

1 THE LEGIBILITY OF THE EVERYDAY CITY

Introduction

In this chapter we begin our exploration of what counts as knowledge of the urban. We ask how we can theorize contemporary cities without losing sight of their extraordinary variety and vitality, and through intimations of the urban practices themselves. We deliberately avoid an essentialist reading, since we do not think that the multiple dynamics of the city allow it to be theorized in terms of driving structures. We turn to another urbanism that emphasizes the city as a place of mobility, flow and everyday practices, and which reads cities from their recurrent phenomenological patterns. Following Bruno Latour and Emily Hermant's remarkable photojournal of contemporary Paris (1998), this requires a view from the 'oligopticon' – vantage points above, below and in between the surfaces of cities.

This chapter draws out the central metaphors of this new urbanism of the everyday. We identify three metaphors which highlight the importance in the organization and vitality of urban life of transitivity, daily rhythms and footprint effects. These are situated, respectively, in the tradition of *flânerie*, rhythmanalysis and urban signature. While broadly sympathetic, we conclude that this urbanism overstates the city as a space of open flow, human interaction and proximate reflexivity. This prefaces our effort in the rest of the book to develop a different knowledge of cities, based on the instituted, transhuman and distanced nature of urban life.

The New Urbanism in Context

Ambitiously, the great American urban theorists of the early twentieth century – Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, Louis Wirth – sought to generalize cities at different stages in history as holistic systems. They tended to see the city as an organism. Underneath the clamour, clutter, confusion and disorder of city life was felt to lie a certain organic integrity. The city was considered a spatially bounded entity, embodying a particular way of life (fast, civic, anonymous), with a distinct internal spatial and social division of labour, a particular relation with the countryside, nation and the ‘outside’ world, and an evolutionary linearity (civilization and progress). They wanted to theorize the city as a sociospatial system with its own internal dynamic. Thus, for example, Mumford felt it right to develop a typology of cities: ‘Tyrannopolis’, with its parasitism and gangster dictators; ‘Megalopolis’, with its greed, dissociation and barbarism; and ‘Nekropolis’, with its looting and primitivism following war, famine and disease. Mumford’s treatment of each type as an organic system is striking.

Regardless of whether cities through the ages can be seen in this way, contemporary cities are certainly not systems with their own internal coherence. The city’s boundaries have become far too permeable and stretched, both geographically and socially, for it to be theorized as a whole. The city has no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts. Instead, it is an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions. This is the aspect of cities that needs to be captured and explained, without any corresponding desire to reduce the varied phenomena to any essence or systemic integrity.

In the last fifteen years, urban theory has moved a considerable way towards recognizing the varied and plural nature of urban life. Most of the major contemporary urbanists, including Manuel Castells, David Harvey, Saskia Sassen, Edward Soja, Richard Sennett, Mike Davis and Michael Dear, acknowledge the inadequacy of one positionality on the city. They note the juxtaposition of high-value added activities with new kinds of informed activity, the co-presence of different classes, social groups, ethnies and cultures, the stark contrast between riches and creativity and abject poverty, and the multiple temporalities and spatialities of different urban livelihoods. It is, however, fair to say that while they get to the complex spirit of the urban, the tendency to generalize from prevalent phenomena or driving processes remains strong.

There is, however, another tradition that has studiously avoided such generalization, attempting to grasp the significant banality of everyday

life in the city. Everyday life has many dimensions. For Henri Lefebvre, for example, it incorporates ‘daily life’, defined as recurrent human and material practices, the ‘everyday’ as an existential or phenomenological condition, and ‘everydayness’, understood as a kind of immanent life force running through everything, ‘a single and boundless space-time for “living”’ (Seigworth 2000: 246) flowing through time and space. How cities manifest everyday life is a question that exercised, for example, the surrealists, and later, the situationists, who attempted to grasp this through non-conventional urban itineraries and mappings, manifestos and poetic musings (Sadler 1998). It also marked Walter Benjamin’s wanderings as a meditative walker in the depths of different cities, and his study of urban sites of mass consumerism as an emerging way of life. We find the same impulse in Michel de Certeau’s (1992) work on how banality as the ‘overflowing of the common’ (p. 5) ‘introduces itself into our techniques’ (p. 5) as the ‘grammar of everyday practice’ (Gardiner 2000: 174).

Underlying this urbanism of the everyday is a sense of the need to grasp a phenomenality that cannot be known through theory or cognition alone. In part, this arises from an understanding of everydayness as an immanent force, ‘an excess that derives neither from a body or a world in isolation, but from the banal movements of pure process’ (Seigworth 2000: 240). How is such an ontology of ‘process in excess’ to be grasped? For Seigworth, ‘in order to “go beyond appearances”, a philosophy of everyday life must have its attention toward “Life” – not merely its immediacy . . . but life in all of its sticky and slack human/nonhuman, inorganic/incorporeal, phenomenal/epiphenomenal, and banal/intense everydayness’ (2000: 246). An everyday urbanism has to get into the intermesh between flesh and stone, humans and non-humans, fixtures and flows, emotions and practices. But, what is to be kept in, and what out? Then, it needs to know the city beyond the powers of cognition, venturing into the realms of poetic invocation and sensory intimation. But, here too, the task is not unproblematic. How can we be sure that the latter take us into the city’s virtuality? How do we avoid simply making empty gestures?

One possibility is the use of metaphors to capture recurring practices. In the rest of this chapter we discuss three strong metaphors in the tradition of everyday urbanism. The first is *transitivity*, which marks the spatial and temporal openness of the city. The second captures the city as a place of manifold *rhythms*, forged through daily encounters and multiple experiences of time and space. The third notes the city as *footprints*: imprints from the past, the daily tracks of movement across, and links beyond the city.

The Flâneur and Transitivity

Walter Benjamin's speculative philosophy, 'at its strongest moments does not seek truth in completeness, but in the neglected detail and the small nuance' (Caygill 1998: 152). This is most evident in his studies of the cities he roamed: Paris, Naples, Marseilles, Berlin and Moscow. Benjamin used the term transitivity to grasp the city as a place of intermingling and improvisation, resulting from its porosity to the past as well as varied spatial influences.

The term dances into play in the 1924 flâneur's tale of Naples, with Benjamin clearly overwhelmed by the city's theatricality, its passion for improvisation, its ironies. Naples visibly shows off its transitivity through the priest publicly harangued for indecent offences, but still able to stop to bless a wedding procession; the Baedeker guide that is of no help in finding architectural sites or the trails of the underworld; and the play of opportunity in a busy piazza, where a gentleman negotiates a fee with an overweight lady to pick up the fan she has dropped. 'Porosity is the inexhaustible law of the life of this city, reappearing everywhere', including how 'building and action inter-penetrate in the courtyards, arcades and stairways . . . to become a theatre of new, unforeseen constellations. The stamp of the definitive is avoided' (Benjamin 1997: 171, 169).

Transitivity/porosity is what allows the city to continually fashion and refashion itself. While it is particularly marked in Naples as a series of street-level improvisations, Benjamin is clear about its relevance for all cities. In the case of Moscow in the 1920s, he writes of the transitivity of a new socialism, based on the co-presence of the state bureaucratic machinery and the silent improvisations of individuals involved in informal trade and barter. The city's transitivity is manifest in the juxtaposition of a new monumental architecture against the mats and boxes laid out on pavements by the city's thousands of hawkers trying to sell whatever they can. Transitivity in both cities has radically different effects, but in both cases the concept encapsulates the city as everyday process, mobilized by flesh and stone in interaction.

What are the tools with which transitivity can be grasped? To begin, Michael Sheringham claims that the 'latent principle of mutability' that drives urban life requires a 'corresponding mobility on the part of the witness'. Traditional tools based on maps, description, emulation, distillation of essence are of little use. Enter the reflexive walker, the flâneur, who, through sensory, emotional and perceptual immersion in the passages of the city, engages in a 'two-way encounter between

mind and the city', resulting in a 'knowledge that cannot be separated from this interactive process' (1996: 104, 111). Thus, Sheringham notes that, for André Breton, knowing the city depended on an attitude of lyrical expectancy and openness, expressed through a mixture of the poetic and the factual. For Benjamin, instead, the autobiographical walker aspired to an 'idleness' in which purposive activity gives way to phantasmagoric experience. Benjamin's journey through Marseilles was helped by the controlled use of hashish in order to slow down and see things differently. The tale of Naples, in contrast, draws on the ecstasy of the Berliner's reaction to a dazzlingly theatrical Mediterranean city, while in Paris he relies on measured reflections on the architecture of its arcades. Similarly, Jacques Réda saw Paris in the 1890s through allegory, as he charted a route based on strong associative connections prompted by wandering.

Contemporary urbanism has renewed the tradition of *flânerie* to read the city from its street-level intimations. Here too, we encounter the idea that the city as 'lived complexity' (Chambers 1994) requires alternative narratives and maps based on wandering. A wonderful example is the work of Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair (1999) who have retraced the life and walks of a Jewish scholar and hermit, David Rodinsky, to produce, with other writings, an A-Z retraced on foot by Iain Sinclair (1999) of the significant sites for this Jewish East Londoner before the 1960s. This is a 'psychogeography' of strange spaces, selected monuments and boroughs and Jewish sites, a London signalled by biographical markings. We get a glimpse of this in the extract from Sinclair's introduction to the A-Z in box 1.1.

The 'theorist' is the gifted meditative walker, purposefully lost in the city's daily rhythms and material juxtapositions. The walker possesses both a poetic sensibility and a poetic science that is almost impossible to distil as a methodology for urban research. Benjamin, for example, was doing much more than opening himself to the transitivity of Naples, Moscow and Marseilles. He was not the naive and impressionable dilettante. He was armed instead with a transcendental speculative philosophy that allowed him to select, order and interpret his sensory experiences of the city. These were reflexive wanderings underpinned by a particular theorization of urban life, with the demand from theory to reveal the processes at work through the eye of a needle.

For some it is precisely the *flâneur's* sensibility linking space, language and subjectivity that is needed to read cities. Such intellectual wandering should not romanticize, but portray the multiple uses of the street, the unexpected subversions of the stereotype. Jerome Charyn's (1987) depiction of New York is illustrative:

Box 1.1 Rodinsky as psychogeographer

‘Rodinsky was an artist in the tradition of Tom Phillips or the Surrealists, a re-maker of found objects. He bent the maps to fit his notion of how London *should* be – as if he was describing it for the first time. Maps were prompts rather than definitive statements. If a particular page [of the London A–Z] took his fancy, Rodinsky would attack its margins with a red biro. Other districts – Enfield, Stanmore, Willesden, Chingford, Hendon, Purley, Crystal Palace, Surbiton, Tooting Bec, Wimbledon, Richmond, Eltham, Peckham Rye – were of no interest to him and they were ignored. He was a taxonomist, breaking down the overwhelming mass of information into categories that excited his attention: prisons, asylums, burial grounds, children’s homes, hospitals. These markings became a projected autobiography, a Dickensian fable of abandonment, destitution, and incarceration. This is how Rodinsky reads the world: a wilderness of unknowing, punctuated by dark places. Reservoirs of pain that solicit the heat of his red nib. His system of classification was shaped around privileged buildings that operated as colonies of the damned, institutions with strictly enforced rules of conduct, gulags of the disappeared. . . .

‘What was his system? If buildings were singled out with no red track leading to them, did that mean they were significant but unvisited? Did the lines that tread strange routes represent journeys undertaken by bus or on foot? Arsenal football ground is ringed, but otherwise left alone. While Mare street is favoured with a red route that culminates in a triumphal circuit of Clapham Ponds. Has Thistlewaite Road been highlighted in honour of Harold Pinter (who lived there as a young man)? Was there a connection, some acquaintance or relative, shared by Pinter and Rodinsky? . . .

‘In the suburbs, Rodinsky concentrates on “Jews’ Hospitals” and “Jews’ Burial Grounds”, as if underwriting his own future; anticipating the routes that would finally carry him away from Princelet Street. . . . Here were the sites where the narrative of a lost life might be found: Heneage Street (the synagogue where Rodinsky was last seen, attending a Kiddush), Tower House in Fieldgate Street, Cheshire Street, Hawksmoor’s Christ Church, the Brady Street burial ground. Islands where time was held within vessels of memory.

‘I decided that the only way to make sense of Rodinsky’s doctored maps was to walk his red lines . . .’

From Iain Sinclair, *Dark Lanthorns: Rodinsky’s A–Z*, Goldmark, Uppingham, 1999, pp. 10–14.

If you want to 'discover' New York, go to the dunes: visit those caves in the South Bronx where breakdance began as ritualized warfare between rival gangs. Or stroll down Ninth Avenue, which hasn't been gentrified, and one can still feel the electric charm, a sense of neighborhood with some of the anarchy that a street ought to have. The old and the young mixing, mingling, with all kinds of quarrels and courtship rites. . . . Or go to Brighton Beach, where the Russian Jews have descended, drinking borscht and wearing 1950s' American clothes. Visit Mafia country in Bath Beach, where the young bloods stand in front of restaurants wearing their silkiest shirts. Travel to the Lower East Side, where the Chinese, the Latinos, and elderly Jews occupy the parks and the streets as if they'd all come out of a single crib. (cited in Marback, Bruch and Eicher 1998: 80)

There can be no doubt that such *flânerie* is able to reveal many intimate secrets of a city. But, the secrets revealed are particular secrets, and of particular parts of the city. They do not 'authenticate' a city, not least because the accounts are from distinctive subject positions. *Flânerie* has never been gender neutral, for example. The accounts have been mostly male, often loaded with sensual connotations (crowds, streets, salons, buildings, as sexually arousing or all-too-frequent analogies with the female body or femininity). Women are often stereotyped within a selective gaze, as Angela McRobbie notes:

it was partly through the various forced exclusions of women into the domestic sphere, into the household world of shopping and into the internalized world of the sexualized body and femininity and maternity that modernity allowed itself to emerge triumphant in the public sphere as a space of white, male, reason, rationality and bureaucracy. While some strata of young middle-class women could be drafted into carrying out the regulatory social work of the city, in the form of philanthropic visiting, their services were quickly dispensed of when it came to developing the great infrastructures of state and government. . . . The power and privilege which allowed this minority of women such 'freedom' cannot in short be understood without taking account of the experience of those many women and girls who were the object of those concerned gazes and for whom the city was a place of work and livelihood, who lived in 'slum territory' and who travelled about the city not because they had gained some new found freedom, but as part of their everyday gainful activities. How else did working women through the centuries get to their work, run errands for their masters and mistresses, take some time for pleasure and enjoyment, and indeed escape the overcrowded conditions of their homes, but by walking about and by hanging about on the streets? (1999: 36-7)

Transitivity based on the experience of women going about their daily business does not feature. This said, we can find a current of ‘flâneuse’ writing. Deborah Parsons, for example, shows in her study of women writing about Paris and London between 1880 and 1940 that the flâneuse works in the details of particular sites with a ‘gender-related city consciousness’ (2000: 7). This includes an empirical knowledge of the city’s grounded particularities, and through this, an exploration of being a woman in a city that is ‘frequently enabling, sometimes difficult, always irresistible, providing spaces in which these women can explore their identities and their writerly voices’ (p. 228). The ‘city is always kept in interplay with a focus on the particular life that takes place within them’ (p. 223). Gender matters in quite significant ways then, in accounts of urban transitivity, depending on who is observing or being observed.

Another problem with flânerie is whether the transitivity of the contemporary city based on endless spread and multiple connections is best grasped through wandering/wondering. How useful, for example, is the flâneur’s knowledge in revealing the porosity of urban life associated with travel, such as the effects of large-scale daily population change? Consider this observation on London by Nick Barley:

The 100 million airborne arrivals who descend on London each year are equal to almost twice the population of Britain. Travel on this scale now makes it impossible to characterise cities as stable entities. They’re no longer simply geographical locations but urban contexts adapting themselves to constant flux. As much as it is a collection of buildings, a city is a shifting set of conceptual possibilities, robust enough to expand and contract on demand without losing its essential identity. . . .When one of London’s airports is in fact in Cambridge, with kilometres of rolling countryside in between, the city has become more a territory for the imagination than one with a measurable physicality. (2000: 13)

The flâneur’s poetic of knowing is not sufficient. The city’s transitivity needs to be grasped through other means. Some of these can draw on now routine technologies of knowing, historical guides and photographs charting change over time, imaginaries which illustrate the city in motion (such as airborne video-shots), and books or films displaying the city’s global connections (tales of diaspora cultures or a city’s global food chain). We have gone a long way towards developing tools that are at one remove from the street and which no longer depend alone on the insight and tools of the knowledgeable flâneur (Featherstone 1998), as the two examples reveal in box 1.2.

Box 1.2 An alternative transitivity

Wanderers and everyday travellers too record the transitivity of cities, without the diagnostic theories and tools of the flâneur. Their travels, and the observations they make during the journey, can mark the city's spaces in quite distinctive ways, and with equally telling effect. Look how an alternative Los Angeles dances into play through Sikivu Hutchinson's description of the bus-rides of a largely poor, and female, motor-less public in this city of cars:

Riding the bus in L.A. is a parallel city. . . . Riding enables another mode of looking, seeing, hearing, and smelling that 'eludes the discipline' of automobility even as it reproduces it. The street plans of this parallel city skirt the edge of automobility. They flow in quiet asynchrony to the virtual city beyond the car window, enclosing the women who wait with their packages in front of hospitals, grocery stores, check-cashing places, day care centers. From Los Angeles to New Haven, the bus is a city of women. . . . working class women of color form the backbone of bus riders in intensely exurban cities like L.A. The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy estimates that only 4 to 5 percent of trips in the United States utilize public transportation. Yet this figure does not adequately account for rates of use in communities of color, where women depend heavily on buses and subways throughout the day for trips to the workplace, public agencies, and the homes of friends and relatives. The elliptical nature of women's journeys through the city is the underside of exurban capital (2000: 108). . . .

Driving past the MTA bus stops on an early weekday morning, 'they', the riding public, are invisible to the street traffic, testament to the otherworldly economy of L.A.'s sidewalks, to the now clichéd observation that 'nobody' walks in L.A. Despite sixty years of the streetcar, to be car-less in L.A. is to be faceless, possessed of an unenviably intimate knowledge of the rhythms and cadences of the city's streets, of the grinding commerce of each intersection and transfer point. (2000: 117)

Then, there are other vernacular insights which involve little knowledge of the city itself. The evocations of strangers from afar, often with a sense of place that draws rather more from a diaspora imaginary than from the locality itself, are a typical example. Consider the porosity of London via the West Indies that runs through

Tanty's excursions in Harrow Road in Samuel Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956):

Well Tanty used to shop in this grocer every Saturday morning. It does be like a jam-session there when all the . . . housewives does go to buy, and Tanty in the lead. They getting on just as if they in the market-place back home: 'Yes child, as I was telling you, she did lose the baby . . . half-pound saltfish please, the dry codfish . . . yes as I was telling you . . . and two pounds rice, please, and half-pound red beans, no, not that one, that one in the bag in the corner . . . (p. 78)

She used to get into big oldtalk with the attendants, paying no mind to people waiting in the queue. 'If I know Montego Bay!' she say. 'Why I was born there, when I was a little girl I used to bathe in the sea where all those filmstars does go. . . . Why I come to London? Is a long story, child, it would take up too much time, and people standing in the queue waiting. But I mind my nephew from when he a little boy, and he there here in London, he have a work in a factory . . .' (p. 80, cited in Akbur 2000: 70)

Riad Akbur (2000) comments that Selvon's protagonists fail to access the real London, but this is to miss the point that Tanty's London is as real as in any other account, grasping, as it does, the stretched and perforated sense of place of millions of immigrants, who identify a city, and their experiences in it, through their local-global geographies.

Rhythms and Rhythmanalysis

Like Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre observed that cities rely on relations of immediacy – on the 'music of the city' that needs to be 'discovered by reflection' (1996: 227, 101). Looking from a window above a crossroads in the centre of Paris, Lefebvre notes the multiple speeds and movements: people crossing the street, cars stopping and accelerating, crowds of people pursuing different aims, the mingling of noises and smells. He adds, 'to this inexorable rhythm which at night hardly abates, are super-imposed other, less intense, slower rhythms: children going off to school, a few very noisy piercing calls, cries of morning recognition. Then, around 9.30, according to a schedule which hardly ever varies . . . the arrival of shoppers, closely followed by tourists' (p. 221). He notes that the rhythms

are not simply those we can see, smell and feel, but also others which 'present themselves without being present' (p. 223), such as the rules of traffic control, the opening times of schools and shops, the itineraries recommended by foreign tour operators, and so on. The rhythms are of presence and absence.

The study of urban rhythms is becoming important in contemporary urbanism. But, what are urban 'rhythms'? John Allen clarifies:

By city rhythms, we mean anything from the regular comings and goings of people about the city to the vast range of repetitive activities, sounds and even smells that punctuate life in the city and which give many of those who live and work there a sense of time and location. This sense has nothing to do with any overall orchestration of effort or any mass co-ordination of routines across a city. Rather it arises out of the teeming mix of city life as people move in and around the city at different times of the day or night, in what appears to be a constant renewal process week in, week out, season after season. (1999: 56)

The rhythms of the city are the coordinates through which inhabitants and visitors frame and order the urban experience. The city's multi-temporality, from bodily and clock rhythms to school patterns and the flows of traffic, need not be read as a loss of control, as some influential commentators claim (Godard 1997). Rather, the city is often known and negotiated through these rhythms and their accompanying ordering devices (traffic rules, telephone conventions, opening times, noise control codes). Even without these devices, order can be exerted through the overlaying of daily rhythms (Picon 1997). Indeed, in the city of manifold practices across its hundreds of spaces, there is a surprising absence of chaos and misunderstanding, partly owing to the repetitions and regularities that become the tracks to negotiate urban life (see chapter 4).

The metaphor of city rhythms can highlight neglected temporalities. Most readings focus on daytime rhythms, while studies of the city at night only too often focus on the unexpected and dark happenings. As darkness falls, the city becomes unidimensional, a place of pleasure and vice, or a place of terror masked in muffled noises and illicit activity. Joachim Schlör's *Nights in the Big City* (1998) is a rare exception. It is a wonderful study of night rhythms and their ordering technologies. The book focuses on the history of the night in the streets of Paris, Berlin and London between 1840 and 1930. It charts changing rhythms associated with historical shifts in public morality, state regulations (drink laws, curfews) and night technologies (street lighting, policing technologies).

Schlör shows, for example, how city curfew laws came to be lifted, with night security passed from civic watchmen into the hands of a

nascent police authority helped by the arrival of street lighting. This opened up the night to the new rhythms of revellers, itinerants and tramps, as the once sole occupants of the street (criminals and prostitutes) were pushed into the shadows. Then, as life in the street at night became more complex, new opening and closing times emerged. As industrialization progressed, work-time extended into the night, with people busy in the utilities, factories, hospitals, presses, market halls, warehouses and police stations. Later, the night without curfew laws, replete with new forms of bourgeois and proletarian entertainment linked to industrialization, saw new efforts to regulate its rhythms (licensing laws, codes of public behaviour). As the comings and goings of the night came under increasing control and public moralizing, new demons of the night emerged: into the twentieth century, the night in Paris, London and Berlin became recast as the time of the underworld, spies and patrols, outcasts and vagabonds; the 'abnormal'.

Little of all this appears in 'big picture' urban theory, where much of urban life is left out. For example, strangely, the everyday rhythms of domestic life have rarely counted as part of the urban, as though the city stopped at the doorstep of the home. But domestic life is now woven routinely into the urban 'public realm'. How else are we to interpret the rise of home-working and teleshopping, and 'public' involvement through the consumption of goods, television, the internet and the growing exposure of domestic life in chat shows and fly-on-the wall television? The rhythms of the home are as much part of city life as, say, the movements of traffic, office life, or interaction in the open spaces of a city. Its rhythms, too, need incorporating into an everyday sociology of the city.

But, how to grasp the rhythms of the city? Lefebvre invoked 'rhythm-analysis', practised at a 'spectral' distance. If the reflexive wanderer reads the city from within and with a certain poetic sensibility, 'spectral analysis' contemplates the rhythms of a city from a more detached vantage point. According to Lefebvre, the elevated and closed window, for example:

offers views that are more than spectacles. Perspectives which are mentally prolonged so that the implication of this spectacle carries its explanation. . . . Opacity and horizons, obstacles and perspectives are implicated, for they become complicated, imbricate themselves to the point of allowing the Unknown, the giant city, to be perceived or guessed at. (1996: 224)

The window allows the city to be read from a certain height and distance so that the comings and goings can be perceived in combination. The window is thus both a real site to view varied rhythms juxtaposed

together, and a tool for speculation, presumably with the help of technology such as maps, drawings, texts, photos and film.

But this is only the starting point of rhythmanalysis. Lefebvre is clear that for two reasons 'the city and the urban cannot be recomposed from the signs of the city' (1996: 143). First, phenomena alone do not reveal how the rhythms of the city combine, overlap, dissolve and recombine, to generate a certain urban synthesis. Second, recording the rhythms of daily life does not provide access to the immanence or excess of process noted earlier by Seigworth (2000). For Lefebvre, what is required is a certain 'praxis that can take charge of . . . the gathering together of what gives itself as dispersed, dissociated, separated, and this in the form of simultaneity and encounters' (1996: 143).

He is frustratingly elusive, however, about the tools of such a praxis. Like *flânerie*, there are no clear methods for rhythmanalysis, only other metaphors such as receptivity and exteriority. The rhythmanalyst has to be captured by the rhythm: 'One has to *let* go, give in and abandon oneself to its duration' (Lefebvre 1996: 219, original emphasis). For this, 'exteriority' is necessary, because to 'extricate and to listen to the rhythms requires attentiveness and a certain amount of time' (p. 223). In the end, the window in spectral analysis remains a stimulant for the gifted artist/analyst to mobilize a lot more than the powers of perception and reflexivity. But we can only guess at these other powers, which presumably include powers of abstraction to name and order the immanent forces behind the instantiated rhythms of the city. We get a glimpse of the power of such a combination of theory and receptivity in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of the rhythms of Roman piazza life in a letter he wrote to his family from Rome on 22 September 1907 (box 1.3).

This is a subtle interpretation of the crowd, with no sense of nostalgia or loss. Freud weaves into his account of the happenings of the piazza the technologies that animate (lantern slides, cinematic projections, flashing signs, electric *tranvia*). We see 'an urban scene in which an individual and collective subjectivity takes shape in a multiplicity of images, sounds, crowds, vectors, pathways, and information', documented through 'one particular attempt at cognitively managing and organizing that overloaded field' (Crary 1999: 365). Jonathan Crary is convinced that the insight is aided by techniques at the heart of Freud's new therapeutic enterprise:

In a paper first published in 1912, Freud put forward some essential 'technical rules' for analysts to follow. The first of these techniques is what Freud called 'evenly suspended attention', which described a self-conscious

Box 1.3 Freud's letter from Rome

'My dear ones

On the Piazza Colonna behind which I am staying, as you know, several thousand people congregate every night. The evening air is really delicious; in Rome wind is hardly known. Behind the column is a stand for a military band which plays there every night, and on the roof of a house at the other end of the piazza there is a screen on which a *società Italiana* projects lantern slides. They are actually advertisements, but to beguile the public these are interspersed with pictures of landscapes, Negroes of the Congo, glacier ascents and so on. But since these wouldn't be enough, the boredom is interrupted by short cinematographic performances for the sake of which the old children (your father included) suffer quietly the advertisements and monotonous photographs. They are stingy with these tidbits, however, so I have had to look at the same thing over and over again. When I turn to go I detect a certain tension in the attentive crowd [*der Menge aufmerksam*], which makes me look again, and sure enough a new performance has begun, and so I stay on. Until 9 pm I usually remain spellbound [*so der Zauber zu wirken*]; then I begin to feel too lonely in the crowd, so I return to my room to write to you all after having ordered a fresh bottle of water. The others who promenade in couples or *undici, dodici* stay on as long as the music and lantern slides last.

'In one corner of the piazza another of those awful advertisements keeps flashing on and off. I think it is called Fermentine. When I was in Genoa two years ago with your aunt it was called Tot; it was some kind of stomach medicine and really unbearable. Fermentine, on the other hand, doesn't seem to disturb the people. In so far as their companions make it possible, they stand in such a way that they can listen to what is being said behind them while seeing what is going on in front, thus getting their full share. Of course there are lots of small children among them, of whom many a woman would say that they ought to have been in bed long ago. Foreigners and natives mix in the most natural way. The clients of the restaurant behind the column and of the confectioner's on one side of the piazza enjoy themselves too; there are wicker chairs to be had near the music, and the townspeople like sitting on the stone balustrade round the monument. I am not sure at the moment

whether I haven't forgotten a fountain on the piazza, the latter is so big. Through the middle of it runs the Corso Umberto (of which it is in fact an enlargement) with its carriages and an electric *tranvia*, but they don't do any harm, for a Roman never moves out of a vehicle's way and the drivers don't seem to be aware of their right to run people over. When the music stops everyone claps loudly, even those who haven't listened. From time to time terrible yells are heard in the otherwise quiet and rather distinguished crowd; this noise is caused by a number of newspaper boys who, breathless like the herald of Marathon, hurl themselves onto the piazza with the evening editions, in the mistaken idea that with the news they are putting an end to an almost unbearable tension. When they have an accident to offer, with dead or wounded, they really feel masters of the situation. I know these newspapers and buy two of them every day for five *centesimi* apiece; they are cheap, but I must say that there is never anything in them that could possibly interest an intelligent foreigner. Occasionally there is something like a commotion, all the boys rush this way and that, but one doesn't have to be afraid that something has happened; they soon come back again. The women in this crowd are very beautiful (foreigners excepted); the women of Rome, strangely enough, are beautiful even when they are ugly, and not many of them are that.

'I can hear the music plainly from my room; but of course I cannot see the pictures. Just now the crowd is clapping again.

Fond greetings, Your Papa'

From Sigmund Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*,
ed. E. L. Freud, Basic Books, New York, 1975, pp. 261–3.

strategy of 'not directing one's notice to anything in particular and maintaining the same evenly suspended attention . . . in the face of all that one hears' But the fundamental significance of his remarks is the attempt to define a state of receptivity in the analyst that will be commensurate with the spoken free association of the patient. . . . It presumes an ideal state in which one could redistribute one's attention so that *nothing* would be shut out, so that everything would be in a low-level focus but without the risk of schizophrenic overload. (Crary 1999: 367–8)

Freud's is, of course, only one possible technique for analysing the rhythms of the city, but the essential point is that receptivity does not come divorced from an analytic method.

Urban Footprints and Namings

Let us, however, continue our exploration of central urban metaphors. If rhythm, defined as ‘localized time’ and ‘temporalized place’ (Lefebvre 1996: 227), registers the daily tempo of the city, the metaphor of footprint overcomes an idea of the city as a contained space. Cities are, of course, demarcated, through planning and architectural rules and through transport and communications networks within and beyond the city. But the spatial and temporal porosity of the city also opens it to footprints from the past and contemporary links elsewhere. City spaces are always exposed, including the ‘gated’ communities that try everything possible to shut themselves off, but are still crossed by the fumes of the city, and the nightly escape of younger residents looking for entertainment in the city’s more lively areas.

Similarly, the present is crossed by influences from the past. A vivid example is Doreen Massey’s description of how in Mexico City the Square of the Three Cultures juxtaposes the ruins of an Aztec pyramid, a baroque Roman Catholic church, and contemporary buildings in the International Style, to reveal the ‘elements of the three major cultures which have gone in to making this place’ (1999: 100). Each stratum of the urban archaeology brings ‘an intricate and active system of interconnections’ across the globe, such that, ‘when “the Spanish” met “the Aztecs” both were already complex products of hybrid histories’ (p. 110). For Massey this ‘multiplicity of histories that is the spatial’ (2000: 231) permeates movement in space too. It is not confined to historical footprints in a situated place. The car journey, for example, involves a complex ‘simultaneity of trajectories’, composed of the practices and thoughts of those travelling, the histories of the places crossed, the trajectories of the places left, now getting by without you. The city is full of these footprints of simultaneity, loaded with spatiotemporal tramlines.

What difference does it make to acknowledge these urban footprints? First, it helps to discard the idea of the city as an ordered and segregated pattern of mobility, helping in turn to see myriad other trails of mobility in the city (commuters, shoppers, tourists, children, the homeless, but also sewers and foxes). This allows a vision of the city as spatially stretched patterns of communication, bringing distant sites into contact (maybe through visits to family and friends), but also separating adjacent spaces (as with neighbours with little in common with each other). These tracks allow the city to be known. We negotiate the city through used tracks and construct imaginaries around them of the known city. This is one way in which a city, with all its complexity, size and change, is named.

Second, an understanding of footprints reveals the ‘mixity’, as Massey describes it, of cities. One example is the presence of past footprints in popular and official symbols memorializing the city, which frame the city (for example, Mexico City as cultural gateway, as city of long-standing global connections). The markings define insiders and outsiders, territory and the city’s irreducible mixity. Memorialization of this sort also works to erase sites, memories and histories which sit uncomfortably with a given imaginary (Klein 1997; Hayden 1997).

The city as palimpsest is known, according to Kevin Hetherington, through the way the urban bricolage is named:

maps, photographs, paintings, televised images, textual descriptions, poems, and so on. . . . They arrange, order, include and exclude, they *make knowable* a space to everyone who might choose to look at these representations and also make it possible to compare it with another space. . . . Those representations contain truth claims (not necessarily scientific) about a space. They perform place myths as places. (1997: 189, original emphasis)

The last sentence is of crucial importance. A city named in certain ways also becomes that city through the practices of people in response to the labels. They perform the labels. As Marback, Bruch and Eicher suggest, ‘When you hear or read about a particular city, almost automatically you draw upon what you previously heard or read about that city to judge what you are hearing or reading now’ (1998: 3):

Through this language, we gain images of places we have never been to. The bustling business world of Wall Street, the gleaming skyscrapers of Washington, D.C., the glitter of Las Vegas, the mosaic of separate ethnic areas in Los Angeles, and the ageing, abandoned factories of northern industrial cities like Detroit are all images that any of us can picture. Each of these images . . . represents the city as a certain kind of place. By representing specific cities as certain kinds of places, we are in a way determining our potential actions in those places. We would, for example, expect to have completely different experiences in Las Vegas and Detroit. So when we go to those places, we go expecting to do some things and not others. (1998: 6)

People and places script each other. Marback, Bruch and Eicher go further, to suggest, on the grounds that cities are now intensely visualized through images of one sort or another, that cities can be conceived as ‘forms of writing, as conglomerations of communication between people

through architecture and neighborhoods, through art and clothing and music, through daily activities and forms of entertainment, as well as through the mass media' (p. 12).

Cities take shape through a plethora of 'fixed namings'. The challenge of reading the city thus also lies in the study of the devices through which cities are named. The most obvious ones are tourist maps and city guides which select particular routes and historical reconstructions to frame cities as attractive places. A similar scripting is evident in the aestheticization of city centres through design, in shopping malls, marinas, recreation sites. But, as Jane Jacobs notes in her study of aboriginal expression in contemporary Australian cities, aestheticization also 'operates as the logic of many more modest urban transformations such as streetscaping, place making, and community arts projects. Some of these transformations assist in the selling of cities, but some may be addressing alternate agendas such as building identity or facilitating political formations among severely marginalized groups' (1998: 274).

Cities are named through a variety of means, and in ways which confirm or subvert stereotypes. Either way, the naming contributes to city identification. The history of the local media can be read in these terms. In chronicling local events, a narrative of the city is constructed, and over the years the city comes to be memorialized in detail. This street, that pub, that corner, that personality, become known, and through their collective naming we see others and other parts of the city. The city becomes accessible, and through the places named in the chronicles it becomes a spatial formation.

And when the media includes architectural critics commenting on the changing physical landscape – as Lewis Mumford did for the *New Yorker* on new developments in the 1930s – the city takes shape through these landmarks in the imaginary too. The cityscape is made known. Through Mumford's commentary New Yorkers came to see a city of skyscrapers and debated whether 'amid such a mass of new and almost new buildings, one has a fresh sense of shame over all this misapplied energy and wasted magnificence' (1998: 85). Now the city, through selective descriptions of the built environment, is given both history and memory, and a basis from which public opinion can praise or condemn.

The city, lastly, is scripted also in a literal sense, through its urban art forms. These include not only events in galleries and other closed spaces, but also open spaces used for artistic expression (concerts in parks, rap in the streets, ethnic festivals and parades) and the urban fabric itself used as canvass (murals, graffiti). The city is the medium itself shouting its stories directly. Take the example of urban graffiti marking particularly strong feelings of urban life in particular cities. In New York, for

Leonard Kriegel, 'the spread of graffiti is as accurate a barometer of the decline of urban civility as anything else one can think of', its politics 'pubescent sloganeering' (1993: 433–4). Others who are less condescending place graffiti with other vernacular art forms which manifest the cultural variety of the city, its diverse entrepreneurial energies, and the contested politics of the public realm (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996). Either way, this form of naming also makes the city knowable, as Susan Smith (2000: 86) suggests:

Whose city is this?

Corporate identity shapes the skyline; commercial products line the streets.
Faceless thousands surge through nameless spaces.

Whose place is this, and how do we know?

Look to the 'twilight zone of communication'.
The signs in the streets, the measures, the markings, the meanings, the movement. . . .

Graffito: A drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface.

What's wrong with graffiti?

Graffito; . . . scribblings or drawings, often indecent, found on public buildings, in lavatories, etc.

What's wrong with graffiti?

Tricia Rose knows, she writes in *Black Noise*:
By the mid-1970s, graffiti emerged as a central example of the extent
of urban decay and heightened already existing fears over a loss of
control of the urban landscape . . .
And that's not all, as David Ley and Roman Cybriwsky observe in
'Urban graffiti as territorial markers':
A zone of tension appeared, which is located exactly by the evidence
of the walls. . . . Diagnostic indicators of an invisible environment
of attitudes and social processes . . . far more than fears, threats
and prejudices, they are the prelude and a directive to open
behaviour. . . .
The walls are more than an attitudinal tabloid; they are a
behavioural manifesto . . .

A Basic Ontology

In this chapter we have begun to look at the difference it makes to visualize the city as a process, without the pretence of total sight or generalization. We have reconstructed the tradition of everyday urbanism as one way of knowing the multiplex city. We have explored the potential of sensory metaphors which capture the transitivity and rhythm of urban life and also allow the city to be named in some way. We have suggested, however, that this urbanism balances on metaphors that lack methodological clarity.

In the rest of the book we want to open this tradition to other ways of knowing the everyday city by grounding it in an understanding of the structured and unstructured regularities of urban life. We consider the tradition as it stands to be flawed in three respects. First, the theoretical edifice rests on metaphors which imply an unlimited ebb and flow to urban life. This needs to be questioned. We have begun to see how urban life is placed by lines of mobility and travel and by namings and imaginaries. The city's rhythms are not free to roam where they will. Cities, as we suggest in chapter 4, also provide the machinery through which rhythms are directed, from traffic lights which regulate the temporality and pace of life, to rules of planning which 'instruct' the city in given directions (such as where and when shopping can take place). Similarly, we argue in chapter 5 that the city is heavily regulated by bureaucracy and other formal and informal institutions. Striating openness and flow are a whole series of rules, conventions and institutions of regulation and control. The city thus needs to be seen as an institutionalized practice, a systematized network, in an expanded everyday urbanism.

Second, the tradition of everyday urbanism is marked by a certain humanism, evident in the powers of reflexive wanderers and rhythm analysts, the emphasis on human-centred aspects of urban life, and, as we show in the next chapter, the desire for face-to-face-contact and urban community. Yet much of city life (chapter 4) is about the machine-like circulation of bodies, talk and objects, as well as the presence and regulation of trans-human and inorganic life (from rats to sewers). The new urbanism needs to recognize the engineering of certainty through varied technologies of regulation (such as traffic signs, postal rules, waste management).

The third flaw is the strong sense of cities as places of proximate links, despite the references to spatial and temporal porosity. Time and again, the city is stressed as a site of localized flows and contact networks. Our argument, in chapters 2 and 3, is that so extensive have the city's connections become as a result of the growth of fast communications, global

flows, and linkage into national and international institutional life that the city needs theorization as a site of local–global connectivity, not a place of meaningful proximate links. The new urbanism needs to note also the everydayness of spatially stretched and distant connections.

With these steps in mind, how might we understand the city? The ontology of the city we present below has an obvious philosophical bloodline which travels forward from writers like David Hume, John Locke and Baruch Spinoza, through those early twentieth-century geniuses like William James in psychology, Gabriel Tarde in sociology and Henri Bergson and Alfred Whitehead in philosophy, to a new later twentieth-century flowering found in the work of Michel Serres and Gilles Deleuze which has been so brilliantly expanded on and made practical by writers such as Bruno Latour. Its chief concern may be counted as an ontology of encounter or togetherness based on the principles of connection, extension and continuous novelty. The watchwords of this ontology may be counted as ‘process’ and ‘potential’, ‘the actual world is a process, and . . . the process is the becoming of actual entities . . . the becoming of an actual entity in disjunctive diversity – actual and non-actual – acquires the real bite of the one actual entity’ (Whitehead 1978: 22). In such a conception, the city is made up of potential and actual entities/associations/togethernesses which there is no going beyond to find anything ‘more real’. The accumulation of these entities can produce *new* becomings – because they encounter each other in so many ways, because they can be apprehended in so many ways, and because they exhibit ‘conrescence’ (to use a Whiteheadian term), that is, when put together they produce something more than when apart, something which cannot be described by simple addition because it will exhibit what would now be called ‘emergent’ properties. Or as Whitehead puts it, ‘the potentiality for being an element in a real conrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attached to all entities, actual and non-actual . . .’ (1978: 22). In other words, it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming’.

All philosophies of becoming have a number of characteristics in common. One is an emphasis on instruments, on tools as a vital element of knowing, not as simply a passive means of representing the known. The second is their consideration of other modes of subjectivity than consciousness. The third is that ‘feelings’, howsoever defined, are regarded as crucial to apprehension. The fourth is that time is not a ‘uniquely serial advance’ (Whitehead 1978: 35) but rather exists as a series of different forms knotted together. Fifth, becoming is discontinuous, ‘there is a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming’ (Whitehead 1978: 35). And finally, and most importantly, this means that new

'prehensions' (ideas about the world) can be constantly built. More and more can be put into the world (and this cannot be reliably forecast since so much of the activity of prehension is virtual). For example, consider the invention of the colour mauve by William Perkin in 1856. What mauve 'promised was a new way of looking at the world' (Garfield 2000: 69). The wide availability of the colour added a new visual register to the city streets as it was used in new fashions, quickly followed by colours like magenta (in 1859), and a host of colours which previously had had to be produced in arduous ways from natural products and which could now be produced artificially (such as madder and indigo). The new dyes quite literally coloured the urban world in new ways. What is clear, then, we hope, is that the ontology outlined below is an open one. It does not trade in notions of a fixed theoretical framework, or in definitive once-and-for-all results; there is no one account of a single urban thing but rather a generative multiplicity of divergent and discontinuous lines of flight with their own spaces and times.

So what exists in cities? How can we hold on to their potential and variety? At the most basic level, we can talk of *life*, teeming bare life, a being-together of existences. In taking this stance, we are trying to point in three directions. The first of these is to simply state that the city is an ecology made up of many species, not just the human, which live at faster or slower rates, gather in greater or lesser intensities, inhabit the city's earth, air and water multiply. Then, second, it is to signal that much of what goes on in cities is centred around the practice of biopolitics, the practice of engineering the body and the senses – and life more generally – so as to produce governable subjects. Power penetrates subjects' very bodies and forms of life. In other words, life is at the centre of all the calculations made about cities. And, third, it is to signal that the senses are a crucial element of urban life. Cities cast spells over the senses, spells which are increasingly engineered by the state and business. And mention of the senses in turn points to that whole realm of human life which is outside consciousness – consciousness is, after all, only one kind of mental process. These are all the reflexes and automatisms which make up the city's 'unconscious', and which account for the bulk of its activity. This is the constant push of habitual consciousness and the dance of gestural, somatic communication, which writers like Walter Benjamin and, later, Michael Taussig tried to show up, and which can be found in nearly every urban encounter:

If, for instance, one comes upon two staunch friends unexpectedly meeting for the first time in many months, and one chances to hear their initial words of surprise, greeting and pleasure, one may readily notice, if one

pays close enough attention, a tonal, melodic layer of communication beneath the explicit denotative meaning of the words – a rippling rise and fall of the voices in a sort of musical duet, rather like two birds singing to each other. Each voice, each side of the duet, mimes a bit of the other's melody while adding its own inflection and style, and then is echoed by the other in turn – the two singing bodies thus tuning and attuning to one another, rediscovering a common register, remembering each other. It requires only a slight shift in focus to realise that this melodic singing is carrying the bulk of communication in this encounter, and that the explicit meanings of the actual words ride on the surface of this depth like waves on the surface of the sea. (Abram 1996: 80–1)

For now, it is a moot point whether new forms of life have joined the urban pack of late – such as informational entities which are no longer ghosts in the machine – or whether it even makes sense to write in these terms, because all life involves alliances of different forms of matter. What seems more important is to ask how life is enlivened, how it becomes a becoming.

We argue that this push comes out of distinctive cross-cutting ethologies, which are *networks* of enrolment, and the motion will produce particular spaces and times, as a consequence of the ways that the actors in these networks relate to one another. The consequences of taking such a stance in which multiple networks course through the city making their way as/in the world are – multiple. To begin with, there is a problem of description. The metaphor of the network is not necessarily the best one since it can conjure up a vision of a fixed set of nodes from which things circulate through fixed channels rather than a set of often tenuous fluid-like flows (Urry 2000; Latour 1999). Then there is a related problem. While these networks are clearly attempts to stabilize and pin down certain issues, ground the world by providing new worlds, they also contain within themselves – or through interaction with other networks, or both – the *potentiality* to become something else. Each network may diverge, or fold, on to others. Networks are, then, an attempt to depart from Cartesian space and Aristotelian place. As Deleuze (1992) puts it, 'I don't like points. *Faire le point* (to conclude) seems stupid to me. It is not the line that is between the two points, but the point that is at the intersection of two lines.' And, lastly, networks are always more or less interwoven with other networks. Thus, for example, human subjects which we conveniently describe as a unity of body and purpose are in fact aggregates of numerous subject positions which are parts of numerous networks. At any time, a 'subject' will therefore be the result of switching in and out of particular positions in particular networks, shuffling between particular spaces and times.

But this sense of a kaleidoscopic urban world, crammed full with hybrid networks going about their business, enables us to see, at the same time, the importance of *encounter*. Networks cannot be sealed off from the world, they are always in collision with other networks: touching, fighting, engaging, cooperating, parasitizing, ignoring – the variations are almost endless. In other words, encounter, and the reaction to it, is a formative element in the urban world. So places, for example, are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as *moments of encounter*, not so much as ‘presents’, fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation. Even when the intent is to hold places stiff and motionless, caught in a cat’s cradle of networks that are out to quell unpredictability, success is rare, and then only for a while. Grand porticos and columns framing imperial triumphs become theme parks. Areas of wealth and influence become slums.

All this may seem abstract and diffuse, difficult to get a hold of because, like all ontologies, it only describes the bare bones of thereness. But, hopefully, we have given some sense of how rich we think such an ontology might prove. For in this ontology, cities cannot be reduced to one. They are truly multiple. They exceed, always exceed. Cities are machines of consumption? Yes, but never just that. Cities are artefacts of the state? Yes, but never just that. Cities are generators of patriarchy? Yes, but never just that. The next chapter continues this argument.