ‘government’ occurs and to which ‘politics’ must relate.

There is an ever-growing literature that suggests that the state system is historically specific and, moreover, that its form can be understood as an effect of economic, social, cultural or military conditions (compare McNeill, 1986; Braudel, 1984; Giddens, 1985; Mann 1986; 1994; Rosenberg, 1994). This mode of analysis has long antecedents. We can find it in Weber and Marx, for instance. Whatever the other merits of this mode of analysis, it does tend to put ‘the political’ into a narrow and dangerous space. To explain existing institutions as an effect of social conditions, broadly construed (including relations of production, religious sentiments, available military technologies and so on) is to present the world as something that developed behind our backs. Like Christ’s crucifiers, we knew not what we were doing. But, what place can
politics have under those conditions? The Weberian/Maxian answer points, on the one hand, toward the social science that enables us to understand the natural order of things (and attune ourselves accordingly) and, on the other hand, to the possibility of a violent intervention that will give form to something persistent. There is thus a secret complicity between the naturalism of the social sciences and the violence that substitutes for politics. The realist theory of international relations tells us that the leaders of states are bound to the use of violence by the logic of the system. Neo-classical economics offers a comparable account of the ruthless logic of economic competition. Stories about cultural difference – such as the ones now told about the Balkans – have a similar logic. The implication always is that there is a natural order to which there is no alternative. Politics cannot change anything of fundamental importance, and violence is required to restrain violence. This way of thinking is implicit in a social scientific approach. In an earlier era, we might have identified that approach with Marxism and Fabianism, but now its main expressions are in neo-liberalism and compassionate conservatism (compare Gill, 1995).

The point of focusing on the urban is to move away from social scientific categories, in the hope of recovering a sense of the political. Used in the way I suggest, the urban is both a spatial and a temporal category – that is, it is both geographical and historical. In its original sense, it denotes a difference between the urban on one side and the rural or simply natural on the other. At any moment this can be mapped in two or three dimensions. On the other hand, the urban is a historical movement, which can be traced to its origins in the ancient civilizations and followed in its development into a global system which actually encompasses the rural and the natural. The predominance of urbanism as a way of life thus can be shown geographically and accounted for historically. It is important to emphasize that urbanism is not just any way of life, but is a particular form of it, in which people gradually free themselves from their immediate dependence on the natural environment and create for themselves environments of their own making. As we know well, the latter environments are not always pleasant and their making is constrained by the parameters of the natural world. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the world in which we live is increasingly something of our own creation and it is this feature, more than the presence of dense clumps of buildings, that makes urbanism as a way of life so different from what went before.

To think of the urban in this way is to bring us nearer to a political conception of it, for the emphasis is on the process whereby we make the world in which we live. There is an Aristotelian echo here, for what Aristotle noted in The Politics was the fact that the ultimate political questions – the "constitutional" questions that interested him most – related to the problem of producing and maintaining the polis in the form most conducive to human aspirations. What was at stake for the founders of a polis was the creation of a new way of life that could be self-sustaining. Genuinely political issues always related to these problems of founding and sustenance. Significantly, the polis was conceived as a city, that is as an organization of urbanism as a way of life. As urbanism became self-conscious, it became political in the fullest sense. To organize a city politically was to make a declaration of independence from agrarian, pastoral or hunter-gatherer life; it was to say that people could create and maintain their own artificial environment, which would be more or less adequate to their own purposes. We may believe, as some ecologists and religious thinkers do, that such an aspiration is a sign of hubris and that people are liable to destroy themselves if they push urbanism to its logical conclusion. However, it is hard to deny the fact that urbanism has become global and that the rural and the natural are quickly being reduced to the status of urban parks. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century social sciences encourage us to think of urbanism as an unintended consequence of things we do for other reasons. Urbanism thus becomes susceptible to naturalistic explanation. A politicized understanding of the urban leads us to refuse this evasion of responsibility. It is true that no one planned the world to be exactly as it is – any more than anyone planned Athens to be exactly as Aristotle found it. Nonetheless, the world in which we live is largely of our own making and we sustain it as such in our daily routines. To take responsibility for that world – as the Athenians took responsibility for Athens – is to take responsibility for urbanism as a way of life. This means attempting to understand the global city – urbanism as a way of life – as a political order that people have created and that they continue to sustain. To appreciate what it is, we have to give up the idea that political order necessarily conforms to the sovereignty principle. The latter idea encourages us to think that there can be no real political order if there is no sovereignty present. Since urbanism does not conform to the sovereignty principle, it appears to be apolitical. But to mistake this appearance for reality is to make a grave theoretical error. To the extent that sovereignty exists, it is always localized and its existence is always in the form of a political claim (Magnussen, 2000). That claim is never uncontested and thus paradoxically sovereignty is always limited. In the wider politics of the global city, sovereignty-claims appear beside other sorts of political claims – rights-claims, property-claims, knowledge-claims, identity-claims and so on – which are not necessarily less important. What is contested politically is actually quite open, for it is always possible for someone to identify a new problem with the existing way of life and to demand fundamental change. That is what 'new' social movements are always about.

If urbanism denotes the process whereby we come to create and sustain our own environment – a place in the natural world in which we can live in accordance with human purposes – then the politics of urbanism is the activity by which this creative and sustaining process is put into question. To the extent that we assume responsibility for what we are doing, we become engaged politically, and in its broadest sense this engagement is with the phenomenon of urbanism.

It is worth pausing to consider the 'ism' in urbanism. As noted above, the term 'urbanism as a way of life' comes from Wirth (1938). He contrasted
urbanism with industrialism and capitalism and appealed for a sociological understanding of the phenomenon. However, he was a social scientist, looking for social not political reasons. This led him towards the naturalism for which he was ultimately criticized by neo-Marxists such as Manuel Castells (1977; see also Smith, 1979, pp. 1-48). Castells attempted to rethink urbanism as an effect of the class relations implicit in capitalism. This led him to the idea of urban social movements as modes of resistance to capitalism. His thinking has evolved since, as has the critical analysis of urban political economy, an analysis that he and David Harvey (1982; 1996) did so much to inspire. In a way, Castells and others have been trying to radicalize and politicize Wirth’s original analysis. In so doing, however, they have pushed Wirth’s original insight into the background. To retrieve that insight, we have to link it not only to the ancient Greek conception of politics as an ongoing activity (Arendt, 1961), but also to the modern notion of a social movement as a challenge to the existing order (Tarrow, 1994).

In a sense, a social movement is the modern equivalent of a polis. If the polis offered to its ancient inhabitants a sense of identity and purpose and constituted their collective existence in a form that enabled them to act together to carry this identity and purpose forward, then the contemporary social movement does something rather similar. There is a crucial difference, however, and this is that a movement is not necessarily tied to a particular place. A movement moves, in every sense of that word (Magnusson, 1997). In this respect, it is akin to urbanism as a way of life. Particular cities, habitations, modes of transportation, forms of cultural expression and patterns of economic activity may be established as this way of life develops, but these fixtures are always temporary. Urbanism is characterized by movement, flux, restlessness. The global city is never finished, because new possibilities are always being discovered. Thus, the politics of urbanism is a politics of movement, akin in this respect to the politics of any other social movement. So, does it make sense to conceive of urbanism as a sort of social movement?

To affix an ‘ism’ to the ‘urban’, as Wirth did, is to suggest such a possibility. Then as now, an ‘ism’ could be conceived as an ideological construct which ordered people’s political activity in a movement towards a particular goal. The goal of urbanism is not easy to specify, but if the analysis above is correct we can identify urbanism with the effort to make human life self-dependent – that is, to free human beings from the limitations of their natural existence. There are many aspects to this aspiration and it is subject to constant revision, but we can well see that urbanism in this sense is associated with a broad political agenda.

The space of urbanism is the space of the global city, but not in the sense in which the geographers and sociologists have tended to use that term. The global city is not just a particular site like New York or Tokyo. Rather, it is urbanism as a ‘way of life’. The argument here is that we must learn to think of this way of life as a way of organizing ourselves politically. From this perspective, urbanism appears as an over-arching social movement, which constitutes the political hyperspace within which other, more familiar social movements appear.

Every important social movement creates its own political space. It defines ‘us and them’, ‘here and there’, ‘then and now’. It establishes an identity and a set of goals for the people involved and thus sets a direction for their activity. This direction is both spatial and temporal: we are here and want to be there, we were this and want to be that. The political space that the movement defines is the terrain in which it must act if it is to be successful. Its enemies appear in particular locations on that terrain, with particular powers at their disposal. Its friends and potential supporters are in other locations, with powers to be developed and deployed in accordance with the strategic objectives and tactical capacities of the movement. The space of action must be defined if decisions are to be made, but it is impossible to know that space – and in particular to appreciate how it might change – without understanding how it was produced historically. Thus, the political space available to a movement must be interpreted temporally if it is to serve as a space for action. In the end, what a movement shapes out of what it can discover is a space and time for its own activity: a where and when for its own efforts. Movements such as socialism, feminism and environmentalism – like liberalism, secular humanism and scientific rationalism before them – create worlds of their own in which the friends and enemies, pasts and futures, homes and aways, opportunities and threats are quite distinctive. It would be a mistake to suppose that each of these movements conforms to the same model.

Urbanism seems to be distinctive in that it is an architectonic movement, which occurs in a more complex political space. The urban is associated with contrary ‘affects’: on the one hand, the excitement of human achievement, human expression and human contact; on the other hand, dismay at the effects of human activity in relation both to individual and social life, and to the natural environment. Thus, the urban is rarely posed as an unambiguous ideal. It is rather the form that our way of life has taken in consequence of our efforts to make the world over in accordance with our purposes. To the extent that different purposes are expressed in different social movements, urbanism is the ensemble of these purposes and more generally of the activities that give effect to them. The really powerful social movements are the ones like capitalism and statism which we can trace to the beginnings of the modern era, and which have obviously reshaped the space and time for human activity in fundamental ways. Capitalism and statism – to which one might add the ideological ensemble of secular humanism, scientific rationalism and political liberalism – appear to have been the most vital movements within urbanism as a way of life and to have given contemporary urbanism its most significant characteristics. Most of the other social movements can be understood in terms of their reaction to these hegemonic movements.
Hyperspace of urbanism as a way of life

Elsewhere I have suggested that we might invoke the concept of ‘hyperspace’ to make sense of the relation between urbanism and other social movements (Magnarsson, 1996). I take this term from contemporary physics (Kaku, 1994), in which the currently dominant theory is that space actually has ten, rather than four dimensions. According to this theory, the four-dimensional world in which we live day-to-day is in a sort of giant, expanding bubble on the surface of a six-dimensional space curled up in a tiny ball. The only evidence that the other six dimensions are there is that, without hypothesizing them, we cannot make sense of the relations between the four fundamental forces of the universe. It would be wrong to suppose that the physicists’ concept of an n-dimensional hyperspace could be applied directly in an analysis of our social existence – what would it mean? – but two important ideas can be derived from this physical theory. The first is that there can be separate spatial domains, in which what is outside remains largely unnoticeable. And the second is that there are features of the interior of any domain that are unintelligible except with reference to what is outside. We can apply these ideas to the analysis of social movements. On the one hand, every major social movement seems to form its own political space – positing an identity (workers, women, whatever), developing an appropriate history, situating itself geographically. As a result, no two movements share exactly the same political space and so none can simply read off its future or pull down its lessons from the experience of another. On the other hand, there are parameters for each movement that are given by the character of the exterior space. A movement cannot simply give its political space the character it wants: that depends on what is outside. If the analysis above is correct, the ‘outside’ can best be understood as the ‘inside’ of a ‘global city’ – the hyperspace of urbanism as a way of life.

Arguably, the concept of urbanism that I am advancing is a functional equivalent of older theories of modernity. After all, it was by means of the distinction between the ancient and the modern or, later, between the traditional and the modern, that western thinkers began to make sense of what distinguished post-Renaissance Europe from what went before and what was outside. The modern was actually a four-dimensional, spatio-temporal concept which was heated up for explanatory purposes at points and times of transition. For good or ill, the concept is now burdened with the assumptions of western imperialism, which are ethnocentric and presentist. Much of the recent fascination with the concept of the post-modern derives from the frustration of intellectuals who are attempting to think beyond the tradition of modernism that they have inherited. However, the concept of the post-modern simply confirms the spatio-temporal assumptions it was supposed to challenge (‘We were modern then, but now we are post-modern.’). If we are to break out of this frame, we need to think of our lives in a way that does not burden us again with the same history and geography. The concept of urbanism as a way of life is not to be identified simply with Europe and its effects since 1492. On the contrary, we can see that this way of life has taken a variety of forms and has developed over thousands of years in different parts of the world. What is unique about the present era is that the various urbanisms have been integrated with one another in the context of a developing global city.

It is not hard to see that some elements of the contemporary global city – long-distance trading routes and universal religions, for example – were already in place two thousand years ago (Times Atlas, 1993, pp. 70–3). However, the world was still strongly separated into distinct regions and some regions – the Americas, southern Africa, Australia, the Arctic – were largely isolated from the rest of the world. In any case, the predominance of urbanism in relation to other modes of life was far from complete. Only with the long outburst of European expansionism in the so-called modern era did the various regions of the world become firmly integrated with one another and urbanism become everywhere predominant. In fact, it is only in the last few decades that most countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have become preponderantly urban. To the extent that this process is as yet incomplete, there is every indication that it will continue until it is complete. People do not like starving in the countryside and they will make what efforts they can to join in the urban prosperity of which they are now aware.

To say this is not to reinvoke a theory of historical inevitability. Rather, it is to call attention to the political choices that are shaping the world in which we live. We are accustomed to assign a political character to the decisions made by national governments, international agencies and great corporations. We have a little more trouble thinking of a peasant’s decision to move into the city as political. But what else is such decision? It is by no means simply an economic move, since it is vested with social and cultural aspirations. Moreover, it involves an implicit repudiation of one sort of political community in favour of another. The sum of these innumerable political choices is of enormous consequence for the world as a whole. On the other hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to call the people concerned to account for the choices they have made, because those choices seem to have been impelled by dire necessity. What we can see from a distance is that the global city is organized in a way that offers only bad choices to the majority of people and gives others enormous power to organize global life in accordance with their own desires. The global city may be decentralised, but it is by no means democratic in its mode of political organization. Indeed, the claim that the world is becoming ‘more’ democratic seems to depend on an extraordinarily narrow conception of democracy, which depends on the illusion that states normally govern human affairs.

If we want to understand the political organization of the contemporary world, we are well advised to look at the cities in which we live. These places are but nodes in the global city, but in their local and regional organization they seem to replicate most features of the global order. Anyone who has studied urban government carefully will tell you that sovereignty is illusory in urban affairs. Of course, there are states that claim authority over cities and intervene regularly in urban affairs, but what becomes apparent on the ground is that states have a very limited capacity to order things as they would wish. In fact,
state authority seems to dissipate at the local level, as it spreads through a bewildering array of agencies that overlap the familiar analytical boundaries. Consider a state-funded charitable agency, with a board of directors representative of local elites, a mandate to raise funds from the community, a core of volunteers and professional workers and a set of elaborate procedures for consulting client groups and affected members of the wider community. Is such an agency within the state or in civil society? Is it economic, social, political or cultural? Or is it all these things simultaneously? The ambiguity we encounter in this instance is typical: nothing on the ground where political decisions are being made in the local community seems to conform to the state-centric categories of the social sciences. Concrete analysis pushes us towards categorical invention.

One such invention is 'the metropolis'. The idea of the metropolis was adopted about a century ago to make sense of the fact that there was a difference between the city proper — that is, the municipality with the name concerned or the densely built-up core — and the surrounding suburbs. As the distinction between suburban and rural areas blurred, people began to talk about metropolitan regions to denote the wider area of urban influence. From the beginning it was noticed that, in densely populated areas, one metropolitan region overlapped another, so that rather arbitrary distinctions had to be made for analytical or administrative purposes. Gradually, it was recognized that wider urban systems were national and international and had been so for some time. Thus, the obvious fact about the metropolis is that it is both centrifugal and centripetal: it draws activity towards itself and spins it outward, so that every metropolis interacts with other metropolises in extremely complicated ways. The relations between one metropolis and another cannot be understood as if the two entities were self-contained and factors like national boundaries are of only relative significance in determining the pattern of interaction. Every metropolis is characterized by an internal dispersal of political authority — a dispersal which is in part geographic and in part functional, but in the end much more complex. This dispersal does not conform to neat distinctions between state and society, public and private, national and local.

A similar ambiguity is implicit in the older idea of the municipality. Municipalities date from the medieval era and hence from a time when sovereignty had yet to congeal as a principle of personal and political identity. A municipality is a sort of polis, but it is not autonomous. It has come to be regarded as an organ of the state and yet it is always also in civil society. Not surprisingly, it has the legal status of a corporation: an artificial person without sovereignty. Although analysts sometimes treat municipalities as if they were miniature states, such an analytic strategy never works, because municipalities are not self-contained. The municipality is a liminal space. As such, it may be paradigmatic. Modern (or post-modern) identities are increasingly porous, complicated and ambiguous. If the personal is the political and the political is the personal, then the municipality is emblematic of our condition. It is limited, but never self-contained: always beyond itself, but nevertheless quite particular. Significantly, the organizations we call states are coming to resemble municipalities in their relation to the global economy and to replicate the patterns of municipal politics on a global scale.

If so, some will wonder why global analysis ought not be proceed under the rubric of 'capitalism'. The so-called triumph of the liberal democracies is obviously a triumph of capitalism and if there is a world order it is evidently now a capitalist world order. The global economy we now have is not just any economy: it is the one that emerged within the womb of European feudalism and that was established on a world scale in the context of European imperialism. It might be argued that, once we strip Marxism of its dross, what we have—especially in Marx's own writings—is a brilliant historical-geographic analysis of the way the contemporary world order came to be (Harvey, 1982; 1996). Moreover, we have in Marxist theory an account of the organizational principles of capitalism—the core system of the world order—which helps us to understand (at least in retrospect) why and how the world evolves as it does. What better analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union could there be than the one we could derive from Marx? Was the Soviet planning system not one that had developed the economy in Russia to the point where the inteugment of the existing system of production had to be broken? If we were to reinvigorate Marxian analysis by applying it ruthlessly to the utopian socialists of the twentieth century—among whom Lenin, Attlee and Blair might all be numbered—then it might be possible to produce a convincing account of our world that put the phenomenon of capitalism at its centre.

Capital is a masterpiece of political analysis, in that it exposes as political a set of relationships that had been labelled as natural (or at least as apolitical). What Marx does so brilliantly is to explain how capitalism works as a political system. All subsequent analysis has to begin where he left off. On the other hand, we must be conscious now that an analysis of capitalism as a political system tells us only some of the things we need to know to make sense of the global politics in which we are engaged. A political science that centres itself on the phenomenon of capitalism may be superior in some respects to a state-centric political science, but it replicates many of the unfortunate features of sovereignty thinking. It misleads us into thinking that our world has a central determinant principle, one that can be comprehended naturalistically and that will somehow give us our political precepts directly. These were the presumptions of the political economy to which Marx was responding and they are presumptions from which he himself never fully escaped.

To conceive of capitalism instead as one of an ensemble of modern social movements is to situate it in a more complex political space. This space is not uniquely defined by the logic of capital or by labour's response to it. What is incommensurable with that logic—be it religious understanding, ethnic hatreds, feminist aspirations, or eco-centric concerns—is neither simply external nor simply subordinate. To understand this is to recognize that capitalism, like statism, produces a show of sovereignty to which we must respond, but respond in a way that does not reproduce the show's illusions.
With respect to citizenship, the state is the show we encounter first. It constitutes the political in a particular way, by attributing natural sovereignty to the individual. As Hobbes feared, such natural sovereignty can lead only to the worst of all possible worlds. So, the artificial sovereignty of the state seems necessary to produce social order. However, the global order thus effected turns out to be a place of mutually exclusive artificial sovereignties: hence, it reproduces the problems of violence and disorder on a different scale. According to the received view, both citizenship proper and politics proper are attributes of statehood (Linklater, 1990). States determine who may be citizens and constitute spaces within which citizenship can be practised. Citizenship thus defines a relation that absolves individuals of responsibility for what happens beyond the borders of their particular states. Political responsibility is state-centred and as such is distinguished from the personal responsibility that each person has for his or her own life. What cannot be assigned either to the personal or to the political is somehow beyond anyone’s responsibility.

Conclusion

The depoliticizing social sciences enable us to analyse human affairs naturalistically and so to evade responsibilities that might otherwise come with citizenship. In deferring to such intellectual practices, we accept the shows of sovereignty as reality. To politicize the global city is to refuse these shows and to accept our responsibility for matters that we can never understand or control completely. Even more than a particular metropolis, the global city is decentred. It is not subject to a single, sovereign authority. There are multiple systems of power at work within it, some of which can be connected with capitalism, others with statism, still others with tribal nationalism, cultural imperialism, religious fundamentalism and so on. If there is a logic to the development of the global city, it can more easily be appreciated in terms of self-organizing systems or chaos theory than otherwise. However, to adopt such theories as a basis for analysis is to retreat once again into naturalism. A political analysis ought instead to return us constantly to the recognition that the city we have created is our own and that what happens in it is our own responsibility. The global city is both the venue and the product of our own struggles to become what we would like to be, and in the end there is no alternative but to take responsibility for what we have created.

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