Part III Cities of Division and Difference

Chapter 21

City Differences

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Differences are constituted across many dimensions from race, class, and ethnicity to gender, sexuality, age, and able bodiedness, and none of these exists as a homogenous space or entity since they multiply and intersect with one another in complex, fluid, and diverse ways. Differences are constructed in, and themselves construct, city life and spaces. They are also constituted spatially, socially, and economically sometimes leading to polarization, inequality, zones of exclusion and fragmentation, and at other times constituting sites of power, resistance, and the celebration of identity. Difference is constituted in all spatial relations but the particularity of the city is that it concentrates differences through its density of

Figure 21.1   Aboriginal mural, Sydney (© Steve Pile)

Figure 21.2   A tale of two cities? Cape Town (© Sophie Watson)

people and lived spaces, through the juxtaposition of different activities and land uses and through its intensities of interaction and interconnections (Massey, Allen, and Pile 1999).

Differences are not simply registered at the social, cultural, or economic level, they are also constituted symbolically with groups inscribing spaces and zones with

particular meanings and discursive practices which may or may not be visible to outsiders. Different subjects and subjectivities are also constituted in the imagined spaces of the city and differential power relations are inscribed on urban bodies. There are thus no clear-cut boundaries and no simple divisions between groups which can easily be mapped on to city spaces, and these complexities are rarely represented in the statistical and census accounts on the basis of which much urban policy is formed.

Instead people inhabit multiple identities in multiple spaces and temporalities of the city, and these identities themselves constitute, shape, and create the very spaces and temporalities or the city. Thus the Central Business District of the large global city with its offices, smart restaurants, information networks and gyms, shapes the possibilities for social interaction, power, and control of the financier in the daylight, while the empty doorways or heating vents at night provide shelter for the homeless youth whose identities are constructed in these selfsame spaces which contain and make possible a whole different set of meanings and social practices. In turn these identities transform the very spaces they inhabit, shifting their appearance and atmosphere at different times of the day. Capturing this idea through the metaphor of city rhythms John Allen (Massey et al. 1999) describes the displacement of the early-morning vendors in São Paolo with the onset of the working day as the businessmen claim the space of their own at the same time as being forced to share it with the street children. While for Amin and Graham (1997) the divisions and differences enacted in these multiple spaces and times form the multiplex city.

There has been a sea change over the last two decades in how social/spatial divisions in cities are conceived with a shift from the notion of division to the idea of difference. In part this shift reflects changing social and economic processes, but just as importantly it reflects theoretical shifts which have provided new lenses through which to analyze cities. During the 1970s and early 1980s the dominance of Marxist thought meant that the focus of analysis was on economic rather than social divisions. Cities were analyzed as working in the interests of capital where the major cleavage was between the owners of the means of production (the capitalists) and the workers. Social divisions were thus predominantly seen as deriving from economic forces and organized around class with differing interpretations as to how class should be defined. Urban journals such as the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR) and the work of David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Michael Harloe, and Enzo Mingione, to name just a handful of scholars among many, could be located in this paradigm.

Though seen as secondary to class in most analyses of cities – particularly in the West – the ways in which racial divisions were constituted in city spaces was also an important strand of work. In Birmingham – Rex and Moore (1967) analyzed the divisions within the housing sector in class terms, while William Julius Wilson (1987) investigated the causes, consequences, and extent of ghettoization in the United States. Feminist analyses of cities began to critique the dominance of class-based analyses towards the late 1970s and early 1980s arguing that gender divisions were spatially constructed in the city at the same time as themselves constructing a patriarchal city form and structure. These early writings are well illustrated by the volume of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* in 1978 devoted solely to gender concerns. Though feminist perspectives challenged

the emphasis on class as the major social/economic cleavage, they too tended to operate within fairly simple dualistic frameworks either drawing on Marxist ideas to establish a notion of patriarchal capitalism, where gender and class were worked together, or suggesting patriarchy as central with gender posited as the core social division.

One strand of urban analysis that can be located in this predominantly Marxist approach was one that mapped social and economic divisions on to cities in a fairly simplisitic and dualistic fashion. This paradigm was predicated on labor-market divisions and established the notion of the dual city or the divided city. This has drawn attention to growing social–spatial polarization in many cities in which the rich have got richer and the poor poorer, and the middle class has contracted (partly with the decline of the manufacturing sector and the massive expansion in service sector employment) leading to what is sometimes represented as an egg-timer-shaped occupational structure. Continuing a long tradition of urban inquiry which has examined inequality and processes of exclusion and ghettoization in the city, in this discourse social polarization was posited as an inevitable effect of global capitalist restructuring which was seen as an uneven process affecting cities and regions, and the people in them, in different ways, including some localities and groups while pushing others to the margins and spaces of exclusion. The economism of this discourse failed to recognize the heterogeneity of differences (Gibson 1998) and the differential access that people have to resources and networks from within an apparently homogenous community (Bridge 1997; Watson 1999). Others have seen globalization as tending instead towards greater homogeneity – the space of flows argument – where everywhere becomes the same and differences are ironed out as information and finance move at greater and greater speeds across the globe.

There is nevertheless ample evidence of strong polarizing tendencies in cities which are visible in the residential patterns of urban populations. For example, in some cities of the US, these tendencies have been particularly extreme where white people have fled to the suburbs, leaving the inner city to black and Hispanic minorities – what is sometimes referred to as the doughnut effect. The patterns though are usually more complex and fragmented than is sometimes suggested. For example, in Southeast Asian cities such as Bangkok extremely high-priced residences are juxtaposed with makeshift and often temporary dwellings. The picture in most cities is clearly too complicated to be captured by a dual model which inevitably homogenizes binary categories so that differences within groups such as the rich and the poor are rendered invisible.

The processes of globalization and social change, particularly in relation to gender relations and family structures, further make any straightforward account of the dual or divided city obsolete. One of the most significant impacts of globalization on cities has been the huge cultural changes which have occurred as a result of large numbers of migrants moving from one part of the world to another – and mostly into cities. As Sassen points out (1999) much of the analysis of global cities has focused on the economic sphere and on the infrastructure necessary for global cities to function – the large office blocks, the centrality of services, commercial centers, and central business districts. But there is another equally important story to tell, which until recently has been more invisible. This is the story of the analytic border-lands, the lives and spaces of the transnational communities who live in cities, whose

work servicing the infrastructure of globalization is just as important as the more visible signs of corporate power (Sassen, chapter 15 of this volume).

The multicultural city is not a new phenomenon and cities have always been spaces of difference and complexity. As Anthony King (chapter 22 in this volume) points out, there are various non-European cities which were marked by racial and cultural diversity long before this was a characteristic of London or Paris. Nevertheless contemporary cities are increasingly affected by complex patterns of local/global interconnection and disconnection, and places are constructed in complex ways within diverse webs of social, economic, and cultural relations. In many cities – or parts of cities – the migrant populations equal or outnumber citizens born in that city. Thus in Fairfield, Sydney, non-English-speaking migrants constitute nearly half of the population, many of whom are Asian, reflecting the huge refugee migration from Vietnam and Cambodia over less than 20 years (Murphy and Watson 1997). In Melbourne the Greek population is greater than in any city in Greece apart from Athens, and similar stories can be told about the Salvadorean and Mexican communities in Los Angeles and many other cities of the world. This intersection of migrant cultures in the context of a particular place has produced a plethora of differentiated, hybrid, and heterogenous cultural geographies within cities.

The dual city model thus appears increasingly obsolete. As Sassen suggests (1996) it is less and less possible to accept the notion of a hierarchical ordering which has created the semblance of a unitary economic system in which individuals are clearly located. Though the center concentrates immense power, and potential global control, the margins, while less powerful in economic and political terms, can be powerful in other ways. The devalued sectors which rest largely on the labor of women, immigrants, and African-Americans in the cities of the US represent a terrain where battles are fought on many fronts and in many sites and these battles lack clear boundaries. Global cities are a result of transactions that fragment space, such that we can no longer talk about global cities as whole cities – instead what we have is bits of cities that are highly globalized – and bits juxtaposed that are completely cut out. In this sense some parts of cities can have more in common with parts of other global cities or cities in the same region than with the part of the city juxtaposed. This increasing valorization and devalorization of spaces goes hand in hand, and in many places is becoming more and more extreme (Sassen, chapter 15). This has led to the reconstruction of city space with growing contestation between different sections of the population – which is often highly spatialized.

It is clear then that the notion of simply polarized or dichotomized social/spatial divisions in cities does not take us far enough. Cities have always been, and will always be, places of heterogeneity. This is particularly evident in the changing social composition of households in the city. The last 30 years or so across the world have witnessed the collapse of the traditional nuclear family, despite its ideological force, and a growing diversity and fragmentation of households; which has occurred as a result of a number of factors. In the more Westernized cities the women's and gay liberation movements, an increase in educational and employment opportunities, and easier access to mortgages for women have had an impact on marriage patterns, with the result that fewer people are marrying, and if they do, at a later age, and more people are choosing to live alone or cohabit, with or without children, in heterosexual or gay relationships. At the same time, when relationships break down

there is less and less stigma attached to divorce. In non-Western countries, patterns of rural–urban migration often associated with the search for a livelihood and work, have also served to disrupt more stable – often extended – family formations. Castells (1997) presents a compelling case for global shifts in household forms which he links not only with social movements but also with the rise of the informational global economy and technological changes in reproduction. One study estimated that one third of the world's households are headed by women, and in urban areas – particularly in Latin America and Africa – the figure exceeds 50 percent, while globally the phenomenon is on the increase (Moser 1993).

Any statistical mapping of differences inevitably ignores the more subtle forms of identification and construction of identities in the spaces of the city. In his early work Castells (1983) pointed to the importance of urban social movements as spaces of change, social organization, and resistance to the dominance of capitalist relations. More recently there has been a shift in his work to the notion of identities and an investigation as to how these are constructed in the network society as a result of globalization and information processes. At the same time feminist, postcolonial, poststructural, and queer theory have disrupted more traditional notions of differ-ence, identity, and subjectivity and shifted the ways in which difference in the city can be thought and lived. A sustained critique of binaries and dualistic paradigms (where one term is privileged over – man over woman, white over black, hetero-sexual over homosexual) has given rise to an emphasis on the multiplicity of inter-secting differences located in a multiplicity of sites. Rather than being seen as fixed, homogenous, immutable, identities are seen to be fluid and in a state of flux, as performed rather than given (Butler 1993), hybrid (Haraway 1991), and transgress-ive of norms. This postmodern subject is a decentred one which is partially formed and constituted within different discourses and sites at different times for different strategic purposes. The city is a key site here.

This "cultural turn" in urban theory has thus destabilized the importance of economic explanations of social/spatial divisions and drawn attention to the ways in which differences are constructed across a whole range of symbolic and cultural terrains. New cultural geographies map the ways different spaces in the city come to have different meanings and attachment for different groups. Thus a particular site can be ascribed meaning through codes which may be visible – to others in the case of, say, graffiti – or which may be hidden and only visible to those who "know." Such ascriptions of identity – often in the more interstitial spaces of the city – can represent powerful spaces of resistance and self-definition. The terrains and dis-courses which construct these identities can shift very rapidly as new strategies, such as new forms of communication, new styles or dress codes, are deployed by marginal groups. This is not to argue that economic and material conditions have become insignificant in constituting relations of exclusion and marginality; it is rather that the terrain of the economic intersects with other terrains producing new confluences of difference.

Living Differences

How differences are lived in the city cannot be read in any simple way. Concentra-tions of particular groups of people may in some instances represent a chosen and

powerful space, a space where identities can be constituted or celebrated, or a minority may be concentrated in one place as a result of processes of exclusion. Darlinghurst in Sydney has developed over 20 years as a safe space where gay men have bought houses, established businesses and restaurants and where they can openly express their sexuality, following similar trends in the Castro area of San Francisco or Soho in London (Mort, chapter 26 of this volume). These areas have also been buoyant economically giving rise to the phenomenon of the pink dollar. Racial or ethnic areas can be more ambiguous. In some instances they may represent sites of power and possibilities in the form of community networks, business or employment opportunities, or cultural arenas – such as Chinatown in Vancouver, Lygon Street in Melbourne, or Little Italy in New York. In others they may be places of enclosure and lack of opportunity such as the classic ghetto.

Power is crucial here. Drawing on Foucault's (1991) notion that power is immanent in all social relations operating as a capillary network across the domain of the social, and intricately bound up with modes of resistance, then all city spaces are imbued with power. Different marginalities, such as race, gender, or sexuality, or other forms of exclusion, interrelate to concentrate sites of power disadvantage and are not simply a question of special needs or lifestyle but are embedded in power relations, whether these be symbolic or real. In Peter Marcuse's (1995) view, beneath the chaos and fragmentation of cities patterns are lurking. Thus he suggests that rather than thinking in terms of divisions it is useful to think in terms of quartered cities or five-parted ones where the parts are intricately linked, walled in, and walled out, hierarchical in power, material or imagined, and dependent on outside social forces. Foucault's (1991) panopticon as a metaphor for modern forms of surveillance has also proved helpful in understanding spaces of exclusion and regulation, notably through CCTV. In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis (1992) analyzed the workings of power in Los Angeles through mechanisms of privatization and surveillance, coining the now well-used idea of the fortress city.

The forces that produce fragmented and divided cities are multifarious. In a capitalist land market accumulation of profit operates as a crucial economic force shaping the city. Neil Smith's work (1979, 1996) over two decades has seen the emergence of gentrification as the product of the urban land market and a growing "rent gap" between the current value of property on a site and the underlying value of the land. While not denying the significance of these forces, Chris Hamnett (chapter 28 of this volume) foregrounds instead the shift from an industrial to a postindustrial society and associated changes in class structure – in particular the expanded middle class and their consumer preferences. Whatever the forces in play, which may be several, the juxtaposition of rich and poor in city centers and the displacement of working-class households from the inner cities are now familiar consequences of gentrification in many cities over the last 30 years.

Planning has operated as another dividing force. Oren Yiftachel (1995) examines the practice of "planning as control" in Majd el Krum – an urbanizing Arab village in Israel's Galilee region – where the government has continuously attempted to contain, segregate, and dominate the process of Arab development, while Mabin (chapter 46 of this volume) makes a similar argument in the South African context. In this volume also, Robins and Aksoy (chapter 29) show how the modernizing agenda of urban planners in Istanbul, with their universalizing vision of rationality,

inclusion, and order, has instead created communities in orbit on the edge of the city, thereby promoting greater segregation and division in Istanbul.

Symbolic and psychic attachments to space play another part in constituting social/spatial divisions in cities. Though homelessness, for example, results in part from economic forces and the failure of the housing market to provide accommodation to low-income groups – effectively an economic analysis – it can also be seen as a psychic space of resistance which involves the occupation of particular symbolic sites involving new spatial and social practices. David Sibley (1995) examines the more symbolic aspects of exclusion and spatial division where people are marginalized because they are feared and created as "other." Powerful groups "purify" and dominate space to create fear of minorities and ultimately exclude them from having a voice. Often in local conflicts in the city a community will represent itself as normal and is threatened by those who are perceived as different. Fears and anxieties are expressed in stereotypes which logically could be challenged by greater knowledge of, and interaction with, the unknown others though such a move could have limited success if done halfheartedly (Sibley 1995: 29).

Divergences in value systems also play a part in shaping and being shaped by particular urban forms. Lily Kong (chapter 30) shows how Singapore is inherently a city of division and difference, pulling particularly in two directions, between modernity and internationalism, built on economic processes and economic rationality, on the one hand, and heritage, culture, and tradition, premised on symbolic value systems, on the other. Whose values are inscribed in the spaces of the cities is also a question of contestation and is open to competing claims which are constituted in a field of power relations and not fixed. A typical example of clashing value systems in many Western cities has been in the construction of mosques in traditionally Christian or secular neighborhoods, where the mosque is seen as a symbolic site of otherness and difference and fiercely resisted (Murphy and Watson 1997).

The physical form of city spaces can also act to produce difference and consolidate marginality. This is particularly evident where disability is concerned. Brendan Gleeson (1998: 91) makes a forceful case for capitalist cities as disabling in their design in the sense that the physical layout of cities – both the land-use patterns and the internal design of buildings – discriminate against people with disabilities by not recognizing their mobility requirements. Feminists have made a similar point about city planning, where transport systems, which are focused on the transport needs of men commuting to the center from the suburbs for work, lock women into complicated and time-consuming travel patterns to carry out domestic and childrearing tasks in areas ill serviced by cross-suburb linkages. Age is similarly constructed as a dependence when city spaces such as ill-lit streets, blind alleys or underpasses, appear frightening or unsafe to the teenage girl or older woman, who fear assault. And, as Fincher (1998) suggests, lifestage assumptions are present in the understandings of urban spaces held by policymakers and urban analysts.

Differences are thus constituted within cities. But there are also differences between cities. Urban hierarchies are constructed in academic debate positioning cities in relation to one another along economic and political grids and criteria are established to designate some cities as global cities while excluding others. Notions of center or core/periphery, metropole/nonmetropole, colonial/ex-colonial, Western/non-Western implicitly construct hierarchies of power – and no easy terms, as we

have discovered, can be deployed to distinguish city typologies which are not so imbued. The notion that there is some linearity of city development and progress from the premodern to the modern or postmodern, or from the undeveloped to the developed has come under increasing criticism. As Anthony King (chapter 22) points out, postcolonial criticism of dominant paradigms of urban studies are decentering the Eurocentric conceptions of the world in terms of society, space, and culture as well as in terms of temporality and history. John Connell and John Lea (1995), for example, argue that there were no premodern cities in Melanesian countries to be added to, replaced, or challenged by colonial order and discipline. Urbanization and the divisions thus engendered were a product of the colonial encounter.

In conclusion, differences and identities in cities are constituted in multiple and complex ways in multiple spaces of the city, and shift and change producing in turn different city spaces and new boundaries and borders. In chapter 42 we briefly consider some ideas about how difference can be productive or negotiated in the city, since difference is here to stay, always embedded in relations of power and potentially productive of new forms of politics in the city. Another interesting route is the recasting of notions of citizenship in the terrain of difference. Ali Rogers here suggests (chapter 24) that placing the city within citizenship debates loosens its connection with the state and nation and makes explicit its territorial or spatial foundations. Such an approach, he suggests, foregrounds the lived, material and representational practices of migrants and foreigners in the multicultural European city. As we have argued, and as chapters in this Companion explore, different spaces of the city constitute different identities and possibilities within a web of global/local connections which make every place unique whatever general patterns can also be drawn.

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