Introduction

Castells, many years after his critique of Lefebvre in *The Urban Question* (1977) and subsequent reassessments, refers to Lefebvre as ‘almost like an artist’ (Castells 1997: 146), a characteristic that Castells deems ‘invaluable’. However, at the same time, Castells takes issue with his ‘intellectual style’ and apparent distance from empirical research (see Leary-Owhin in Part 1). Accordingly, if one reads between the lines, Castells is in essence criticising Lefebvre for being too artistic in his approach. I am going to start with this premise of Lefebvre as ‘almost like an artist’ as a crucial point of departure for considering what Lefebvre offers to our contemporary understanding of the spatial aesthetics of planetary urbanisation. The deep aesthetic sensibility of his urban social theory recognises the dynamic interplay between research, imagination, and representation.

There is considerable weight behind Madden’s deceptively plain assessment, ‘these are interesting times for urban studies’ (Madden 2015: 297). Urban studies in the contemporary moment is under heightened scrutiny and redefinition, and the vigorous debate around planetary urbanisation is an emblematic case. Certainly, in this regard, ‘interesting’ refers to two related circumstances. The first, as Madden explains: ‘urbanization and urbanism are, in some sense, ruling the day’; that is, not only is urbanisation ever-progressing, but all things urban have captured the popular and academic imagination. Yet, we are reminded that this imagination has a particular shape. Despite the hard work of many committed and active urbanists, critical urbanism is not ruling the day. The second issue, one that shadows the first, is the urgency behind discussions of the adequacy of current urban theories and methods to engage with this voracious urbanisation. This certainly makes for turbulent and interesting times for urban scholars. In this chapter, I am responding to debates on expansive urbanisation by returning to Lefebvre’s aesthetic legacy, using his work to reassert how the aesthetics of spatial justice are an important feature of the problematic of planetary urbanisation. The first part of this chapter will review key aspects of Lefebvre’s aesthetic orientations. The second part will examine the deployment of visual metaphors in the discourse of planetary urbanisation, and how these unfold into issues of representation and imagination. The third section, through an analysis of a specific work of art, elaborates upon what art can contribute to our understanding of a critical spatial aesthetic under expansive urbanisation.
Lefebvre, art, and artists

This section briefly tours through Lefebvre’s relationship to art and artists, and his subsequent influence on recent scholarship on urban art and culture. Artistic culture cannot be divorced from critical urban theory. As Léger (2006) demonstrates, Lefebvre’s theorising of ‘moments’ makes a central contribution to the repositioning of artistic production and everyday life in Marxist theory. Similarly, as Shields makes clear, Lefebvre’s ‘experience with artistic avant-gardes seeking revolution through art, not politics, influenced him for the rest of his life’ (Shields 1999: 1). Here, I am sketching out some of the key interests of the artistic Lefebvre and his important contributions to critical urban theory, mainly through his insights into spatial aesthetics and critical visuality. I am not presenting an exhaustive overview, but drawing attention to a few features of this work and its ensuing reception in English language academic discourse.

Lefebvre was frequently embedded in evolving artistic worlds. Shields’ book *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics* examines the relationship between his early work and intellectual development by ‘taking seriously his engagement with ideas and proposals generated by the artistic avant-gardes of the 1920s’ (1999: 29). Lefebvre had a marked attraction to Dada, one compelled by Dada’s refusal to make sense, attention to productive disintegration, and embrace of moral disorder (53–8). These avant-garde values continued to interest Lefebvre, especially during his alliance with the Situationist International. As Merrifield asserts, ‘The Situationists, and notably Guy Debord, exerted a strange grip on Lefebvre’ (2006: 31). Lefebvre’s energetic collaboration and eventual (inevitable) falling out with Debord, his dialogues with Constant Nieuwenhuys and ongoing interest in the automated utopia New Babylon – these are some of the many ways he connected aesthetic experimentation to urban possibility.

Generally, Lefebvrian-inspired analysis of urban artistic practices has assumed many shapes and guises, where his work is drawn on to account for everything from street art to new media projects. Lefebvre has been central for positioning art as an agent of change within urban spatial justice claims. There is an arts-based version of the well-known spatial justice work indebted to Lefebvre (e.g. Harvey and Soja), and with a consistent tenor to these art-focused discussions; Lefebvre is an essential building block for understanding the place of aesthetics within transformative action, even when the key works cited vary, from the *Critique of Everyday Life* to *Rhythmanalysis* to *The Production of Space* to lesser-known untranslated essays. For example, Papastergiadis draws on Lefebvre as a resource to explain how art draws on everyday life, where ‘everyday life can illuminate the complex ways in which subjects exercise their potential to be emancipatory and critical’ (2010: 24), and Pinder presents him as a model for a distinctly spatial critical pedagogy within the evolving tactics of hybrid urban art-activist intervention practices (Pinder 2008). One of the most influential English language art historical contributions to understanding these alignments, Deutsche’s (1996) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, turns to Lefebvre to account for the multifaceted place of art and architecture’s role within spatial dynamics. Importantly, this book provides numerous case studies around the relationship between art and spatial conflict, and begins a dialogue around the ways that artistic practices have appropriated the dominant space of capital. At the same time, Deutsche draws on Lefebvre to explain how public art, architecture, and design can impose aesthetic coherence and rationality onto spaces in ways aligned with the exercise of power, for example, in the case of the redevelopment of Battery Park City in New York City.

Lefebvre provides a framework adept at diagnosing existing conditions, and he is the theoretical hinge that informs the emancipatory possibilities of art. For example, Loftus’ (2012) case study of the multi-city non-profit City Mine(d) is instructive here. Loftus draws on Lefebvre as one of the foremost theorists of everyday life, using his call to ‘let everyday life become a
work of art’ (Lefebvre in Loftus 2012: 109) to examine City Mine(d)’s process-based aesthetic and participatory methods during an experimental community art project in London. He uses City Mine(d) to re-read Lefebvre in a manner that positions urban cultural praxis as a central Lefebvrian concept. However, Loftus develops this concept to redress one of the central limitations of Lefebvre’s thought – his inability to ‘see nature as an ally in the struggle for this better world’ (110). Thus, within contemporary art discourses, Lefebvre provides both theoretical and methodological guidance. For example, rhythmmanalysis is a key tool for recognising the aesthetic dimensions of urban life. As Highmore argues, rhythmmanalysis is a methodology for understanding urban cultural representations as ‘the multiple rhythms of modernity: the various speeds of circulation; the different spacings of movement; and the varied directions of flows’ (2005: 11, emphasis in original). Fraser (2015) argues for a new model of urban cultural studies that better coordinates the key interests of urban studies and cultural studies. Again, Lefebvre is the most prolific exemplar and glue for such a project. Fraser draws attention to the often-undervalued place of culture within urban studies’ social science orientations and makes clear that Lefebvre is an exception. As he explains, his ‘engagement with the urban problematic is sustained, multidimensional, both intellectual and radical, interdisciplinary, historical, far-reaching, cultural, eclectic’ (26). Further, Fraser argues for the essential role aesthetics plays in a Lefebvrian urban cultural studies methodology: ‘Lefebvre’s work suggests that the formulation of an urban cultural studies method requires an aesthetic theory as its base’ (69).

But it is not just that academics use Lefebvre to explain existing urban art practices, contemporary artists and collectives also use Lefebvre as a resource. For example, Cohabitation Strategies (CoHaStra) is a non-profit multi-city ‘socio-spatial research’ collective that mixes collaborative art, design, and social science research to develop site-specific urban projects. They specially cite the ‘right to the city’ as a foundation for their aesthetic development of collaborative spatial justice practices. According, they place as one of their key principles, speculating with radically new urban imaginaries: stronger local solidarities, communal politico-economic subjectivities, social networks at larger scales, and parallel urban economies (CoHaStra 2015). For example, their recent examination of affordable housing in New York for the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) project and exhibition Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities, 2014, started with interviews and a compilation of the spatial inequalities that animate the New York housing crisis. They used this material to propose an alternative affordable housing strategy, Cooperative Housing Trust, which they describe as a hybrid tenure model for New York City. Yet not to oversimplify this process, this exhibition has produced its own debate around the possibility of radical change offered by such practice-based curatorial initiatives. As Brenner (2015) queries in his review of the exhibition, ‘tactical urbanism may be narrated as a self-evident alternative to neoliberal urbanism; but we must ask the question: is this really the case, and if so, how, where, under what conditions, via what methods, with what consequences, and for whom?’.

The above discussion demonstrates how Lefebvre’s work informs contemporary discussions of critical spatial aesthetics, be it termed urban cultural praxis or rhythmmanalysis, and that this sensibility developed alongside his reflections on art, space, and the everyday. Certainly, The Production of Space is full of references to movements, artists, and architects (Bauhaus; Constructivists; surrealism, Klee, Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, Picasso), to name but a few. For example, we stumble upon references to paintings (Picasso’s Guernica and Les Demoiselles d’Avignon), ruminations on the development of perspective in the Italian Renaissance, and reflections on Greco–Roman architecture. And, of course, there is the notable place accorded to ‘some’ (Lefebvre 1991: 39) artists within the spatial triad. As he explains, ‘Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre… Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional,
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situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic’ (42). Lefebvre recognises that artists can access this ‘qualitative’ character and play a pivotal role in dramatising the production of spatial understanding, something missed by the ‘naivety’ of art historians (305). Yet Lefebvre’s comments on surrealism in *The Production of Space* are particularly relevant to my wider argument because of the way in which he describes the movement’s shortcomings. He speaks of the ‘scale of the failure’ (109) of surrealism, noting a number of key limitations. As he explains, ‘the intrinsic shortcomings of the poetry run deeper, however: it prefers the visual to the act of seeing, rarely adopts a “listening” posture, and curiously neglects the musical both in its mode of expression, and, even more, in its central “vision”’. Elsewhere, he accuses them of fleeing from reality, if not denigrating it altogether (110–11). While these are phrased as points of criticism, at the same time, we can read these comments as a proposition for an alternative version of critical artistic practices. This practice is reflective and embodied. It is responsive and can productively engage with ‘the act of seeing’. With this description in mind, the next section asks: can we apply this distinction between the visual and the act of seeing to current debates on planetary urbanisation?

**Planetary urbanisation and the search for a critical spatial aesthetic**

In this section, I am looking specifically to how aesthetics, but especially visuality, animates the discourse on planetary urbanism in order to consider some of the conceptual and representational challenges that planetary urbanisation poses – be it termed ‘complete urbanisation’ (Lefebvre 2003: 1), ‘generalized urbanization’ (17), or ‘implosion-explosion’ (15). I will place this entwining of questions of urbanisation, representation, and imagination that emerge in the recent literature alongside strategies in contemporary art that reconceptualise urbanisation and globalisation. Both contemporary art and critical urban theory share a commitment to the role representation plays in contemporary understanding.

The significance of developing new cartographies of planetary urbanisation is beyond dispute given the challenging task of representing the vastness of its processes. The section ‘Visualizations – ideologies and experiments’ in Brenner’s (2014) edited collection starts with the visual problematic: ‘How to develop appropriately differentiated spatial representations of historical and contemporary urbanization processes? What taxonomies are most effective for mapping a world of generalized urbanization, massive spatial development and continued territorial differentiation?’ (396). Yet the response that I am developing here, in keeping with Lefebvrian thought, is not entirely straightforward. First, I return to the issue of blindness and other metaphors of sight as they emerge within discussions of total urbanisation’s theoretical and methodological dilemmas. Second, I explore how this question of vision is twinned with a concern for our urban imagination. Third, I argue that understanding abstraction as an aesthetic genre can help us to better respond to the many violent and voracious abstractions of planetary urbanisation.

The visual culture of planetary urbanisation vividly demonstrates urban expansion and the blurring between city, region, and territory, from NASA photographs of satellite beehives, to global transit infrastructure maps, to transnational resource extraction circuits. At a glance, these images do not seem much different than the sort of illustration one expects from research on globalisation or international development. But it is important to stress their role: to render visible the diversity of urbanisation processes that remain so expansive as to be easily missed or misconceived. At issue is how to practise a critical visuality that enables us to consider ‘how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein’ (Foster 1988: ix). Or, as visual theorist W.J.T. Mitchell (2004) asks, how do we better reckon with the agency of images, their dynamic role in life and discourse that far exceeds their status as mere illustrations?

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Benjamin’s (2002) *Arcades Project* has long demonstrated that there is no one method for representing urban research that can adequately capture the complexity of urban constellations. While planetary urbanisation is a key contemporary example of this question of how to capture processes without constraining conceptualisation, concepts and techniques of representation have always occupied a place within definitional debates in urban studies. The literature on urban representations emphasises that understanding urban life must always negotiate the terrain of incompatibilities found at the intersection of the city and its representation. So, while we recognise that ‘the city is inseparable from its representations’ (Balshaw and Kennedy 2000: 3), at the same time, it is ‘neither identical with nor reducible to them’. For Kittler (1996), it is not that we need to regard the city a representation *per se*, it is that we need to recognise the city itself as a medium. Or, as Shields (1996) argues, ‘representations make the city available for analysis and replay’ (228), but a perilous feature of this process is that ‘representations are treacherous metaphors, summarising the complexity of the city in an elegant model’ (229, emphasis in original). By this argument, we cannot trust urban representations, but we are at the same time reliant upon them. In more recent terms, Merrifield (2013) maintains that we fumble around without adequate descriptors, challenged by this new, boundary-less urbanisation. By virtue of such, it appears that our need to envision becomes even stronger. As he explains, ‘to construe our field of vision as a container, is an exorable human need: the need to restrict reality so we can cope, so we can comprehend’ (4). It is worth remembering that the second chapter of *The Urban Revolution* (2003) is entitled ‘ Blind Field’. The relationship between urbanisation and vision resonates on many levels as a mutually constituting problem of representation and research.

For Lefebvre, the term blind field is not just a description of an insufficient research approach. A blind field is ‘not merely dark and uncertain, poorly explored, but blind in the sense that there is a blind spot in the retina, the center – and negation – of vision’ (2003: 29). The blind field is the inability to see the emergent realities of urbanisation. As he continues, ‘we focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that we shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization… and is therefore reductive of the emerging reality. We no longer see that reality’ (29, emphasis in original). It is a matter of not being able to ‘perceive or conceive multiple paths, complex spaces’ (29). There is a conceptual faulting in the interplay between presentation and representation at the core of the blind field that is inseparable from but cannot be totally reduced to questions of ideology:

Blindness, our not-seeing and not-knowing, implies an ideology. These blind fields embed themselves in re-presentations. Initially, we are faced with a presentation of the facts and groups of facts, a way of perceiving and grouping. This is followed by a re-presentation, an interpretation of the facts. Between these two moments and in each of them, there are misrepresentations, misunderstandings. The blinding (assumptions we accept dogmatically) and the blinded (misunderstood) are complementary aspects of our blindness.

*(Lefebvre 2003: 30)*

Thus, to avoid both ‘blinding’ and being ‘blinded’ hinges on the unique qualities of representation itself. Given Lefebvre’s description, it is not surprising why vision is so central to contemporary dialogues on expansive urbanisation, and to various ends.

Merrifield’s discussion of the emerging politics of planetary urbanisation starts with a very different image, one drawn from pioneering science fiction author and biochemist Isaac Asimov’s vision of the urban planet Trantor, a single-city-planet with 40-billion inhabitants. Lefebvre briefly references Asimov in ‘Right to the City’ (1996: 160), and for Merrifield, this is a telling spectre, a glance to the challenge of living with the immensity of urbanisation to
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come. Reminding us of Lefebvre’s work as an ominous foretelling of the contemporary condition of planetary urbanism, Merrifield indicates the challenge of addressing an all-encompassing urbanism present and future: ‘the complete urbanization of society, of something that’s both here and about to come here soon’ (2013: 2). Appropriately following Lefebvre, Merrifield remains thoroughly imagistic in his discussion. His book includes many visual analogies to account for the supersession of the urban over the city – cubist painting, abstract expressionism, wormholes – these are all employed to capture the challenge of organising around expansive urbanisation. Now, he explains, the urban is an:

ontological reality inside us, a way of seeing ourselves and our world. Thus another ‘way of seeing’, another way of perceiving urbanization in our mind’s eye, is to grasp it as a complex adaptive system, as a chaotic yet determined process. As a concept, even a ‘virtual concept’, the term ‘planetary’ already connotes a perspectival shift and conjures up more stirring imagery, maybe even more rhetorical imagery, something seemingly extraterrestrial and futuristic.

(Merrifield 2013: 3–4)

Expansive, rhetorical, futuristic, chaotic: what Merrifield presents is the speculative image within the imagination of expansive urbanisation. And his formulation recognises both the ambivalence and critical potential of such speculation. Which brings me to my second point: the inseparability of representation and imagination in current discussions.

The dilemmas accompanying the representation of urban research under planetary urbanisation is a recurring theme in many texts. For example, Brenner’s ‘Theses on urbanization’ proposes a ‘reconstituted vision of the “site”’ within urban studies (2013: 94). Or, in Brenner and Schmid’s (2014) article ‘The “Urban Age” in question’, they explicitly tackle presumptions underlying the Urban Age approach to understanding contemporary urbanisation, referring to the ‘extremely blurry vision of the global urban condition’ (740) and the ‘particularly obfuscatory vision’ (744) of its representational domains. Similarly, in ‘Towards a new epistemology of the urban?’ they identify the ‘often-contradictory framing visions, interpretations and cartographies of the urban’ (Brenner and Schmid 2015: 164). In contrast, they identify a number of strategies for change that will allow for greater reflexivity as well as unpack ‘the underlying conceptual assumptions and cartographic frameworks’ (749). Thus, one of the key solutions they propose to this dilemma is stronger collaboration between representation and imagination. Likewise, Madden (2012) refers to the work of the ‘global-urban imagination’ and draws on Lefebvre as a key foundation for realising ‘critical global-urban imaginaries’ (774). Or, as Brenner and Schmid maintain, we must ‘expand our urban imagination’ (2014: 752) and invite more ‘heterodox engagements’ (749) with our urban questions. Elsewhere it is explained, ‘a new cognitive map is urgently needed’ (Brenner 2013: 95). Importantly, there is more than a hint of optimism to these formulations that revolve around representation-imagination: ‘perhaps the current era of radically intensified urbanisation, even if it now appears as a succession of alienating forms, can repoliticise urbanism and allow for new channels connecting actually-existing cities and the urbanist imagination’ (Madden 2015: 301). And this folds into collaborative action grounded in processes of experimentation and imagination: ‘The urban is a collective project – it is produced through collective action, negotiation, imagination, experimentation and struggle’ (Brenner and Schmid 2015: 178).

Shadowing these fairly enthusiastic declarations of potential, however, are the implications of abstraction. Lefebvre acutely captures how capitalism’s appetites and capacity to erase recognitions of suffering and inequality are always a backdrop to concerns around urban research and representation. As a verb, to abstract can mean to extract, to take away from something; in this
case, abstraction captures the unbridled resource extractions under urban expansion. But we are also well reminded that an abstract is also a summary of research – something that will frame the detailed analysis enclosed in the research. By implication, this can divert attention away from the initial object, and risks diminishing or weakening its overall stability. In terms of aesthetics, as in painting, it refers to diverse types of non-representational work. Herein rests the underlying concern. Without a critical visuality at work, the representation of planetary urbanisation within critical urbanism verges on its own abstractions that risk detracting from the reach of inequalities these processes represent. Accordingly, representation is another way to describe the tension between the urban as theoretical category and empirical object; ‘the urban is thus a theoretical category, not an empirical object: its demarcation as a zone of thought, representation, imagination or action can only occur through a process of theoretical abstraction (Brenner and Schmid 2015: 163). That is, abstraction, when defined both in terms of the translation of research and as aesthetic sensibility can provide, but by no means guarantee, an inroad to a critical spatial aesthetic of the sort that representing expansive urbanisation requires.

To demonstrate, let me turn now to what I view as an example of heterodox engagement (Brenner and Schmid 2014) – a dynamic map that expresses urban displacement and spatial vulnerability as an aesthetic encounter inseparable from global urbanisation. I am suggesting that critical practices in contemporary art can contribute to other practices of experimentation around representation currently being developed in professional practice, and which are also trying to navigate the complexities of abstraction. For example, Harvard University’s Urban Theory Lab that ‘complicates the task of visualizing urbanization processes’ and ‘destabilizes inherited assumptions regarding both spatial units and parameters of the urban condition’ (Urban Theory Lab 2014: 474).

Contemporary art’s fabric of expansive urbanisation

In this section, I develop how the installation work *Woven Chronicle*, 2016 (see Figure 30.1), by Mumbai-based artist Reena Saini Kallat, reinforces a critical spatial aesthetics of planetary

![Figure 30.1](image_url)
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urbanisation. This work, which was part of the MoMA exhibition, *Insecurities: Tracing Displacement and Shelter*, 1 October 2016 to 22 January 2017, is an imposing, wall-sized global map of contemporary routes of migration and displacement (MoMA 2016). This map of the world is constructed out of heavy electric cable with multi-coloured strands that draw an outline of the world and demarcate circuits of movement, flight, and prohibition. The wires are ambiguous, both conduits and barriers. The wire-coil pathways intersect, stop, or become suddenly barbed. This map hurts. Piles of wire rest on the floor, unclear if they are part of an unravelling to come, or in wait to make further additions to the routes of displacement. Embedded speakers broadcast a collage of sounds, both sharp and ambient, of high voltage currents, sirens, cell phones, industry: the sounds of urbanisation. Weaving strands of electric wire like wool, the artist describes the work as a mapping of the world from the perspective of the refugee, migrant worker, or indentured labourer. The museum's description of the project stresses how 'the work highlights the inherent contradiction in celebrating an increasingly connected world while stringent immigration laws, closed borders and prejudice face individuals seeking to transgress geographic boundaries' (MoMA 2016). Or, as the artist writes of her process (in reference to an earlier rendition of the installation):

> This work was made with wires that essentially transmit energy and information from one place to another; their linear formations often evoking barbed wires, barriers or different kinds of fencing… By changing the instrument of this quasi-cartographic drawing from a pencil line to a wire, I’m interested in the notion of the map as dynamic, ever changing, streaming and transferring data with the global flows of energies and people.

*(Kallat 2011)*

This is not a cartography of precision (a meticulous charting of exact numbers or routes) but one of aesthetics. This aesthetic perspective captures a dynamic experience of urbanisation processes and their multiple spatial vulnerabilities, an experience that is only activated by the movements of the viewer’s inspection. This artwork cuts the potentially abstracting tendencies of techniques of visualising expansive urbanisation by its mixed media dramatisation of a world tied together by displacement. These migrations are yet another feature of planetary urbanisation and its demands, conflicts, and inequalities, but where the aesthetic is an opportunity to reflect on the barbs of these bonds.

The theme of the exhibition in which this work appears is refuge, and this particular project is a representation of the inability to realise the ‘right to the city’ under an expansive urbanisation that prioritises economic values alongside global hierarchies of power; this artwork is a spatial mapping of precariousness. Schmid (2014) uses Lefebvre to develop a theoretical framework derived from his layered conception of the production of space that stresses the following: networks, borders, and differences. These points, as his ensuing collaborative empirical research project on urbanisation in Switzerland demonstrates, provide a methodological guide to the representation of urban processes. I draw on Schmid’s framework here because this artistic representation highlights the inseparability of these three characteristics. However, at this point, I will explore the role of borders in more detail, following Lefebvre’s notion of ‘incision-suture’ (2003: 38) as always ambivalent (Schmid: 78). Borders control, regulate, and structure, but they are also spaces of transitions, of linkages and even potential, where ‘new orders, new concepts, new images and new urban configurations emerge from the urban transformation of borders’ (78). The migrations in this map are part of an urbanisation-industrialisation pairing that most often forecloses progressive change, but the work of art, in this regard, creates a space of representation that reminds of latent alternatives, alternatives that are embedded in the materiality and name of
the work itself, *Woven Chronicle*. These woven cables are an artistic interpretation of our ‘urban fabric’, another key concept within Lefebvre’s theory of complete urbanisation. He employs the term urban fabric to refer to the transformation of rural life through industrialisation and consumption: ‘The urban fabric grows, extends its borders, corrodes the residue of agrarian life. This expression, “urban fabric” does not narrowly define the built world of cities but all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country’ (2003: 4). If we associate weaving with a traditional mode of craft, the project presents weaving in the materials of industrialisation, which has clearly changed the nature of the artistic project, but also the art of world-making itself. Yet if we were to remove the barbs, the currents, the volatility of the woven material, we would have a vision/version of urban fabric as solidarity under urbanisation. That is, we would have the remaking of the world in a different image, and through a material, if you will, transformation.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has touched on key features of Lefebvre’s aesthetic orientations. I have described how both academics and artists have adopted Lefebvre’s critical spatial aesthetics, and demonstrated in more detail how aesthetic issues play out in distinct ways within recent debates around urban methods and theories under planetary urbanisation. It is easy to miss the centrality of aesthetic insights if we do not combine diverse interpretations of Lefebvre from both the humanities and social sciences. We need dialogue between not only density and periphery within the variegated landscapes of urbanisation but also different domains of aesthetics, aesthetics as not only embedded in everyday life but also as part of questions of urban research and its representation. This chapter underscores that a renewed commitment to a Lefebvrian-inspired triad of research, representation, and imagination can recast the expansiveness of urban processes in critical ways.

**References**

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Madden, D.J. (2015) ‘There is a politics of urban knowledge because urban knowledge is political’, City, 19:2–3 297–302.