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Malcolm Miles, *Urban Utopias: The built and social architectures of alternative settlements*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008; pp256, £22.99 paperback.

You might think that urban utopias, utopias of any sort, would not today be very high on the ToDo list of anyone who is concerned with the immediate problems of poverty, homelessness, pollution, hunger, insecurity. But, if they're not, then they should be, and this book provides ample reason for considering them seriously and practically. The fortieth anniversary of the events of 1968 is a particularly auspicious time for turning to re-examine broad-scale efforts to make utopias relevant to today's struggles.

Malcolm Miles sees utopias as a broad and inclusive category, departing from the conventional accounts which focus on physical schemes for the ideal city. He is concerned with attempts to radically rethink what a city should be, what an urban life should be, what a good community should be; physical forms are secondary. Thus he considers not only the classical utopias, e.g. Fourier and Owens; not only Garden Cities and socialist experiments, but also the summer of love in San Francisco, the May events of Paris and the '68ers' and hippie communes, religious settlements, and small-scale eco-villages. He argues, convincingly, that they are all of one piece, reflecting a fundamental dissatisfaction with cities and generally with the urban forms of life of advanced industrialism and advanced capitalism, and a willingness to think about and to experiment with fundamental alternatives. He sees these efforts, these 'urban utopias', as direct challenges to and illuminations of the shortcomings of existing relationships (precisely the poverty, homelessness, pollution, hunger, insecurity of such immediate concern) but also as challenging more fundamentally the commodification, the homogenisation, the repression and the suppression of full creativity. That is perhaps the single biggest contribution of the book, this broad view of the urban condition and the range of responses to it, and why it should be a provocative stimulus to everyone whose ToDo list is full of emergencies and deadlines without room for methodical thinking about the underlying basics and the long-range possibilities.

Miles' first of four sections (in 9 chapters and 9 short case studies) opens, traditionally, with the classic and well-known literary utopias. But his approach is fresh, focusing not on the blueprints but on the social and even psychological aspects. He views Thomas More's classic *Utopia* as a critique of his world, not a prescription, and placed in a remote setting to avoid censorship. In a typically thoughtful and open-minded commentary, he takes up, without resolving,

Ernst Bloch's view of utopias not as unattainable visions but as incentives to urge on revolt. Then comes a chapter with an unexpected discussion of Descartes' architectural and verbal image of an engineer drawing a line as a metaphor for writers imagining utopias. In his subsequent discussion of Fourier the focus is on his views of sexual liberty and understanding of labour which underlie the images of the Phalanstère, seeing it all as a reaction to the economic relations of his society and their impact on the humanity of the members of that society. Contrary to many discussions, Miles sees Fourier's utopia more as a literary utopia, not a proposed actual one. Owen saw physical change as an adequate route to social change; Miles does not. Instead, he emphasizes, as do both writers, that their efforts were all grounded on the hopes for a radical change in people, a human transformation that would liberate potentials not given opportunity under existing conditions. Always Miles stays away from routine accounts and raises new issues, and provocative ones. This is no descriptive history of utopias (although it contains carefully researched details on much of its subject-matter), but a sympathetic interrogation of ideas and experiments, always with an open mind and a fresh approach.

The next section of the book takes up a number of 'utopias' built in the real world, in the context of the authors' thinking that lay behind them. Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier, as might be expected, are there, but so is a discussion of Cerda's 1859 plan for Barcelona; Zlin, a factory town built in the Soviet Union in the 1920s; and BedZED, 96 units built to be eco-friendly. In discussing them, Miles brings in Giddens and arguments about compact cities. All interesting stuff, opening unconventional vistas. The next chapter, called 'Social Utopias', introduces one of the most significant contributions to thinking about utopias that Miles provides: it takes up attempts to build alternative ways of life in which physical design plays, if anything, a subsidiary role. He starts with the Summer of Love in San Francisco and the life-styles of Haight-Ashbury, and goes on to the Yippies, the Diggers, the Motherfuckers, and then the 7,000 or so communes that came together in the late '60s and '70s. Again the view is broad and sympathetic; they belong in the history of utopias, Miles argues, because they are based on visions of an alternate society, rejecting the existing in favour of a way of life liberated for the expression of true feelings, desires and hopes - utopian cultures, rather than utopian cities.

The next two chapters follow more current efforts, centred on ecological 'utopias'. Utopias is in quotes here, for they do not see themselves as creating utopias, but as forging immediately realizable steps to what might exist in the future, and their approach is more narrowly centred on environmental reform than broader challenges to societal organization, although with implications for the latter. Chapter 6 takes up some little known programmes centred around what Miles calls liberation ecology; chapter 7 puts current environmental activism (for instance, anti-roads activism or the Earth First! Movement) in the context of utopian thinking. It is an unusual and stimulating

context; it raises the question of the relationship between environmental goals and other goals that frequently run in parallel, such as social justice. What kind of utopia is it that maximizes only one goal of a fully free society? The utopian context also raises the difficult question of the relationship between humanitarian goals and the human consciousness of those striving for such goals. Social transformation requires a transformation of the consciousness of individuals, but individual consciousness is moulded by social experience: how does building or living in an ecovillage, for instance, help create new human beings with the will to pursue utopias, or do we need such individuals to begin with to create the villages - and if so, is their creation really a step towards broader utopias? Miles sharpens the questions, but commendably does not make answering them easier.

Chapters 8 and 9, and the final Section, pursue these themes with some unusual case studies: first, what Miles calls mud-brick Utopias, referring to Third-World architectural efforts to build settlements at a minimum of cost and with a maximum of consideration of local customs and desires, as in the work of the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy and the Indian architect Balkrishna Doshi; both fascinating. Both rely heavily on the skills and imagination and commitment of the architect. The next chapter provides a contrast: a novel examination of the Social Work Research Center in Rajasthan, India, an oddly formal name for what most refer to as the Barefoot College, where local villagers, aided by professional consultation from dedicated architects and planners, have built their own new environment. Hardly a utopia, but in a spirit that Miles suggests may have lessons for a West self-constrained and barely post-colonial in the possibilities it considers or is even aware of. The cases, Miles suggests, with brief references to Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire, may reveal much about how, and in what spirit, full utopias might theoretically be built. The following section presents nine short case studies, some well known, some not: Economy, Pennsylvania; Arcosanti, Arizona; Auroville; Tamil Nadu, India; LKUfa-fabrik, Berlin; Uzupio, Vilnius; Cambridge Cohousing, Massachusetts; Ecovillae at Ithaca, New York State; and ZEGG, in Belzig, Germany - utopias, no, but small examples of what is involved in trying to build a new community with a new way of life; full of pitfalls and promise, and perhaps illustrative of the problems of similar endeavours on a larger societal scale.

In an open-ended Conclusion Miles pulls together some of his theoretical musings. He takes up sympathetically Herbert Marcuse's perception of a 'new sensibility' which would be linked to an ending of scarcity, but seems to equate the two concepts. He refers to Lefebvre's theory of moments of liberation, briefly questions the relation between biology and the quest for utopia, and ends with provocative comments on art and the criticism of reality.

The book raises a number of big questions. One set is strategic, but fundamental. Much of the utopianism Miles describes (the search for immediate alternative life-styles, the rejection of conventional habits, mores, means of making a living, the rat race) are however, just that: rejections.

They are, in this sense, and appropriately, negative: the Great Refusal. They join much existing critical thinking and reform-oriented action in that they know what they do not want much more clearly than what they do want. The experimental communities with whose description Miles ends are indeed limited experiments; none of them are presented as solutions to the ills of existing society, but rather escapes from it. That is already quite something; we would probably all be very happy if we could find ways of just escaping from evil; if we could just reduce the total number of prevailing injustices, without having to define what justice is; if we could just improve society, even if we couldn't fundamentally transform it. But, in the view espoused by many of the 'utopians' Miles describes, and with which he presumably himself concurs, fundamental transformation is indeed required.

The other big question, then, is to what extent does exploring alternate utopias contribute to fundamental transformation? On the one side, the life-style utopias, the Great Refusal, has never been seen as the active agent of such change, but rather as a symptom, an indicator, a necessary individual reaction to the need for change, but not its producer. Does it, however, play a role as supporting further change? Certainly many involved thought so; most prominently perhaps the young militants in Berlin in 1968, where alternate communes, sexual liberation, and refusal of conventional work, all combined with aggressive directly political action, house occupations, street protests, boycotts and disruptions.¹ The San Francisco movements Miles describes, from Motherfuckers to Diggers to Hog Farmers, no doubt contributed to the election of a gay mayor for the first time in that city and the change of a number of planning approaches, regulation of criminal conduct, and educational policies, but hardly the transformations that might have been hoped in the city, let alone the society, at large. Even if success or failure is not a fair test of a transformative movement, it is hard to find evidence that these life-style utopias even contributed significantly to movement in the direction of transformation.

The same question may be raised about the small alternative communities Miles describes; the 'mini-utopias.' Miles is not alone in looking to small instances of effectively radically transformed living as markers on the road to a radically transformed society. David Harvey entitles his book *Spaces of Hope*; Lefebvre talks of major change in the future coming only from seeds within the existing world, as indeed does Marx. A substantial literature in urban planning recounts examples of 'liberated' spaces, amounting almost to a 'best practices' approaches to social change. But again, the question how far radical change can be built on such examples remains open. But it is an important question: right now, alternative life-style utopias and mini-utopian communities are among the few efforts to deal with the need for transformative change that we have. Other movements: anti-colonial, anti-military, labour movements and workers' movements, social movements around urban issues, movements under the banner of Right to the City and/or related to the World Social Forum, are all important, probably more important than these utopias; but

1. The literature on Paris is, to my knowledge, not very illuminating about life-style issues among protestors. Certainly the Situationists, in theory, called for revolutionary changes in ways of living, seeing, doing, but their life-style, as far as I know, remained relatively conventional, as did those of many of the theorists of the Great Refusal, with the exception of a few outliers like Timothy Leary.

at this point they rarely go over to radical platforms, and the infusion of a little utopianism in their work might be an advantage.

Another issue left open is the nature of the changes in this post-1968 period. If there is any criticism to be made of the book, it is that it does not link the flowering of urban utopias in and after the '60s to the change in the existing realities that that period witnessed and highlighted. Criticisms, hopes, aspirations, ideals, change when existing conditions change. What Miles describes in the bulk of the book, the later twentieth-century ideas and experiments, are indeed utopias in an old tradition, but they are significantly different from their forbears. They are responses to changes in society that in other accounts are discussed under the headings of Fordism and Post-Fordism, Keynesianism and the welfare state, fascism, 'really existing socialism' and totalitarianism, colonialism and post-colonialism, today perhaps globalism and empire. It is no accident that the deep concerns he eloquently plumbs, particularly in his last chapter, surfaced when they did, or were received as they were. One might speculate that 1968 marked a fundamental shift in critical concerns from the bread-and-butter issues of earlier industrialization to the cultural concerns of a one-dimensional society, although the two sets of issues remained linked and their relative importance varied widely from place to place. The issue needs further exploration.

There are other minor points with which one might take issue. Miles uses a very broad (and productive) concept of utopia but refuses to define the term (the 'alternative settlements' of the book's subtitle is clearly inadequate), arguing it should result from process, not prescription. That is true for analysing *a* utopia, not for defining the term. Are not, for instance, the visions of heaven or the after-life in many religions, essentially utopias, playing the same social role that some he describes play? Is the 'concept of a Utopia ... integral to a Western modernity' (p228) or is it a historical reaction to the ills of many societies? Miles, much in passing, uses the phrase 'utopian tactics', a pregnant phrase indeed; it would warrant a great deal of useful examination, to see how utopias have in fact been used, or misused (Karl Popper, for instance, deserves continuing clear refutation) in actual political and social confrontations.

But to clarify; all this is a tall order, and much too much to ask of one book. If this book succeeds in providing grist and provoking such a further examination, it will have made a major contribution to current thinking and perhaps even acting on urban problems. As it is, it could well stand as the opening round in a fundamental re-analysis of just what those 'urban problems' are and what possibilities exist for dealing with them.

SPACE, POLITICS, AND HOW EXPERIMENTAL CAN ONE BE?

Noortje Marres

Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 2008; pp325; £23.99 paperback.

Doreen Massey, *World City*, Polity Press, London, 2007; pp272, £14.99 paperback.

Space is the principal site of politics today. Recent books by two well-established post-structuralist British geographers, Nigel Thrift and Doreen Massey, elaborate this overly general and rather abstract claim, and mostly successfully. The two books under review are really about different topics: one is about London as a global city, and the other presents a new experimental mode of theorizing space in the social sciences. But they develop similar theoretical ideas about 'the politics of the spatial', drawing on previous work, and both authors seek to put these ideas to use to address predicaments raised by current states of affairs: globalization, in Massey's case, and hi-tech capitalism in Thrift's. In order to get an adequate grip on these phenomena, they propose that we must recognize that power is today increasingly exerted in and through spatial arrangements, in and through the socio-material formations that sustain social life. What is especially distinctive about their perspectives on spatial politics, in the current context, is the way in which they stretch out the concept of politics to refer to configurations that most other people call by different names; like the 'social', 'technical', or the 'economic'. Thus, the catchphrase 'the politics of space' has recently been embraced in other fields, such as international relations, where the multiplication of the sites of politics is presented as a central challenge to democracy today. But this kind of perspective tends to limit itself to institutional and organisational, that is, rather straightforwardly 'political', locations of politics. Thrift and Massey refuse this limitation, and continue to commit to the post-60s, post-structuralist, 'radical' message that everyday life constitutes a site of politics: they regard it as a central location for the exertion of power, and accordingly, where power may be most effectively challenged. I am convinced that this enables Thrift and Massey to formulate relevant diagnoses and articulate normative challenges that otherwise might well have remained out of view. At the same time, however, their books can also be seen to highlight certain limitations of such a 'broad' understanding of politics, in particular the risk of turning politics into something 'overly theoretical'.

Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory* is a collection of articles that, with the exception of the first and the last chapters, have all been previously published

in journals. This might make one suspect that the book lacks internal coherence, and this concern is not altogether dispelled by the introduction, which provides a rather long list of topics that the book is supposed to be about. It is said to be about 'the politics of everyday life', to provide 'a topography of human experience', and 'a geography of what happens', as well as discussing the shift in the social sciences 'from a representational to an experimentalist approach'. Part of the pleasure of reading Thrift's book, however, turns out to be the discovery of how these different notions entail one another, and can be understood as variations on a theme. Indeed, the book turns out to have a very clear 'order', as the chapters have the structure of a series of rephrasings of very similar claims, having to do with the ways in which human experience is structured by the technological spaces people inhabit. In each chapter Thrift elaborates this idea a bit further, providing several vocabularies for it and demonstrating its relevance for different fields of study. The book starts off with an overview of strategies of 'consumer engagement' recently developed in hi-tech industries: from clever product designs that captivate the senses, like a car door that clicks shut in a seductive way, to the creation of interactive platforms to enable the involvement of users in product design. Coining phrases like 'full-palette capitalism' and 'IT-enabled thinking spaces', Thrift elaborates the idea that consumer products (and especially consumer environments like malls, museums, and the Internet) are increasingly designed to keep consumers engaged on the sensory level, and thus to 'design' experiences. Subsequent chapters further elaborate this central claim. They focus on different technological environments: 'driving in the city', audio-visual recordings of nature, the layered metric spaces that now facilitate real-time tracking and tracing of things and people, and the repair and maintenance services that keep cities running. The topics are diverse, but in each case Thrift seeks to demonstrate how technical arrangements inform, stimulate, and organise human embodied sensibilities. As he repeatedly suggests, this implies nothing less than that social geography here takes on a task that transcendental philosophers classically assign to themselves, namely to determine the conditions of possibility of human experience. As Thrift puts it, once we acknowledge that 'sensory experience is not a stable category,' but is historically and spatially variable, the task falls to the social sciences to describe how our sensibilities are structured in specific techno-spatial arrangements.

In some ways, this approach is a well-established one, developed in a variety of recent studies of technology inspired by phenomenology and Foucault. Regarding the latter, I was surprised by the relative sparsity of references to Foucault in Thrift's book. After all, Foucault was the one who most famously historicized the Kantian question of the conditions of possibility of experience. (Thrift also seems to follow Foucault in maintaining the centrality of the question of human experience, and of what structures it, in spite of the partial dissolution of the transcendental framework that had anchored this question in its central place.) But Thrift refers much

more intensively to other traditions, such as the event-thinking of Deleuze and Whitehead and the non-humanist approach of actor-network theorists like Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. The work of the latter authors can be distinguished precisely by its non-Kantian commitments, i.e. by their shift in attention to *events*, and away from the question of ‘the conditions of possibility of experience’, which Thrift’s accounts of the techno-spatial ‘background’ of human sensibility precisely seems to address. However, it would be a mistake to view his references to these non-humanist traditions as some kind of clever ‘cover up’ by a Kantian in drag. Thrift’s reworking of the category of experience in this book incorporates important elements from non-humanist approaches. Thus, he comes to redefine experience in terms of the ‘intelligence’ that emerges in embodied movements in space, a point to which I return below. However, this book does confirm something that Thrift has been criticized for in the past, namely that his work mixes together philosophical traditions that, to the more argumentatively inclined, seem clearly in tension with one another. He does not dwell on, nor seems much disturbed by, the potential internal contradictions in his approach.

Thrift does give convincing reasons, though, for why the ‘Kantian’ question of the conditions for human experience should be taken seriously today. As he makes clear from the first chapter onwards, he is interested in the spatio-technological configuration of experience because he is concerned about a dangerous development affecting contemporary societies. This has to do with the production of what Thrift calls ‘affective spaces,’ in which people are increasingly manipulated ‘on the level of their bodily responses.’ A variety of newish technologies enable the formation of such spaces, from electronic screens in the urban environment to hi-modern architecture and GPS-based mobile applications. Thrift uses a number of different terms to describe them, such as ‘the realm of forethought’, ‘the technological unconsciousness’, ‘second nature’, and ‘the spatiality of feeling’. But whatever they should be called, their most salient feature is that these arrangements capture people’s interest on the pre-conscious, pre-cognitive, and indeed pre-individual level. Thrift’s problem with them is that they constitute a central but largely ‘hidden’ site for the exertion of power. This argumentative move is in some ways a familiar one: Michel Foucault (again) has shown that when the question of the conditions of possibility of human experience is treated as an empirical one, it turns out to be political. That is, as human sensibilities appear to be structured by the technological spaces that people inhabit, the control that is exerted over people through the organisation of these spaces becomes an object of concern. However, in his discussion of ‘the spatial engineering of feeling’, Thrift provides his own conceptualization of the type of politics performed in the particular technological formations that he is interested in. There are three aspects to his approach. Firstly, Thrift argues that the distinctive affordances of affective techniques for the manipulation of people have to do with the level on which they operate, that of embodied sensibility. Secondly, the fact that manipulation today operates on this level has far-

reaching consequences for the question of political agency. By working on people's sensibilities, affective techniques affect people's ability to become involved, and thereby, on their disposition to act on certain matters and not others. Thirdly, and finally, Thrift suggests that it is not just technological industries and media that make use of these techniques, but increasingly it is mainstream politics too.

It is an important analysis, the one for which Thrift is probably most well-known, and rightly so, I think, because it opens up a whole field of critical study, and also because it challenges comfortable leftists' positions in an effective way. Perhaps most crucially, it problematizes the status of 'engagement' as an un-critiqueable normative ideal, and the leftist habit of projecting it into the future as one of the principal objectives that progressive thought/action will help to realize. Thrift makes clear that the engagement of viewers, users and passers by, and the continuously recurring challenge of 'keeping them involved', are distinguishing features of the contemporary technological economy. He thereby makes a forceful case for a less prescriptive and more realistic view of the pros and cons of 'involvement'. However, I find Thrift's proposal that the spatial engineering of affect represent a 'politics of everyday life' less convincing. He certainly makes an important point when he argues that people's capacities for involvement come about in the various technology-facilitated spaces that they pass through as part of everyday life. But it seems problematic to equate the techno-spatial arrangements that he privileges in this book with the 'everyday'. Thrift's 'affective techniques' tend to be rather hi-tech: the latest car designs, ergonomically designed office-chairs, locative media-technologies, and so on. It also means that his affective technologies tend to be rather spectacular ones: in many cases they are just emerging from the lab. Thrift often seems to be writing about everyday life as it is imagined in R&D labs, in design studios, and by technology watchers, rather than as it is lived by 'the rest of us'. He does acknowledge this limitation, when he says that he is aware that his approach runs the risk of 'techno-hyperbole'. But the claim he makes in his defence, that this is inevitable when trying to write 'the history of the present', seems falsified by many other studies of everyday technology that *do* make an effort to avert this risk.

Secondly, regarding Thrift's notion of the *politics* of everyday life, there has been much debate about it among geographers, especially about the extent to which he advocates a break with the wider socio-economic concerns of critical theory. Another relevant question, I think, is whether Thrift's definition of politics as an operation upon affect doesn't describe a form of power, rather than politics. The political effects of the socio-technical organisation of spaces, as Thrift characterizes them, have something immutable and/or uncontrollable about them, and they can seem to lack the contingency, and relative open-endedness, of encounters between conflicting tendencies, which I associate with politics. Thrift does provide a positive definition of 'the politics of affect'. His commitments in this regard are principally aesthetic: he foregrounds artistic attempts to create affective spaces that enable the

development of human sensibilities, as in the work of artists like Bill Viola, and in modern dance. He considers these practices to be 'political', to the extent that they offer a creative alternative to mainstream affective spaces. But, somewhat tricky in this regard is that Thrift has spent many pages in this book demonstrating, quite convincingly, that big business is very resourceful in terms of its ability to instrumentalize the aesthetic register. So where does that leave modern dance and the art of Bill Viola? Thrift makes it clear that he does not want to fall back on the dogmatic habit of critiquing business qua business, turning it into an 'evil other'. But this still leaves a lot of questions unanswered regarding the ability of art to fulfil a political role in a market society. One further question, in this regard, is whether a theory that proposes to make the shift from 'representation' to 'experiment', as Thrift's does, should not be more experimental in its conception of politics. Shouldn't it treat the question of whether a given socio-technical arrangement enables involvement, and confers capacities to act, as an empirical one, as something to be tested? In this regard, Thrift's approach to the politics of affect can seem rather heavy on theory, i.e. as so concerned with conceptualizing these effects that it glosses over the question of which experimental methods would enable us to detect them. Though, of course, this point of critique itself owes much to the conceptual work that Thrift performs in this book, to the idea that socio-technical space is where the questions of critical thought are to be engaged today.

Doreen Massey's *World City* is clear in its commitment not to be a theoretical book, but its topic is similar to that of Thrift's. Having recently published *For Space*, which develops a conception of space in conversation with philosophers like Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, in the new book Massey brings this developed perspective to bear on more concrete political predicaments, as they arise in a specific location, the global city of London. Her book is also much more straightforwardly 'political' than Thrift's, following a strategy of critique that is common on the left: it exposes its topic, London, as a site where 'neo-liberal power' currently holds sway, and then goes on to describe the political opportunities that are opened up by this insight, i.e. pointing to the appropriate sites and modes for contesting this power. However, while this argumentative schema is a rather standard one, Massey's spatial perspective on politics gives it a particular twist, and, indeed, a freshness, in part I think because it means that she foregrounds certain specific configurations that are usually covered over in conventional categories like 'the rich'. Massey's commitment to 'the spatial' means first of all that she describes the power relations that are characteristic of neo-liberalism as socio-geographic in nature. She provides a geographic version of the narrative of the rise of London as a World City, over the course of the 1990s. She tells the story of the rise to power of the City in its relation to Westminster and to the 'Rest of the UK', a story that, Massey proposes, can also be read as one about the consolidation of the position of South-East England. Drawing on statistical sources, Massey shows that this development implies growing socio-economic inequality both

between different London boroughs, between London and other UK regions, and in relation to the 'rest of world'. It is the most matter of fact and least controversial part of her argument, though it does leave somewhat unclear whether her claim is that power relations are geographically produced, or whether they find their expression in geography. However, Massey fairly quickly moves on to discuss a second form of 'spatial politics', which in her view is crucial to understanding what is political about the growing inequalities she describes. Thus, she argues that certain 'spatial imaginaries' play a central role in sustaining the current neo-liberal hegemony, as they help to cover up its political nature. In her view, predominant discourses make the neo-liberal status quo seem a lot more 'inevitable' than in truth it is, and the efficacy of these discourses depends crucially on certain spatial assumptions.

At this point one may already wonder why one should want to go along with this tendency to privilege 'the spatial dimension' of whatever aspect of political economies is being considered: real existing inequality, political ideologies, etc. Nonetheless, Massey's analysis of the rhetorical politics of the spatial does provide a clear sense of the political construct that is 'globalisation'. Analysing reports by influential think-thanks and other authoritative sources, Massey distils three exemplary tropes: the notion of London as the 'Golden Goose'; of globalisation as an 'external force'; and that of 'the autonomy of the regions'. The first trope involves the argument that the City of London produces economic growth from which the rest of the country benefits, and for that reason should be 'left alone'. Quoting reports that reveal the de facto dependency of the City on demand from Rest of the UK, Massey problematizes the idea that the benefits flow in one direction only between the City and the regions. On the second point, she argues that London is one of those places where the notion that globalisation arrives 'from the outside' clearly doesn't hold, as so much of the activities that contribute to the transnationalization of the economy are going on here. Finally, Massey questions a framing central to governmental attempts to address inter-regional inequality, namely the definition of the regions as autonomous entities that compete for success in a marketized environment. It is not difficult to point out some contradictions among these different arguments (some of which assume the dependency, and others the autonomy of geographical entities). But the critical point for Massey is that in each of these cases spatial metaphors are deployed that erase the dimension of power and politics from dominant narratives. Here Massey is partly referring to the multi-faceted power relations she previously described between the City, Westminster, the South-East, Rest of London, Rest of UK, Rest of World, and so on. But another element also enters the story, as she makes frequent references to the cosy relations that exist between people in the City and in Westminster, and boardroom handshakes. It suggests that politics for Massey also very much refers to the doing and dealing that goes on among people of influence. It means that different meanings of the word 'politics' proliferate in this book, not all of them 'spatial.' Thus, there is also an element of 'social' politics in the book: one in which the intimacy among

actors provides a principal source of leverage and political agency more broadly. This aspect of the story, indeed, can seem all the more significant, when taking into account a personal narrative that Massey has woven through the book, about her long-standing friendship with the previous Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.

This raises all sorts of questions, of course, among others about the extent to which Massey's critical writing speaks for, or is tied to, the political projects pursued by Mayor Livingstone. The book does at times read as an attempt to arrive at a different kind of 'solidarity', between the independent radical left and the radical left that accepted office. At times, Massey does seem rather caught up in the question of her relation to those in power, as when she tries to explain why Livingstone did not impose stricter regulations on the City, by saying that he was prevented from doing so by the national Labour party. An explanation like that seems oddly one-dimensional in the context of this book about spatial politics. However, Massey does not seem too bothered in this book with having different conceptions of politics exist alongside one another, and indeed the dialectical movement in her general argument means she provides different definitions of spatial politics for different stages of analysis. Thus, in the section on spatial imaginaries, politics becomes a matter of how things are portrayed, and the book acquires an idealistic flavour, as when Massey writes: 'we make geography, through the implicit imaginations that we deploy' (pp23-24). At some points, however, her account of 'the power of ideas' does collapse into a more straightforward accusation against those who deploy rhetorical devices to maintain the status quo. On several occasions, Massey suggests that politics in the sense of powerplay is responsible for why things don't change. She suggests that the dominance of the City within London, and the power of London as a financial centre in relation to Rest of UK and Rest of World, is at least in part the result of a tacit political consensus among the Labour party and the City - and not of politico-economic constraints like 'the external force of globalization', which in Massey's view are rhetorical ploys. Especially problematic about this, I find, is that it also means that Massey leaves largely undiscussed the question of how a progressive politics can address the economic constraints of globalisation, and perhaps just as importantly, mobilize them for its own purposes.

This brings me to a last notion of spatial politics that Massey develops in the final, synthesizing part of the book. Central here is her alternative conception of space, developed in earlier work, according to which space is relational, and in flux, with encounters between different trajectories being a central event. As Massey puts it, this means viewing space as political, because places now turn out to be constituted by the connections that run both inwards and outwards, generating unequal distributions of opportunity and thus responsibility, i.e. as nodes in 'a wider power geometry'. This tying together of the notions of space and politics is very much a conceptual endeavour, but Massey makes convincingly clear that it enables an appreciation of

particular sites and projects as significant examples of 'the politics of alternative globalization'. Thus, she discusses London-based projects to develop alternative commodity chains, as an example of a relational politics of responsibility and redistribution. Massey thereby shows one of the principal benefits for progressive politics of conceptually connecting space and politics: it enables an appreciation of projects, which are often reductively framed as cases of ethical entrepreneurship, as much more comprehensive in nature, as attempts to alter structures of responsibility, and to contest dominant politico-spatial regimes. At the same time, however, it did strike me that there is relatively little normative tension in Massey's description of this and other projects. That is, Massey quotes these examples approvingly, and so one does not really get a sense of the riskiness of attempts to perform a different kind of political economy, for instance of the danger of projects becoming instrumentalized by 'problematic' interests. Perhaps we find here something similar to Thrift's book: a relatively strong emphasis on the 'metaphysics' of space, a commitment to single out promising sites of progressive politics, but relatively little attention to politics as an empirical question, of which it has to be experimentally determined how 'good' or 'bad' it eventually plays out. Or is that kind of experimentalism the wrong thing to expect from books that aim to demonstrate the viability of sites of politics that aren't commonly recognized as such?

BOOKNOTES

Stephen Johnstone (ed), *The Everyday*, London and Cambridge (Mass.), Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2008; pp240, £14.95 paperback.

In 1981 artist Sophie Calle takes a job as a chambermaid in Venice. Everyday for three weeks she does what most of us would do – snoop through the guests' belongings. Their individual tastes and actions are revealed through the banal objects documented by Calle. Elsewhere, everyday for a month Annette Messenger predicts what the next 24 hours will bring by writing her name, folding the paper and then interpreting the resulting ink smudges. At different times, in different places Hans-Peter Feldman takes a photo of his car stereo when it plays a song he likes, Martha Rosler holds a garage sale and Yoko Ono steps in all the puddles in the city.

These are just some of the ways in which artists' recent engagements with the everyday are traced throughout this collection of texts. It is part of the Documents of Contemporary Art series produced by the Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, each volume of which acts as a source book, bringing together writing around a significant theme or tendency in contemporary art. In his introduction Stephen Johnstone notes that contemporary art is saturated with references to the everyday, citing the plethora of exhibitions, biennials and site-specific projects which have taken the everyday as their theme. However there are very few texts which provide critical analysis of contemporary art's specific engagement with the quotidian. While a collection of texts cannot do this work itself, it does however successfully provide the reader with a material framework from which to locate a contextual history of this engagement, drawing on enduring texts from theorist such as Lefebvre together with more contemporary writing from art historians, critics and artists themselves. A particular strength of this volume is its insistence on the independence of art as a practice to engage newly and differently with the everyday, a practise which is in dialogue with existing theory rather than in any way an illustration of it; 'it would be a mistake' Johnstone notes, 'simply to position art as the experimental research arm of everyday life studies' (p17).

The experience of reading a collection of texts such as this is by its very nature fragmentary, and while this can in some cases be frustrating, the short length of many of the entries creates an energising rhythm, as one moves from one project or set of ideas to the next. The inclusion of text pieces by artists such as Calle, Messenger, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, and Ian Breakwell, which exist as artworks in themselves is laudable and provides an insight into some of the most fascinating processes developed by artists for attending to the everyday. My one criticism in this respect is that this volume unfortunately belongs to the growing range of books about art with no images, and while

it is beautifully designed the addition of illustrations of some artists' projects would add an invaluable vividness to the projects they describe.

Rosemary Shirley

Jean-Francois Augoyard, *Step by Step: Everyday Walks in a French Urban Housing Project*, translated by David Ames Curtis, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2007; 281pp, £14, paperback

Jean-Francois Augoyard's findings in *Step by Step* (which was originally published in France in 1979) are based on interviews with residents of the Arlequin, a high-density neighbourhood constructed in Grenoble, France, between 1969 and 1972. He asked his respondents to recount their daily strolls in the neighbourhood, and his analysis of their narratives demonstrates that seemingly insignificant practices of everyday life can shake up the spatial permanences of a planned environment and can creatively undermine an urban space that seems to reject such innovation. As a result of their ambulation – what he terms a *walking-writing* – the inhabitants are able to configure and reconfigure their environment, and can never be entirely co-opted by the commercial economy. His study of everyday walks indicates that there is greater dynamic tension in the humblest acts of walking and inhabiting than is allowed for in the prescriptions of urban planning.

Augoyard writes with the detachment of the social scientist, and yet the subject matter is clearly of considerable personal interest to him: he lived in the Arlequin neighbourhood for a number of years, and thus his analysis is imbued with nuanced participant observation. What is remarkable about this first English edition of the book, translated by David Ames Curtis, is how thematically pertinent it remains in the context of contemporary urban planning, where as Augoyard observes, 'the concrete is steeped in ideology as well as in economics' (p166), and where houses are often designed as items of trade and commerce, as places in which to 'house people', rather than as places to actually inhabit. Augoyard's account is given further contemporary resonance by his attention to the bodily aspects of what he terms the 'lived time' of inhabitation. This keeps him far from structuralist determinism; and although he deploys elements of the post-structuralist theories that were ascendant in the 1970s, he never allows himself to get bogged down in their excesses. He applies linguistic, semiotic, musicological and psychoanalytic analogies effectively and reflexively, whilst drawing attention to their limitations in relation to his case studies; and he avoids reducing the inhabitants' movements to mere topography. The result is a highly engaging account of 'the tenacious persistence of a power of inhabitant expression' (p168).

In describing the ambulatory habits of the residents of Arlequin, Augoyard's writing style is at times painfully abstruse, and his esoteric

terminology sometimes sits uneasily alongside the colloquial responses of his interviewees. Nevertheless, he conjures some brilliant moments: for example, when describing how the neighbourhood's daytime multiplicity lurches towards a shared, disturbing evocation of night-time, grounded in the imaginary: 'One has a presentiment that each bug, each cockroach, and each rat that frolics around at night still lies in ambush during the day' (p143). Augoyard's ambitions are highly modest, and the creative and unforeseeable force of inhabiting to which he draws our attention is not postulated as part of a grand political project. However, as he concludes, 'the paths of expression do indeed seem to lead somewhere' (p178).

Simon Stewart