

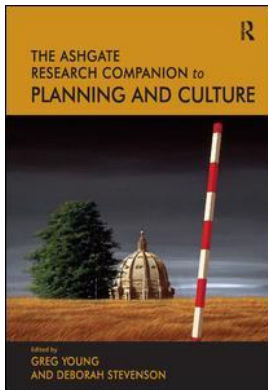
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 29 Nov 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning and Culture

Greg Young, Deborah Stevenson

Global Futures: Reflections on Culture, Diversity and Planning for the Twenty-first Century

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315613390.ch1>

Sophie Watson

Published online on: 30 Sep 2013

How to cite :- Sophie Watson. 30 Sep 2013, *Global Futures: Reflections on Culture, Diversity and Planning for the Twenty-first Century* from: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning and Culture* Routledge

Accessed on: 29 Nov 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315613390.ch1>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

PART 1

Global Contexts

This page has been left blank intentionally

Preface to Part 1

Deborah Stevenson

The chapters that comprise this Part of the book present penetrating insights into the global contexts within which city building and urban planning occur. Cities, their cultures, planning practices and economies increasingly are enmeshed in an array of global processes that include transnational flows and multifaceted circuits of capital, people, ideas and services. With increased globalization has come a fascination not only with its contours and contradictions, but also with the situation of different cities within and outside influential networks. It was in this context, for instance, that the notions of the 'global' and 'world' city gained currency. Globalization and associated categorizations of cities are founded on the existence of a core and a marginalized periphery with cities increasingly being defined in terms of their locations *vis-à-vis* the global. A consequence of the fixation on global networks, status, contexts and processes is countervailing interest in the 'other' of the global – the local. And so it is with the chapters here, each of which in some way seeks to understand local conditions and processes not only in the context of, but frequently in opposition to, the global.

The task of interrogating the global contexts which shape and are shaped by the local, and very directly mould the lives of urban dwellers, begins with Sophie Watson's chapter examining the challenges planning faces as a result of increased urban diversity that is an outcome, in part, of global migration and mobility. Watson is keen to probe the role that planners can play in shaping spaces, and public spaces in particular, which will not only accommodate this diversity but do so in ways that support a multiplicity of cultures. This is a significant undertaking but Watson is sanguine, suggesting that urban complexity and uncertainty may actually provide the conditions for the development of a 'radical and creative imaginary' required for a rethinking of planning practice. The starting point is to reconceptualize many of the entrenched processes and cultures of planning and to see planning not solely as a technical exercise but as a set of engaged knowledges and practices. It also means scrutinizing the often limited assumptions that planners make about people, their cultures and the ways in which they relate to and use the city.

Stephen Ward shares some of Watson's concerns regarding the culture of contemporary planning and its ability to contribute to the development of socially progressive landscapes in the context of global influences. But where Watson sees cause for optimism Ward is more circumspect, leaving open the question of whether a 'cultural renewal' of planning is possible. He suggests that in order to understand both the limits and potential of contemporary urban planning, it is necessary first to examine its cultural and historical dimensions and, to this end, he traces the development of

planning from its origins as a highly localized, progressive activity to one that has become largely a mediator of competing interests. Ward suggests that although urban planning is a 'cultural form in its own right, with distinct national, regional and local characteristics' it is shaped by values and protocols that are international and universalizing and it is these that have undermined its engagement with the political, social and cultural dimensions of the local and diminished its reformist capacity as a result.

A growing awareness of the cultural dimensions, consequences and intentions of urban planning has led many to suggest that greater links between urban and cultural policy and planning are necessary. Indeed, some contend that urban planning is already an aspect of cultural planning because of the all-embracing way in which culture has come to be defined. Under such conditions, cultural policy increasingly focuses more on the economic potential of the culture and its strategic use including in the revitalization of cities and less on aesthetics, meaning and memory. It is these trends and their consequences that are of concern to Toby Miller whose chapter maps the historical, conceptual and ideological contexts of cultural policy studies and the emergence of the creative industries agenda that has come to dominate both it and cultural planning. Miller argues that in privileging industrial and economic priorities rather than the cultural, cultural policy has lost its progressive agenda and this, in turn, has significant consequences for the possibility of developing reformist urban policies and creating socially equitable and environmentally sustainable urban landscapes. He suggests that the shipping of toxic e-wastes from the global North to the global South represents a troubling outcome of the cultural economy.

The final chapter in this Part is by Peter Newman and Andy Thornley who take as their starting point the proposition that globalization is leading to the homogenization of cities and urban cultures. They acknowledge, for instance, that city form and ideas about architecture and planning are significantly shaped by globalized ideas and trends and in response to economic globalization. Evidence of this include striking similarities between city skylines and architectural forms as well as the replication of planning approaches, blueprints and fashions, with skyscrapers, mega-malls and themed waterfront developments being obvious examples. With reference to four (global/world) cities, however, Newman and Thornley assert that the extent of global standardization and seriality is overstated and that each city (and its responses to the challenges of globalization) is a product of its specific histories, cultures, traditions and forms of governance while the interplay of these factors are 'balanced' through the 'political culture' of the national state.

In addressing the theme of 'Global Contexts' the chapters in this Part of the book in different ways highlight not only significant macro trends and influences but also the contingent, fractured and, indeed, local dimensions of the global. Processes of globalization have indeed transformed cities and their study and every city is now in some way locked into (or out of) significant global circuits of information, capital, people and ideas. But each city is also a lived space, shaped by its histories and cultures including those of planning, politics and everyday life.

Global Futures: Reflections on Culture, Diversity and Planning for the Twenty-first Century

Sophie Watson

All planning involves imagination and speculation about the future, since there is an inevitable time lag between the conception of the plan and its execution and an even longer period during which the plan has effects, particularly where the plan involves infrastructures and the built environment. Planning is simpler then in periods of social, economic, political and cultural stability, where greater levels of certainty as to the future trajectories of the city and its people are in place. Instead, a plethora of events during the first decade of the twenty-first century indicate that we have entered a period of increasing uncertainty, complexity and cultural change. Global warming at unprecedented levels shows signs of increasing further bringing potentially devastating effects; reliance on oil for virtually every activity from industry to transport looks increasingly precarious and irrational; population shifts from political unrest, environmental disaster, or the search for employment or shelter look set to continue apace; financial collapse at institutional and sometimes national levels with its devastating consequences for the less well-off is a growing feature of capitalist economies; and socio-cultural changes in the form of new family formations, lifestyle choices or religious affiliations are impossible to predict. This is to mention only some of the contours of a future, particularly an urban future, marked by unpredictability and often rapid change with very uneven effects at a global level.

Here my intention is to focus on questions that arise as a consequence of growing cultural diversity in many cities which should be of central concern to planners in the coming years. (See also Stevenson, Low, and Duxbury and Jeannotte, Chapters 9, 17, and 21, this volume.) I do this through looking at a variety of sites and spaces where diverse cultural practices are enacted, and consider the planning implications, constraints and possibilities which follow. Before moving to this more pragmatic set of concerns, let me indulge in a moment of polemic. It seems to me that we have entered dangerous times, times where radical visions and radical imaginaries of a future of greater social equality and redistribution from the rich to the poor, care for the

environment, democratic politics, decent social welfare provision, are held by an ever decreasing minority. Yet notions of this kind precisely have underpinned the rationale for planning since its inception, and with their demise, the role of planning looks ever more uncertain. In this context, my point is that there is a far greater imperative to embrace a radical and creative imaginary, one that lends itself to openness, collectivity, plurality and optimism rather than closure, singularity, negativity and individualism. Castoriadis is helpful here:

I think that we are at a crossing in the roads of history, history in the grand sense. One road already appears clearly laid out, at least in its general orientation. That's the road of the loss of meaning, of the repetition of empty forms, of conformism, apathy, irresponsibility, and cynicism at the same time as it is that of the tightening grip of the capitalist imaginary of unlimited expansion of 'rational mastery', pseudorational pseudomastery, of an unlimited expansion of consumption for the sake of consumption, that is to say, for nothing, and of a technoscience that has become autonomized along its path and that is evidently involved in the domination of this capitalist imaginary. The other road should be opened: it is not at all laid out. It can be opened only through a social and political awakening, a resurgence of the project of individual and collective autonomy, that is to say, of the will to freedom. This would require an awakening of the imagination and of the creative imaginary. (Castoriadis 2007: 146)

Though the material world undoubtedly constrains, makes possible and performs the social worlds we inhabit (Latour 2005), there is still room for resistance, manoeuvre, change, perhaps (idealistically) even revolution. So also imaginaries and discourses frame and perform realities. As planners in these precarious times, new imaginaries that address complexity and diversity and mobilize a more democratic politics are urgently needed.

Public Space

Core to this new world of complexity and cultural diversity is public space. (See also Stevenson, Low, and Paddison, Chapters 9, 17, and 18, this volume.) The notion of public space is conceived in a multiplicity of ways from Habermas' (1989) formal public sphere of rational debate and communication conducted in the eighteenth century coffee house to Arendt's (1958) idealized notion of the agora as a space where people come together freely as non-economic slaves and the life of labour which has the capacity to oppress them or Young's (1990) idea of the city as a space of 'unassimilated otherness'. In my own work (S. Watson 2006a) I have emphasized the significance of more marginal and often hidden spaces as key sites of 'rubbing along' and encounters with 'different others'. My concern, like Connolly (1995) and also Deutsche (1999) has been how to conceive of democratic public space which is not predicated on the exclusions of others who are different from ourselves. Planners have a role to play here, in resisting those developments which keep people out, those gated communities and residential enclaves based on the fear of mixing with others who are different which

embody Bauman's (2003) notion of 'mixophobia'. All theories of public space concern, or should concern, the mediation, accommodation and resolution of difference in public to a greater or lesser extent, yet such concern has not been a core preoccupation of planning theory until fairly recently. Sandercock (2003) has repeatedly argued that the question of the integration of migrants and living together as strangers without conflict and fear is central to the concerns of urban planners, designers and engineers, as well as governments more broadly. As Bollens (2004: 212) puts it: 'differing planning systems are a defining characteristic of ethnically polarized cities and also appear to be an increasing attribute of planning and resource allocation debates in North America and Western Europe.'

Nevertheless, the growing cultural diversity in cities has had considerable impact on city spaces, some of which are contested and contentious hence becoming a matter of concern to the day to day life of city planners. Other multicultural spaces occur in a hotchpotch kind of way, operating as key sites in the mediation of differences. My argument in this chapter, endorsing a similar plea by others over the last two decades (Sandercock 2003) is that planning has an ever more important role to play in this complex terrain of multicultural differences in the city. Planners need to be involved in creating new and innovative spaces where different cultural practices can be enacted and performed, supporting those that exist already, and at the same time intervening to find solutions where conflicts and tensions arise. Nevertheless, as Vanessa Watson (2003) argues, we are seeing increasingly irreconcilable gaps between communities who regard each other from different rationalities, and between planners and those that are planned for, where the possibility of reaching a consensus looks virtually improbable and where views as to what constitutes progress or development differ dramatically. There may not always be a clear resolution. With these considerations in mind, this chapter considers two kinds of spaces – street markets and religious sites – which I suggest are crucial spaces for living with difference that planners should take seriously. There are many others.

Street Markets

In recent years, street markets have increasingly been recognized as places which matter for social, economic, environmental and health reasons, reversing the view of their inevitable decline faced with competition from supermarkets and other cheap retail outlets. In *Markets as Sites of Social Interaction: Spaces of Diversity* (S. Watson 2006b), based on research in eight London street markets, I argued that markets fulfilled a number of key policy agendas: they provided sites for social encounters, for the mediation of social and cultural differences, for social inclusion, for urban regeneration, for the revitalization of city centres, for economic and social innovation – for example for start-up businesses, for healthy eating through the provision of fresh and cheap food, for environmental agendas – through reduction in packaging and local access by foot or public transport (in contrast to out of town shopping centres and supermarkets), and for the promotion of city liveability. (See also Ashworth and Montgomery, Chapters 11, and 20, this volume.) Arguments such as these have increasingly been taken up in national policy agendas. In 2008–9 in the United Kingdom, the House of Commons

Department of Communities and Local Government Committee established an inquiry into markets including traditional street markets, farmers' and specialist markets (CLGC 2009). The Government response published in October 2009 agreed with the committee's conclusions and in particular the role of markets in contributing to the vitality of streets and regeneration of the wider area, seeing the key source of their support as the responsibility of the local authority. However, the response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recommendations has been very uneven across the United Kingdom.

Of the different agendas that markets connect to, my argument here is that markets have particular significance in assisting migrants to establish themselves in the city and that for this reason alone, they should be of concern to planners and policy makers. Markets can provide opportunities for survival and also for different communities to encounter one another in public spaces, mediating racial/ethnic cultural differences and mitigating inter-ethnic and racial conflict in the global city. However, their success as spaces of conviviality, encounter and sociality is by no means assured, indeed it is contingent on serendipitous factors, such as the market's location, history, design, as much as it is on local authority strategy, planning and investment. Markets can operate as spaces of social homogeneity, closure and exclusion, just as much as they can operate as spaces of mixing, encounter across differences, and social inclusion, and planners can play a part in enhancing one outcome rather than another. Three different market sites will be explored briefly here to illustrate my argument.

At one end of the spectrum is Four Tigers market in Budapest. This is a market which is home to one of the largest Chinese communities in Europe. In brief, Asian immigrants began to arrive in the city before the fall of the Communist regime, when visa requirements were abolished between the two countries in 1988. Within three years the number of registered Chinese rose from zero to 30,000, with the importation of garments in suitcases via the Trans-Siberian railway in the initial phase later to be replaced by containers. Within a few years, Hungary became the hub of Chinese imports to Central and Eastern Europe. The majority of the Chinese community in Budapest live around the Four Tigers market, which is squeezed between the railway tracks and a large trunk road out of town, and is a sprawling complex of shacks and warehouses located in Budapest's eighth district where hundreds of family businesses are occupied with the daily wholesale and retail grind of providing cheap commodities to a diversity of mainly Chinese consumers. The market is a teeming city comprised of shipping containers and tin shacks. At the entrance to the market a billboard illustration of a gun, dogs and a camera, each dissected by a large red cross graphically reveals the contours of the market as a space of illicit and illegal activity, under the protection of private security guards employed by the traders. All the elements of a Chinese market in mainland China are in place: the noodle bars, the men playing mahjong, the beautifully laid out mass produced designer clothes on mannequins and the cheap alcohol stalls. According to the figures from the Immigration and Naturalisation Office, there are currently 11,000 legal Chinese residents in Hungary, but the real figure is estimated at 20,000 or even 30,000, most of whom live in Budapest. The Four Tigers represents a key site of connection and survival for many of this group.

Despite its economic and social benefits to the Chinese community, by all accounts there is very little assimilation of this group into the city and antagonisms are easily fuelled in the media by the inspectors' reports of irregularities and illicit trading

revealed in their surprise visits. High-tech machines and electronics worth some \$7.5 billion account for 80 per cent of the trade between Hungary and China of which the informal and unregulated sector represents an unknown proportion. Processes of inclusion and exclusion are hard to unravel without extensive research, as is the extent to which the Chinese choose, or are forced to live and work in an area cut off from the mainstream of Budapest social and economic life. What is clear though is that this market, like many markets across the globe, represents a strategy for survival for a large group of migrants whose opportunities for integration or economic success in a new place are somewhat limited.

What are the implications then for planners? In the specific case discussed here, it could be argued that it is a poorly planned space, which has limited visibility or accessibility from the outside, and which thus spatially as well as seemingly intentionally from the insiders' perspective, serves to keep people out and exclude outsiders. As such it does not operate as a space of mixing across differences and inclusion. But as already suggested, it is a significant space in the lives of the Chinese residents of Budapest. In this sense then, there are strong arguments for vacant sites being made available to migrant groups and for allowing a high degree of autonomy for the traders and consumers of the market, within reasonable parameters of adherence to statutory health and other regulations. What we see here is a market that appears to have been left to its own devices by the local city authority (at least as far as I could ascertain). As a consequence it is a place which offers protection, employment, consumption opportunities and sociability, to one specific community. But it is not a space which encourages intermingling across cultural differences – many Budapest residents never have visited the site – nor mutual understanding or recognition. In contrast, outsiders were viewed with suspicion.

Queen's Crescent market offers a different model. This is a market which runs through a very racially and ethnically mixed locality of Gospel Oak in the London borough of Camden. The local population is 10,900 of which Black minority ethnic groups constitute 41 per cent; many of these households are refugees or migrants with few prospects of stable employment. Gospel Oak has three small areas that fall into the 20 per cent most deprived nationally. The market has a total of 77 pitches but in 2011 many of these sites stood empty during the Thursday and Saturday market. The market has a bedraggled air, the stalls selling cheap clothes and domestic commodities, with one fruit and vegetable stall and a flower stall as reminders of what the market once was in the days when Emecheta described it in 1974 as a lively and friendly place full of the sounds of voices and laughter and the smells of ripe tomatoes and flowers. Since that time the market has seen almost steady decline as supermarkets moved into the locality draining money out of the local economy, while the local authority turned a blind eye. Rather than reinvesting the rents collected from stalls, the council saw the market as a 'cash cow' and for the better part of 50 years had limited strategic vision and no clear management structures for the market. As a result, what once was a vibrant space which the long term stall holders remember as full of life and activity, with a mix of stalls selling a wide range of products, by the late 1990s had become a site of inter-racial disharmony (including open racism from the long term white stall holders and shop owners towards the new arrivals), neglect and a public life characterized by crime and violence rather than sociality and mutual support (Watson and Wells 2005, Wells and Watson 2005). Testimony to the impact of local authority neglect and indifference,

and the potential for reversing such a radical decline in a market, was a brief period in mid-2005–6, when under the Single Regeneration Budget highly successful attempts to regenerate the locality, and the market in particular, had visible effects. Under the strategic leadership of an energetic market manager, traders selling a diversity of products were encouraged back into the market selling jewellery, Italian cheeses, breads, fish and South Asian ethnic foods, and for a brief period the market was a place of sociality, conviviality and inclusion across ethnic and racial differences. With the manager's departure, its return to decline by the end of the decade has led to the complete separation of the market from council control.

What are the planning implications of this brief narrative? Queen's Crescent represents a market whose success as a local commercial and social space, and a space of potential intermingling across different cultures was sadly relinquished by the local authority through lack of investment, planning and management. During the research (Watson and Wells 2005) many of the traders referred to this lack of investment, poor design, the lack of suitable parking for shoppers, the lack of amenities such as seating places for the elderly as responsible for the market's decline. At the same time they saw the decision by the local planning department to allow the construction of two large supermarkets in the locality as responsible for the market's failure to attract customers.

The third market for my argument is Ridley Road market in the London Borough of Hackney. This is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country with a non-white population of 40 per cent including, in particular, a large number of Afro-Caribbean, African and Asian households. The local authority is notable for its proactive engagement in diversity policies supporting its multicultural population in a myriad of ways. Ridley Road, close to Dalston Junction, has a long history from at least the mid-nineteenth century of being a focal point for migrants to the area, and until recent years the majority of the stall holders came from the Jewish community who were numerous in the borough. As this population moved north and East into the outer suburbs of London, the market became increasingly ethnically diverse, with a minority of Jewish traders remaining. Unlike Queen's Crescent this is a market where inter cultural mixing is celebrated and lived, and Ridley Road is well known across the country for being a place to meet up with long lost friends and relatives from countries of origin, where virtually anything can be found, from unusual spices to tropical fish, snakes and goat (S. Watson 2006b). Though for many years the market effectively ran itself, albeit successfully, it is now recognized and supported by the council as a key public space and site of inter-ethnic mixing, as well as a successful commercial centre and focus for tourism. Plans have been put in place to provide seating areas, local parking, transport facilities and amenities.

Across the world there are a plethora of markets such as these representing different models, cultural practices, represented discursively by different interest groups in a myriad of ways. Yet despite support for markets from many quarters, and in the UK, from such bodies as the DCLG as we have seen, the future of markets in many places remain uncertain. In the United Kingdom for example, the National Market Traders Association recently reported that markets are battling for survival as shoppers turn to online shopping and supermarkets (Baron 2011: 12). From the traders' viewpoint a large part of the problem is the raising of rents – by 400 per cent in Mexborough, Yorkshire for example. While in Friends of Leeds Kirkgate Market there is fear that the council is looking to gentrify facilities and change its character. My point here is that for markets

to survive, local government support and intervention can be crucial, which includes planners, both at the level of strategy, and at the micro level of planning regulations concerning parking, design and the provision of facilities. Given the importance of markets for economic survival and for intercultural mixing and social encounters in the global multicultural city, planning has a crucial role to play.

Religious Spaces

Diverse religious practices of different migrant groups in cities represent one of the most visible forms of cultural difference enacted in city spaces (see also Greed, Chapter 5, this volume). Yet arguably religion represents a key site of belonging and connection for new migrants to the city, especially in the context of cutbacks in expenditure on welfare and community services. Religious difference contains elements of the symbolic, the cultural and the material and these have different implications in the city, yet any generalization of how religious difference has been accommodated in cities inevitably would be both inaccurate and simplistic. However, in the post-2001 political climate across the Western world we have witnessed the exacerbation of a trend – which was already in evidence (Gale 2005, Hill 2011, Naylor and Ryan 2002) – of using planning discourse and policy as a means of opposition to the construction of mosques. Many mosques are located in sites that have undergone change of use – domestic residences, warehouses, factories – and are often difficult to recognize as mosques. Others have taken over religious buildings which have been vacated by other faiths whose congregations have declined, this is a pattern particularly common in the East End of London in the case of synagogues. Where opposition has tended to arise has been in the case of new constructions which are seen as visibly different from the local surroundings or vernacular architecture, either on account of their size or style – minarets, for example. As well as opposition to architectural style, common objections to the construction of mosques take the form of planning issues such as lack of parking or congestion in the locality. Many Muslim people would argue that objections mobilized in planning or architectural discourses simply mask a resistance to the visible presence of a religious faith in the city which has come to be associated with terrorism at worst, or the view that an immigrant group is alien. Such a reaction has its most extreme representation in the British National Party whose website has vituperative and provocative advice from Nick Griffin, their national figurehead, on how to campaign against a mosque planning application.

The picture on the ground is a mixed one, with some localities embracing a multicultural politics, and seeing the construction of a mosque in the area as a welcome addition, while other local councils have used planning as a tool to resist unpopular applications from Muslim groups. A recent application for extension of the Al-Jamaat-ul-Muslimin of Bangladesh mosque into a neighbouring building in Northampton, United Kingdom, for example, met with a positive response from the local council. As Councillor Clarke put it: 'There's still a need for a central mosque to keep up with the growing number of practising Muslims in the town. But the plans to extend the mosque in St George's Street are very welcome' (Bontoft 2011). According to an article in the *Northampton Chronicle and Echo* 'Documents submitted to Northampton Borough

Council said: 'The proposal will be a community resource in an accessible location with benefits to the whole community. It would provide a venue for social activities and strengthen links between different groups within the wider community' (Bontoft 2011). In contrast, the requested planning by the Bengali Welfare Association Surrey for a mosque in Camberley met with the planning decision that the benefits that it would bring to the town's Islamic congregation did not outweigh the potential loss of the 140-year-old Victorian structure (Engage 2011).

Not surprisingly, the most widespread resistance to a proposed mosque in Britain in recent years was focused on the proposal by Tablighi Jamaat, a strict Islamic association, to build a very large mosque next to the London Olympic site. Quite apart from the size of the development its symbolic presence close to London's impending flagship national event appeared to have challenged even liberal tolerance of difference. More than 48,000 people petitioned the Government to prevent the development, dubbed the 'mega-mosque'. Planning played a crucial role here as in early 2010 Newham Council (where the Olympic Park is located) were considering compulsory purchase of the site as the sect had failed to lodge a master plan, and had been operating illegally in a temporary mosque without planning permission thus facing eviction. From the Muslim Council of Britain's point of view, however, planning was not the issue, instead 'the group had fallen victim to "unfounded hostility and hysteria"'. Campaigners welcomed the outcome, saying that the proposed mosque – which would have held four times as many worshippers as Britain's largest Anglican cathedral – was inappropriate. Alan Craig, a councillor representing the Christian Peoples' Alliance, said: 'It would have given a huge national platform, right by the Olympics, for them to promote their ideology' (Hamilton and Gledhill 2010). Such disputes have been prevalent across Europe with a recent proposal by Turkish migrants living in a small Swiss village in the Alps objected to by local residents due to the minarets and potential noise disruption: 'It's the noise, and all the cars. You should see it on a Friday night', complained Roland Kissling, a perfume buyer for a local cosmetics company. 'I've got nothing against mosques, or even against minarets. But in the city. Not in this village. It's just not right. There's going to be trouble' (Traynor 2007). My own study of Marrickville in Sydney (Watson 2009) revealed a borough seemingly able and willing to embrace multicultural religious difference over many decades, with striking religious buildings offering various migrant communities a space to worship scattered through the locality.

It is not only visible material architectural structures that have exercised planners across the world, symbolic sites which challenge normative definitions of space represent another form of religious cultural intervention in the city which have become points of contention. The Jewish *eruv* represents one such intriguing example. First, what exactly is an *eruv*? For traditional Jews, Sabbath is the day which is set aside for rest and calm away from the fast pace of weekday life, which involves a cessation of labour of various kinds. Various restrictions are laid down in Jewish law that impose prohibitions on the Sabbath which include the carrying of objects from private domains to public domains and vice versa. These public domains include streets, thoroughfares, open areas, highways and so on. Private domains are homes and flats in residential areas which are enclosed and surrounded by a wall and thus closed off from the public areas. In these private areas, carrying of objects on the Sabbath is permitted.

The purpose of the *eruv*, which in Hebrew means mixing or joining together, is to integrate a number of private and public properties into one larger private domain or,

to put this another way, to redefine the activities permitted in semi-public (or *karmelite*) space for the purposes of the Sabbath in order that activities normally allowed only in the private domain can be performed (Cooper 1996, Valins 2000: 579). This is a process of temporal spatial reordering. Once an eruv is constructed, individuals within the designated area are permitted to carry and move objects across what was hitherto a private/public boundary. This may include anything from the carrying of house keys, handbags (as long as no money is contained), a walking stick, to the pushing of a stroller or wheelchair. The construction of an eruv is thus of particular relevance to women with small children and people who are frail or disabled – those effectively excluded by age, gender or infirmity from public space on the Sabbath.

The practice of demarcating an eruv has been used by Orthodox Jews for 2000 years and is based on principles derived from the Torah, developed in the Talmud, and codified in Jewish Law. According to Talmudic law there is a very precise definition of an eruv. For an area to be reconstituted as a private domain it must cover a minimum of 12 square feet and be demarcated from its surroundings by a wall or boundary of some sort or by virtue of its topography. Already existing boundaries such as fences, rivers, or railways or even rows of houses can serve as the basis for the eruv, but where the boundary is not continuous – broken, for instance, by a highway – a boundary line must be constructed in order to maintain the enclosed space. The concept here is that, where a door separates two rooms in a house, the remaining structure on either side is still a wall, even if there are many openings. The eruv in the modern city is thus the limit case where the notional wall contains many openings with very little solid wall remaining. To construct the enclosure, there are clear vertical and horizontal elements which make up its parameters. To make acceptable the door/lintel combination, an eruv can use existing poles in the street – such as telephone, electric, cable poles – or new poles can be constructed. These are joined either by existing wires (usually the lowest in place) or by a new wire, in the case of the Barnet eruv in London this was a nylon fishing line, or plastic cable. For the pseudo-door to be acceptable the lintel (wire) must rest above the door posts, which can be made by attaching a thin vertical rod to the existing pole. In Hebrew these are ‘lechi’. In the construction of eruvim in the United Kingdom and the United States it is these almost invisible objects which have become the site of contestation even though their visibility or intrusion on the street landscape is minimal.

There are eruvim in many urban areas across the globe including Canada (the eruv in Toronto has existed there for over 60 years), Australia (in Sydney, where the boundary is created from cliff faces, a golf course, and fences along the Bondi beach, and in Melbourne), Belgium (Antwerp), France (Strasbourg), Italy (Venice), South Africa (Johannesburg) and many in the United States. The Barnet proposal to construct an eruv (S. Watson 2005) represented the largest of its kind in the United Kingdom. They vary in size from a small front yard of a single household to a large building such as a hospital (allowing Orthodox Jewish medical staff to work on the Sabbath), to ones that match the boundaries of whole cities as is often the case in Israel. Even the White House is included in the boundaries of the Washington eruv (Vincent and Warf 2002: 35–6). Usually eruvim are distinct spatial entities, although where they overlap, because of the lack of recognition of each other’s eruv by different communities, coloured ribbons are attached to the wires to avoid confusion for the members of synagogue communities. Ironically, though they themselves draw on an ancient concept, some eruvim are highly modern in their use of the Internet for keeping their members informed of the state of

their local eruv through websites. Typically, eruvim are patrolled the day before the Sabbath to ensure that the enclosure is intact and wires are not broken, as they cease to function once a gap has emerged – often indicated on websites by a kind of traffic-light system of green and red lights. This eruv boundary is unlike other boundaries in that when it ruptures nowhere inside is safe or unaffected.

For an eruv to become operational, in the first instance a civil figure with jurisdiction over the prescribed area has to give permission for the eruv. In the American case a nominal fee is paid. In Britain an application is made through the planning system. At one level this requirement necessarily constitutes the group that is requesting the eruv as dependent and powerless in relation to a state, or other, official. For example, one Orthodox woman described how an Oxford quad was defined as an eruv for one evening for the purposes of a party on the Sabbath, for which permission was requested from the college rector. In the United States they are generally established by means of a ceremonial proclamation that the area is ‘rented’. This is issued by municipal authorities.

According to two rabbis interviewed in Barnet, many eruvim have been established with minimal local objection, often barely entering the consciousness of local residents. However, in various instances the construction of an eruv has been hotly contested, sometimes over many years. Tenaflly in New Jersey, United States, and Barnet are two such cases where opposition was intense but was articulated through different arenas of the state. In my own research on these two sites what was revealed were several things: first, the symbolic claim on the use of space by a particular religious group, though having minimal visible impact on a local space, nevertheless was highly contested by local groups, and confounded local planning authorities and other juridical concerns. Second, in Britain planning and related arguments represent the key site for opposition and resolution – unlike in the United States where constitutional law is deployed. What brings the eruv into being then is a series of rituals, a performativity where new identities, spaces, social practices and notions of the private are constituted. It is not simply a question of the construction of an eruv, rather it is the routinized and repetitive recognition of the boundary by its users and the vigilant maintenance required to keep it intact that maintain it and keep it alive.

My argument here is that the power of symbols in this conflict over space is precisely the point. The fact that legal or planning approval has to be granted for the eruv is, in some sense, to submit to it. The eruv thus raises the questions of whether competing meanings of space can, or should, be resolved in the policy or planning arena, and can policy initiatives confront the symbolic? There is no easy answer here, but, if the symbolic power of space is to be taken seriously, particularly in the context of competing cross-cultural claims, planning and policy responses will need to confront some rather thorny questions. One such issue is that minority groups requesting permission from the state and from planners in particular – in whatever form this takes – are differently (and less powerfully) positioned from those imbued in the dominant culture, of which the state may be imagined to be an integral part.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the context of increasing uncertainty can well be seen as a potential opportunity as much as it might be articulated as a problem, since in settled and prosperous times, many people are suspicious of change, whereas during periods of upheaval it becomes possible to do things differently, and to mobilize concern in productive ways. In this sense, planners perhaps will find that new ideas and ways of working may be far more possible than previously thought. In particular, as argued here, finding ways of empowering less powerful groups, including migrants and other minorities, to define the everyday uses of, and practices performed in, urban public spaces, has to be a matter of serious concern to those involved in planning and designing the contemporary city and new approaches will need to be found.

As Vanessa Watson (2006: 31) argues, there is an increasing incongruence between the realities that face planning and the philosophical roots of traditional planning thought, which is based on universalistic and rational assumptions about homogenous societies which resemble less and less the urban societies within which they operate. (See also, Watson, Chapter 7, this volume.) Differences are always embedded in relations of power, not open to reconciliation, and contestation and conflict inevitably will occur. But where possible deliberative democratic processes need to be fiercely defended and upheld, and planners should be held to account to intervene as much as is possible to confront deep divisions and inequalities in contemporary society, to challenge the neo-liberal agendas which perpetuate these, and to find creative solutions in mediating differences, particularly where these are embedded in relations of racism, sexism and other forms of power. As this chapter has shown, it is by no means a homogenous picture and at the local level across the globe, there are countless examples of local and metropolitan councils supporting and enhancing innovative and different economic, social and cultural practices. That said, Vanessa Watson's (2006: 50) argument that in the context of deepening differences, and the increasing difficulties in reaching consensus, philosophies based on universalizing liberal tendencies have to be rethought, and new moral philosophical sources found to confront the thorny issues which confront planners on a day to day basis in the multicultural city.

References

- Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Baron, J. 2011. Markets under threat as shoppers go online for fruit and veg. *Guardian*, 3 October. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/02/markets-under-threat-online-shopping> [accessed 4 April 2013].
- Bauman, Z. 2003. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bollens, S. 2004. Urban planning and inter-group conflict: confronting a fractured public interest, in *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning*, edited by B. Stiftel and V. Watson. London: Routledge, 209–46.
- Bontoft, W. 2011. Expansion plan for Northampton town centre mosque. *Northampton Chronicle*, 15 July. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/>

- community/local-information/planning-applications/expansion_plan_for_northampton_town_centre_mosque_1_2867524 [accessed 4 April 2013].
- Castoriadis, C. 2007. *Figures of the Thinkable* (translated by Helen Arnold). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Communities and Local Government Committee (CLGC). 2009. *Market Failure?: Can the Traditional Market Survive?*. London: House of Commons, CLGC.
- Connolly, W. 1995. *The Ethos of Pluralisation*. Minneapolis, MN: the University of Minnesota Press.
- Cooper, D. 1996. Talmudic territory? Space, law, and modernist discourse. *Journal of Law and Society*, 23(4), 529–48.
- Deutsche, R. 1999. Reasonable urbanism, in *Giving Ground: The Politics of Propinquity*, edited by J. Copjec and M. Sorkin. London: Verso, 175–206.
- Emecheta, B. 1974. *Second Class Citizen*. London: Allison and Busby.
- Engage. 2011. Camberley mosque planning appeal rejected, 22 June. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/1411-camberley-mosque-planning-appeal-rejected> [accessed 4 April 2013].
- Gale, R. 2005. Representing the city: mosques and the planning process in Birmingham. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(6), 1161–79.
- Habermas, J. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hamilton, F. and Gledhill, R. 2010. Islamic sect's plan to build mega mosque next to Olympic site collapses. *Sunday Times*, 18 January.
- Hill, A. 2011. The city, the psyche and the visibility of religious spaces, in *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, edited by G. Bridge and S. Watson. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Naylor, S. and Ryan, J.R. 2002. The mosque in the suburbs: negotiating religion and ethnicity in South London. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 3(1), 39–59.
- Sandercock, L. 2003. *Cosmopolis 11: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century*. London and New York: Continuum Publishing.
- Traynor, I. 2007. The rise of mosques becomes catalyst for conflict across Europe. *Guardian*, 11 October. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/oct/11/thefarright.religion> [accessed 4 April 2013].
- Valins, O. 2000. Institutionalised religion: sacred texts and Jewish spatial practice. *Geoforum*, 31(4), 575–86.
- Vincent, P. and Warf, B. 2002. Eruvim: Talmudic places in a postmodern world. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, 27(1), 30–51.
- Watson, S. 2005 Symbolic spaces of difference: contesting the eruv in Barnet, London and Tenafly, New Jersey. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23(4), 597–613
- . 2006a. *City Publics: The (Dis) Enchantments of Urban Encounters*. London: Routledge.
- . 2006b *Markets as sites of Social Interaction: Spaces of Diversity*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Policy Press
- . 2009. Performing religion: migrants, the church and belonging in Marrickville, Sydney. *Culture and Religion*, 10(3), 317–38.

- Watson, S. and Wells, K. 2005. Spaces of nostalgia: the hollowing out of a London market. *Journal of Social and Cultural Geography*, 6(1), 17–30.
- Watson, V. 2003. Conflicting rationalities: implications for planning theory and ethics. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 4(4), 395–407.
- . 2006. Deep difference: diversity, planning and ethics. *Planning Theory*, 5(1), 31–50.
- Wells, K. and Watson, S. 2005. A politics of resentment: shopkeepers in a London neighbourhood. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(2), 261–77.
- Young, I. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

This page has been left blank intentionally