

Kent Academic Repository

Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Hubbard, Phil and Lyon, Dawn (2018) Introduction: Streetlife - the Shifting Sociologies of the Street. *The Sociological Review*, 66 (4).

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118771281>

Link to record in KAR

<http://kar.kent.ac.uk/66840/>

Document Version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

Introduction: Streetlife - the Shifting Sociologies of the Street

Phil Hubbard, Dept of Geography, King's College London
& Dawn Lyon, SSPSSR, University of Kent

Abstract: The street has long been a key laboratory for studies of social life, from the roots of urban sociology in the ethnographies of the Chicago School to the diverse range of contemporary studies which consider the performative, affective and non-representational nature of street etiquette and encounter. For all this, the street remains only loosely defined in many studies, and sometimes disappears from view entirely, with social action often privileged over material and environmental context. This Special Issue is intended as a spur to take the street more seriously in contemporary sociology, and explores the importance of the street as a site, scale and field for sociological research. Recognising that the street is both contradictory and complex, in the Introduction to this Issue we draw out emerging themes in the shifting sociologies of the street by highlighting the specific contribution inter-disciplinary work can make to our understanding of streets as distinctive but contested social spaces.

Introduction

Late November 2017, a High Street in a provincial *and 'multicultural'* British city. Like many others around the country, it has been transformed into a 'German' Christmas market place, with small wooden cabins having been erected to allow stallholders to sell a variety of crafted goods and foodstuffs to the crowds that congregate in the early evening. Tonight, the Christmas lights are to be turned on, and a couple of thousand people have gathered: buggy-pushing couples who have moved near the front to give their children a good view, towards the back a mixture of childless couples and older shoppers who are waiting around for the lights to be turned on, many clasping steaming plastic beakers of mulled wine, cider or hot chocolate to keep out the sub-zero temperature. The crowd is very mixed, with black and non-white ethnic minorities visible in large numbers. A collection bucket for a local homeless charity is passed around as a local ukulele orchestra, some twenty strong, performs on the small stage to enthusiastic applause, generating smiles and some laughter from the crowds for their somewhat idiosyncratic cover versions of contemporary chart hits. Once they have finished, the countdown for the Christmas lights begins, led by a local radio DJ and a minor celebrity. The crowd chant in unison, the lights are switched on, and Father Christmas appears in the sky above, dangling precariously from a wire to the amusement of many older viewers, but the evident wonder of many of the toddlers and children present. He scatters sweets to the crowd, then a few minutes later, retreats. The crowd slowly begins to thin out, this moment of civic communion over for another year.

Many moments of civic connection and congregation in the contemporary city appear remarkably 'shallow', and are far from genuinely inter-cultural. The turning on of Christmas lights, for example, is a largely commercial tradition whose religious connotations are clearly not shared or understood by all: nonetheless, it remains a spectacle enjoyed by those of different faith traditions, and a moment of light

sociality in which people from different communities and backgrounds congregate without visible antagonism or tension. This form of collectivity may not break down axes of division in our cities, but the mere act of bringing people together is itself a way that the city's diversity is made visible: in such all-too-rare moments of congregation, conviviality can come to the fore, with the proximity of difference accepted and even celebrated, no matter how banal the circumstances (see also Neal et al 2013).

This vignette makes the point that the street remains a social space like no other. Even in the context of divided and segregated cities, gated communities and 'privatopias', streets continue to provide spaces for public congregation, encounter, and community-making. They are places where senses of belonging can be developed and negotiated; where ideas of identity may be forged and where protests can be heard (Jackson 1988). They help us anchor our sense of self in a changing society, but continually force us to perform our identities in new ways as we encounter a range of individuals whose orientations and intentions are uncertain (Darling and Wilson 2016). But streets are also sites subject to increasing levels of surveillance, regulation and codification (Coleman and Sim 2000), spaces of attention where the boundaries between sociality and anti-sociality are endlessly fussed over and policed. The street remains a site of intense scrutiny by the media, the state and the law, who 'remoralise' the street in moments when its excessive liveliness threatens to challenge social convention. In neoliberal Western cities, streets increasingly move in time with the rhythms of consumer capitalism, offering fewer and fewer opportunities for simply 'hanging out': the homeless, sex workers, drug users, skateboarders, and 'street youth' are no longer tolerated as part of the street scene, but displaced via policies designed to secure urban order (Smith 1996)).

This ambivalence has always fascinated sociologists, many of whom have taken the street as a litmus of the social habits, mores and etiquette of the time: the street continues to preoccupy sociologists exploring the ways that individuals relate to one another in urban societies depicted as 'superdiverse' and complex (e.g. Quayson 2014; Hall 2012; Zukin et al 2017). Despite this, the street moves in and out of focus in much sociological work, always there but rarely theorized or defined in explicit terms (see Fyfe 1996). The question as to whether (and how) the street is a site, scale or field of analysis is seldom broached, and the temporal and spatial parameters of the street as a unit of analysis remain unstated (see Duneier 1999). This matters because contemporary sociology is concerned not just with human agency, but the relationality of human and non-human: it is not just bodies that matter on the street, but a vital materiality that runs through and across bodies and things (Edensor 2010). Streets may be theatres of human life, but the stage is set by all manner of objects and energies of different natures moving at different speeds: litter, lights, trees, wind, buildings, pavements, billboards, cars, kerbs, dogs, drains and so on (Amin and Thrift 2002). These bequeath the street a distinctive metabolism that requires critical scrutiny by social scientists so that they might say something consequential about the social life of the street and its changing forms and rhythms (see also Cronin 2010; Degan et al 2008; Hubbard 2017a; Temelová and Novák 2011).

Clearly, there are dangers in privileging the street as the 'ideal' laboratory for examining social practice, moralities and interactions, or suggesting it is the most (or only) meaningful site in which to explore the contradictions of everyday life. This is certainly not the intention of this Special Issue, which has a more modest aim, namely to consider how inter-disciplinary perspectives and methods can be appropriately applied to the study of streetlife. Here, we are particularly interested in the ways that questions of agency, embodiment and sensorial encounter are invoked by sociologists, geographers and anthropologists as they engage with the street, and explore how this generates insights into the street as a site of enchantment and spontaneity. We begin, however, by thinking about changing definitions of the street in contemporary, and 'super-diverse', times (Vertovec 2007).

Defining the street

Many of the most important sociological accounts of urban life have been based on traditions of street writing or street ethnography, from the classic sociological accounts of the Chicago School (e.g. Reckless 1926; Whyte 1943) through to contemporary 'slumdog' studies (e.g. Anjaria 2016; Boo 2014; Harms

2011) via innumerable studies of those ‘deviant’ or marginal populations who make the street their home (e.g. Felisher 1995; Spradley 1970; Miller 1995; Knowles 2005). But in all cases, questions remain about whether these urban ethnographies are of the streets, or simply about particular populations on the street. The difference here is not insignificant, and raises fundamental questions about how we might best conceptualise the street. In this regard, it is notable that the majority of street ethnographies begin by trying to identify distinctive ‘street cultures’ via thick description of life on the street set against a specific urban backdrop or context. This tactic, as Sundarem (2016) notes, favours the socio-cultural over the physical-spatial, meaning that such accounts can present a thin account of place itself. However, this tendency is arguably less evident in the streetwise Marxism of Henri Lefebvre (2001) or Marshall Berman (2017), whose accounts tend to foreground the materiality of place and emphasise how social life is caught up in, and transformed by, certain rhythms of streetlife, regarding the street as an inherently social production.

But whether one begins with the social or material, the question remains as to how we locate the street and delineate its reach. By definition, most streets are linear forms, conduits for flows of different types, both above (cars, people, traffic) and below (water, gas, electricity) ground. But opposed to mere roads (or motorways and highways), they are also woven into the social fabric of the city in multiple ways, adjoining any number of buildings, public facilities, open spaces and commercial venues and providing some form of interaction and relationality between them. A facile but nonetheless important observation here is that streets connect people in a variety of significant ways, enabling specific practices of neighbourliness, community and place-making: Grannis (1998) finds that two residents of the same city are much more likely to interact with one another if they live on the same street than two equally distant residents who dwell on different streets – and this type of conclusion appears to hold good even in the Internet Age (Mok et al 2010). The delimitation of the street is then of importance: streets have length, depth and breadth, and if one starts a sociological study a priori with a limited definition of the street, this will influence the study’s findings. Indeed, Mitchell Duneier (1999: 334) completely rewrote *Sidewalk*, his study of the everyday life of a street vendor, as he came to realise that the first version of the book did not give a sufficiently ‘comprehensive’ or ‘wide-angle view’ of the street. Conversely, if the researcher goes into the field without a clear definition of the street in question, the study may spiral and become one that potentially becomes too socially-decontextualized.

While establishing the way people interact with one another on the street helps us think about the ‘scale’ at which we can best study urban life, **Nick Dines’** paper insists this should not overshadow the contribution of morphological studies in definitions of the street. In making this argument, Dines insists that the street is not synonymous with all the hard-surfaced, publically-open spaces in the city, such as alleyways, pavements, roads, squares, marketplaces, and promenades, each of which is associated with distinctive modes of occupation and dwelling. Just as importantly, he insists that these spaces are not just morphologically distinct, but also culturally-specific. Offering a critique of Anglophone urban studies in general, and sociologies of the street in particular, Dines spells out the dangers of equating the ‘street’ with the Italian concepts of the *vicolo*, *corso* or *strada*, arguing that these terms connote a particular socio-spatial assemblage. As Dines stresses, a street as it is understood in an Anglophone context is not necessarily the same as a boulevard in Paris, a *roji* in Tokyo or *kuchi* in Dhaka (Bedarida and Sutcliffe 1980; Mowla 1997; Imai 2017) – and nor should we assume it functions in the same ways. Drawing on debates about multi-sited ethnography and comparative urbanism (e.g. Nijman 2007), Dines suggests ways for arriving at a more cosmopolitan perspective on the social significance of the street.

Connected to this inter-cultural and cosmopolitan perspective is the question of how one locates the street within wider systems of space (Sundarem 2016). The ‘mobilities’ paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) is relevant here since street spaces are characterised by movements and flows of different speed and duration. These flows also have different origins and destinations, with Doreen Massey’s ‘progressive sense of place’ reminding us that any street is open to the world, and formed relationally:

Take, for instance, a walk down Kilburn High Road, my local shopping centre. It is a pretty ordinary place, north-west of the centre of London. Under the railway bridge the newspaper stand sells papers from every county of what my neighbours, many of whom come from there, still often call the Irish Free State. The postboxes down the High Road, and many an empty space on a wall, are adorned with the letters IRA... In two shops I notice this week's lottery ticket winners: in one the name is Teresa Gleeson, in the other, Chouman Hassan. Thread your way through the often almost stationary traffic diagonally across the road from the newsstand and there's a shop which as long as I can remember has displayed saris in the window. Four life-sized models of Indian women, and reams of cloth... Overhead there is always at least one aeroplane - we seem to have on a flight-path to Heathrow and by the time they're over Kilburn you can see them clearly enough to tell the airline and wonder as you struggle with your shopping where they're coming from. Below, the reason the traffic is snarled up (another odd effect of time-space compression!) is in part because this is one of the main entrances to and escape routes from London, the road to Staples Corner and the beginning of the M1 to 'the North' (Massey, 1991: 28)

For Massey, this represented the beginnings of a sketch of how street can be regarded as connected to things that are both proximate and far-distant – a sketch that has now arguably been fleshed out in the work of **Suzanne Hall** (see especially Hall 2012), who presents findings in this Issue from a study of how diversity and discrimination is lived in the context of streets in Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester and Manchester. Here, she shows how specific examples of 'ethnic entrepreneurialism' are deeply embedded in the concrete context of the streets in which businesses are located, but always connected to long histories of (urban) migration as well as geographies of discrimination which are local and global. The streets in question offer a vantage point from which one can make sense of wider processes, and also locate the present in trajectories of social change. Connecting the presence of diverse proprietors to wider histories and geographies, Hall hence argues for a more expansive perspective across time and space, as well as a more differentiated account of practice as it is manifest in the street itself.

Encounter and the everyday

A key theme in street writing has concerned the transformation of the public realm from one characterised by intimate and sensual encounters to one in which the emphasis is essentially on surface appearances and (visual) encounters between strangers (Fyfe 1996). For all this, the street retains a particular significance for sociologists and other social scientists because it remains a space of (essentially unmediated) embodied encounter: in many ways, the street encounter is the defining urban experience, with chance and 'mis-meetings' giving the city its distinctive character of risk and liveliness (Stevens 2007; Watson 2006). This raises key questions regarding the value of street encounters, the potential they might hold for catalysing social change (Wilson 2016), and overcoming existing social prejudices (Valentine 2008). Most famously perhaps, in Jane Jacobs' (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, street encounter was deemed essential to the making of city life in the sense that it provided the basis for civic engagement and the enrichment of collective life. Jacobs was of course focused on the way that a particular form of intricate 'sidewalk ballet' arose in mid-twentieth century Greenwich village, and was damning of modernist designs which discouraged the forms of 'natural surveillance' that encouraged people into the streets. In more recent times, Rishbeth and Rogaly (2017) have re-emphasised the importance of street design in overcoming cultural prejudice, suggesting that humble street furniture can also be important in creating proximities and socialities - reiterating Jacobs' (1961: 72) view that 'sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public life may grow'.

The idea that urban conviviality can 'bubble up' from the street to create multicultural and tolerant societies has been much explored in recent urban studies, notably in Ash Amin's (2012) promotion of an 'indifference to difference' and Paul Gilroy's (2014) ideal that essentialised differences should not add up to discontinuities of everyday experience. This fostering of conviviality on the streets is the subject of

Charlotte Bates' contribution to this Special Issue, which suggests that through the accumulation of everyday encounters with difference, streets can emerge as convivial places. Noting the ways that the design of public spaces can help foster encounters, especially through inclusive measures that afford access to those with physical disabilities, Bates details how the streets become a site of what Rishbeth and Rogaly (2017: 7) term 'un-panicked multicultural': a space where people get on and get by, in effect, and enjoy the mundane pleasure of being amongst others who may not be like them, but are not so different either. In doing so, Bates echoes Anderson's (2004) description of Philadelphia's Reading Terminal market as a 'cosmopolitan canopy'.

Through a case study of a public square in South London (General Gordon Square), Bates shows that the materiality of the streets – in terms of its physical and social design - supports relationships through which connection, similarity and difference are encountered and affirmed. As Bates notes, the idea that social life has a physical texture, and that the materiality of the urban environment mediates social relationships, is far from new, yet she is right to assert there has been surprisingly little work that brings the geographical and the sociological imagination together in order to understand urban life. **Alasdair Jones'** (2016) work is, however, a notable exception, and proposes a reading of London's South Bank which is attuned to its legal and regulatory geographies as well as the physical affordances offered by its bewildering concrete landscape of stairs, underpasses, bridges, viewing platforms, promenades, benches, sculpture and street art. Describing the varied life associated with this heavily-surveyed but ultimately surprisingly 'loose' urban space, Jones' account details a street scene where tourists and consumers rub shoulders with performers, security guards, the homeless, skateboarders, street drinkers, late night revellers and workers, all of whom are part of what is an unpredictably inclusive urban spectacle. And although Jones notes that the South Bank is a space orchestrated to promote particular modes of consumption, he shows that the space is loose enough to sometimes appear indifferent to these ends.

Jones' work is a rare example of street ethnography which aims to make sense of a particular space (in this case, one subject to significant securitisation) rather than to better understand a particular social group or way of life. But as his contribution to this Special Issue spells out, street ethnography can be spurred on by other theoretical impulses, not least the desire to make sense of the 'everyday'. Clearly, the idea that the street is a privileged site for accessing everyday life is problematic – not least because the everyday is itself a problem, a contradiction and a paradox (see especially Highmore 2002). For Jones, the issue here is to somehow differentiate the ordinary or mundane from the life of the street, noting that a good deal of what happens on the street is not necessarily about the repetitive, habitual and routine, but the exceptional: a moment that punctures the routines of everyday life. But, as he describes, there is a tension here between using the exceptional to highlight the normal, and portraying the exception as the norm.

In many ways, Jones alludes to issues central to the work of perhaps the most pre-eminent theorist of the everyday: Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, 'everyday life' was deployed as both description (of the social consequences of modernity) and critique (whereby analysis of the practice of everyday life reveals the subversive and resistant qualities of everyday culture). Though he explored how everydayness was manifest in spaces of work, rest and leisure, Lefebvre too was particularly drawn towards streetlife, but always with an eye to the way it was embodied with 'actual flesh and blood and culture' (Merrifield 2000: 175). In his view, the fact that the streetlife of cities so often lacked passion or excitement was the real tragedy of cities created in capitalism's image. The body, for Lefebvre, was warm and sensual, but the streets cold and abstract, its rhythms often repressing bodily desires. Yet Lefebvre believed cities were still capable of releasing this repression, arguing they could become a means for free expression: 'arenas of jouissance, of intense sensual and sexual pleasure and excitement' (Merrifield 2000: 175). Lefebvre, and many of his contemporaries (e.g. Guy Debord, Michel de Certeau and Raoul Vaneigem) suggested that the basis of this revolutionary urbanism was present, albeit dormant, on the city's streets, emerging in revelatory moments. These moments can be collective, eruptions of joy, and expressive spontaneity (e.g. street carnivals, fans taking to the streets to celebrate a football win, political protests, riots) or individual, contemplative instances when the city offers us a moment of profound illumination that things might be

different, and better. Clearly, not all streets encourage these moments of enjoyment or *jouissance*, with designers' ideas and those of users seldom coinciding in cities that are devised according to capitalist imperatives. But even the most sanitized street can sometimes be in sync with the body's needs, and it is in those moments that the city itself can appear more livable, vital and stimulating. The fight for the 'right to the city' is then often presented as about the right to the streets, and a battle in which the pleasures and enchantments of the street can be made available to all (Mitchell 2003).

Play, enchantment and streetlife

Noting the capacity for human adaptation and improvisation, there is now a large body of work focusing on the practical negotiation of the street, particularly the potential of embodied improvisation and 'performativity' to create a more livable city (Highmore 2002). Here, an important characteristic of street spaces is that they are associated with gaming and play (see Redmon 2003; Fincham 2007; Stevens 2007), with the *ludic body* often subverting or challenging dominant expectations of public dressage and comportment. Stevens (2007) insists that play represents a tactical appropriation of the streets for non-capitalist ends, and should not be undervalued in terms of its role in living life intensely. Street-games and street pursuits such as skateboarding, rollerblading and free running have been held up as exemplary of forms of escapism and risky playfulness suggestive of streetlife (e.g. Borden 2001; Kidder 2002; Mould 2009). These expressive body-practices are of course subject to regulations which often curtail their potential as a means of changing the dominant uses of streets (i.e. as spaces of commerce and exchange), and modernist planning principles of 'clean sweep' urbanism certainly discourage all but the most functional uses of street spaces. But this does not mean that playful practices are never promoted, as **Tim Edensor** and **Steve Millington** show in their account of Blackpool's promenade: a linear streetscape for sure, but one that also consists of a variety of surfaces, textures and gradients that solicit a somatic engagement, complete with distractions that divert pedestrians from following a purposive, straight movement. Posing questions about the oppositions often made between risk and safety – as well as established distinctions of productivity and waste - Edensor and Millington argue that there is much to be learnt from the off-kilter urban design of Blackpool's promenade and its ability to embed playful habits among its users.

Another example of creativity on the streets is provided in this Issue by **Sabine Andron**, who focuses on graffiti's relationship with street art. Much has been written about graffiti as territorial marker, and its association with street style and subculture: Andron in particular picks up on the idea that the location of graffiti (i.e. on the street) devalues it within accepted canons of taste and value. But as opposed to some commentators who have suggested that such art takes on value when transferred to formal art galleries (e.g. Cresswell 1992), Andron argues that the growth in street art tours indicates that different creative processes may be in play on the streets, with walking tours implicated in understandings of street creativity in a number of strong senses. Specifically, her paper proposes that art walking tours legitimise the street art world along three distinct dimensions: what is shown or, the street art works themselves (designated by 'what you should see' on a tour); where it is shown (street locations: 'where you should see it'); and what is being said about what is shown (the narratives concerning 'how you should see it'). In the context of the East End of London, her work suggests that street art is both critical of the growing tide of gentrification yet is conversely used to map out those very streets as ripe for gentrification, with street-level creativity narrated as part of a gritty urbanism that has become eminently marketable on a global basis.

This suggests that the sociology of the streets often needs to engage with the complex relationships unfolding between creativity and commodification on the streets, and remain sanguine about some of those spontaneous forms of streetlife that seem initially to challenge dominant social norms and conventions. Conversely, this also implies that sociologists need to be open about some forms of streetlife which appear, at first glance, to be deeply troubling or exploitative. One example here is the street

vending and trading endemic to much of the developing world (and some of the more developed world as well). While such dangerous and dirty work might be taken as indicative of a failing economy, Roy (2011) argues that if it is viewed through the lens of ‘subaltern urbanism’ it can be reconceptualised as a near-heroic form of entrepreneurial enterprise. Street cultures of ‘make do’ are indeed often characterised by extreme inventiveness and resilience, with Bayat (2000: 533), arguing that, in Third World cities, a ‘marginalized and deinstitutionalized subaltern’ crafts a street politics best understood as ‘the quiet encroachment of the ordinary’.

While Roy is somewhat sceptical of the tendency to celebrate the street habitus of ‘slumdog cities’, a focus on the labour (and agency) of street workers appears vital if one is to fully capture the life of the streets as well as the dynamic role of the informal sector in the making of cities. **Phil Mizen** stresses this in his paper on the informal economies of Accra (Ghana), a city where around nine-tenths of all new jobs could be described as informal. Documenting the hot, heavy and dirty work carried out by children as vendors, hawkers, porters and carriers on the streets of Accra, Mizen nonetheless notes that such work can open up other opportunities for children as they move between a variety spaces and actors, some who may offer the children more lucrative and less demanding work. Here, Mizen suggests that the good fortune that befalls some children, but which evades others, in finding ‘good’ work is because of the opportunities handed to the children by others as opposed to being a result of their own resourcefulness and resilience.

Mizen hence explores the way that the street exists as a site of human agency and creativity whilst acknowledging the way that this is tipped in favour of particular populations and interests. In many ways, Mizen is grappling with the question that Barker (2009: 155) suggests animates virtually all anthropological research on street life, namely ‘the question of whether the street is a terrain for creativity and a starting place for democratic or oppositional politics, or whether it is a terrain pre-structured by political, legal and economic forces that reinforce existing social hierarchies and patterns of exclusion’. Of course, the answer is that both are possible, suggesting close sociological readings of the street might be required to establish how the dominant and subordinate rhythms of the street coalesce to reproduce particular practices as the norm, sometimes consolidating hierarchies of value and morality, at other times inverting them. The reference to luck and fortune in Mizen’s paper hence serves to make an important point about streetlife: that it can produce moments of enchantment characterised by serendipity and egalitarianism rather than always perpetuating unequal power relations (see especially Teo and Neo, 2017 on street football in Singapore).

Sensing the street

Clearly, part of the contemporary appeal of street ethnography is associated with the widespread skepticism surrounding attempts to present totalizing accounts of the city, as if viewed from above (see Hubbard 2017b). Given that an engagement with the life of the street necessitates an embodied perspective on urban life, urban sociologies that begin at street level appear to have much to commend them in terms of forcing the researcher to engage with questions of reflexivity and positionality. However, this still raises questions about what the most appropriate methods are in the context of street ethnography. Some, for example, favour modes of engagement which mimic the ways in which streets are experienced in the context of everyday urban life, such as the go-along interview or walking tours. Whilst walking should not be privileged as a way of knowing (see O’Neill and Hubbard 2010), it clearly has certain sensate, embodied, relational and collective attributes that render it useful as a means of exploring the importance of being-in-place:

Walking is critical to the task because it gets you out there and lets you get to know the city up close. However, you cannot merely walk *through* a city to know it. You have to stop long enough to absorb what’s going on around you. And the only way to do that is to immerse yourself in it—spending as much time as possible in the city streets (Helmreich 2013: 3).

Helmreich is something of an extreme advocate of this perspective, his book *The New York Nobody Knows* based on 6000 miles of walking the five boroughs of New York, block by block, over four years. This kind of attentive walking is what Bachelard calls a ‘muscular consciousness’. Researchers such as Helmreich (see also Edensor 2008; 2010; Wunderlich 2008; 2013) literally use their bodies to tune into the multitude of movements and materialities, rhythms and atmospheres on the move. In so doing, they develop an explicit strategy for researching streetlife which chimes with the widespread trend for mobile methods in urban sociology. Such practices challenge implicitly static conceptions of the street and through their accounts of social life on the move render the street as a fluid and fluctuating space.

In her contribution to this Issue, **Monica Degen** addresses the mobile and embodied, temporal and spatial dimensions of streetlife across the process of data collection and analysis in her study of a single – now famous – street in Barcelona, the Rambla del Raval. The Rambla, as it is often described, is an open, modernist boulevard which was literally created from the destruction of the city’s former red-light district and housing for an estimated 10,000 residents. Degen combines Lefebvre’s spatial triad with Adam’s notion of timescapes to trace the conceived temporalities of planning and the perceived temporalities of the environment, and how these come together in the lived temporalities of everyday life. This conceptual framework allows her to identify the ways in which planning is used as a tool to manage the present as well as the future as imagined in the present. ‘Adaptation’ is thereby appreciated as a temporal process which itself - or its perceived failure in this instance - prompts further regeneration. For Lefebvre, ‘The interaction of diverse, repetitive and different rhythms animates, as one says, the street and the neighbourhood’ (2004: 30). For the Rambla planners, it was the perception that multiple rhythms were out of sync with one another that necessitated additional regeneration. However, this was then perceived, especially by older residents, as a ‘spatio-temporal imposition’ which both took place unexpectedly quickly and erased important material repositories of memory. In her chapter, Degen offers an ‘understanding of place-making as a complex temporal achievement’ which continues as new rhythms emerge in the everyday lived experience of the street.

This paper both showcases an approach to researching streetlife through multiple methods and prompts questions about contemporary practices of urban research (see also the Special Issue of *Sociological Review* on ‘Urban Rhythms’ edited by Rob Smith and Kevin Hetherington in 2013). An understanding of urban space as constituted through ‘the sensory-practico body’ (Degen 2008: 41) means that the body and the senses are central in the conduct of empirical research on the lived experience of the street. As Degen, Helmreich and others have shown, it is necessary to cultivate attentiveness to rhythm, pace and atmosphere to do this well. For Lefebvre, this is part and parcel of becoming a rhythm analyst: the researcher ‘listens – and first to his [sic] body; he learns rhythm from it, in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms’ (2004: 19). He continues: ‘to grasp a rhythm, it is necessary to have been **grasped** by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration’. At the same time however, ‘it is necessary to get outside them [rhythms], but not completely’ (27, emphasis in original). Whether on the move or from a static vantage point in place – Lefebvre’s balcony for instance - the question and the challenge for urban researchers is to find a way to ‘insinuate’ themselves into the dominant rhythms of the street and at the same time retain the capacity to separate from them in order to advance sense-making.

If the question of literally where to place the body in space in the study of streetlife is key, the temporalities of streetlife research are equally important – and Degen’s longitudinal research (from 1996 to the present) exemplifies the importance of time (as duration) in appreciating social change in the social life of the street. More generally, an appreciation of the specific rhythms and temporalities of the street needs to inform research designs. For instance, in their study of urban outreach workers, Hall and Smith’s (2014) ‘twenty-four hour design’ arises from recognition of the cyclical character of the labour of outreach workers in the city. Where social life is fast and fleeting, attention needs to be focused and intensive. When the co-existing temporalities that shape the street occur over longer duration, the time of attention needs to be more extended. Whatever the scale, failing to appreciate the temporalities of the street means that we risk missing much of what is going on.

However, the task of addressing the spatial and temporal challenges of streetlife research might necessitate a different approach altogether. Immersion in time and space can also be an obstacle to perception where the temporality of change exceeds the capacity for human perception - too fast to get a hold on or too slow to discern at all - or where the spatial reach of the field goes beyond the ethnographer's inevitable myopia. In recent years, audio-visual devices have been employed in innovative ways to extend the reach and capacity of the senses to document the world and there are notable attempts to integrate mobile methods with mappings of place facilitated by geocoded recording, photography and videography (see Jones et al 2008). For example, Simpson's (2012) use of time-lapse photography to capture movement, interaction and rhythm in the public performance of a street magician shows it is possible to record 'the qualitative unfolding of events as they happen' (2012: 31, emphasis in original). In this and other cases (e.g. Lyon 2016), time-lapse photography is a way of grasping the variety of rhythms and routines that permeate the street or space and combine or interfere with one another. It also provides the researcher with the means to 'play' with time by accelerating or decelerating the sequence of images in the process of analysis – something that can help reveal both the speed and slowness of streetlife.

Notwithstanding these innovative uses of the visual, urban research has been widely criticised for its ocular emphasis in accounts of metropolitan experience. In this regard, an 'attentive ear' has a lot to offer the researcher of streetlife (Lefebvre 2004: 27) and there are some exciting developments in this field (see Gallagher and Prior, 2014, for a review and future directions). For instance, Duffy et al (2016) have devised what they call 'visceral sonic mapping as a research tool' in which they repeatedly listen to recorded sounds and annotate them in the form of a 'sound map'. In so doing, they gradually add distinctions and interconnections between different layers of sound. Subsequently sharing these maps with research participants triggers the emotional and affective resonances of the sounds for them which deepens the data and nuances the analysis of streetlife.

Conclusion

This Special Issue emerged out of a Symposium sponsored by the Sociological Review which took place at the University of Kent in September 2015. At this event, we sought to explore how the street matters for contemporary sociology, how we might approach it as an object of study and a site of social life, and what a sociology of streetlife might comprise. The articles in this Issue address the shifting sociologies of the street across different conceptual, linguistic and material registers. Given the contributions come from sociologists, anthropologists and geographers, the research they discuss is wide-ranging in terms of its spatial specificity and temporal horizon. These papers are also grounded in different methodological traditions of ethnography and visual sociology, collectively showing that the contested definition and conceptualisation of the street necessitates methods that are open to its complexity and diversity.

This Issue shows that street spaces are sometimes surprising sites of conviviality and playfulness in which urban design still affords opportunities for spontaneity, notwithstanding the chronic commodification of urban space. This noted, the papers in the Issue show how the street can be mobilised as an object of inquiry in its own right and taken as a starting point for the appreciation of the broader social processes that are implicated in the production of space. To fully grasp the everyday patterns, rhythms and interconnections that underpin these processes, research on the street often requires embodied practices and perspectives - and needs to add to them in creative and imaginative ways. We hope that the Special Issue will spur readers to reconsider the street as a key site of social life and as a field of sociological research, beyond the scope of the discussion presented here. After all, the street is always mobile and in flux. The contributions of this Issue attend to the broad social, cultural and political trajectories and infrastructures which bring certain lives together in time and place and literally shape the ways they might be lived – but which never fully curtail the vitality and spontaneity of streetlife.

References

- Amin, A. (2012) *Land of strangers*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Anderson, E. (2004). The cosmopolitan canopy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595(1), 14-31.
- Anjaria, J. S. (2016). *The Slow Boil: Street Food, Rights and Public Space in Mumbai*. New York, Stanford University Press.
- Barker, J. (2009). Introduction: Street Life. *City & Society*, 21(2), 155-162.
- Bayat, A. (2000). From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels': Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South. *International Sociology*, 15(3), 533-557.
- Bedarida, F., & Sutcliffe, A. (1980). The street in the structure and life of the city: reflections on nineteenth-century London and Paris. *Journal of Urban History*, 6(4), 379-396.
- Berman, M. (2017). *Modernism in the Streets: A Life and Times in Essays*. New York, Verso Books.
- Boo, K. (2014). *Behind the beautiful forevers: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity*. New York, Random House.
- Borden, I.M. (2001). *Skateboarding, space and the city: Architecture and the body* London, Berg.
- Coleman, R., & Sim, J. (2000). 'You'll never walk alone': CCTV surveillance, order and neo-liberal rule in Liverpool city centre1. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 51(4), 623-639.
- Cresswell, T. (1992). The crucial 'where' of graffiti: a geographical analysis of reactions to graffiti in New York. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 10(3), 329-344.
- Darling, J., & Wilson, H.F. (Eds.). (2016). *Encountering the city: Urban encounters from Accra to New York*. Routledge.
- Degen, M., DeSilvey, C., & Rose, G. (2008). Experiencing visualities in designed urban environments: learning from Milton Keynes. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(8), 1901-1920.
- Duffy, M., Waitt, G., Gorman-Murray, A., & Gibson, C. (2011). Bodily rhythms: Corporeal capacities to engage with festival spaces. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 4(1), 17-24.
- Duffy, M., Waitt, G. & Harada, T. (2016) 'Making sense of sound: Visceral sonic mapping as a research tool', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 20: 49-57.
- Duneier, M. (1999). *Sidewalk*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Edensor, T. (2010). Walking in rhythms: place, regulation, style and the flow of experience. *Visual Studies*, 25(1), 69-79.
- Edensor, T (2008) 'Walking Through Ruins' in T Ingold and J L Vergunst (eds.) *Ways of Walking, Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Fincham, B. (2007). 'Generally Speaking People are in it for the Cycling and the Beer': Bicycle Couriers, Subculture and Enjoyment. *The Sociological Review*, 55(2), 189-202.
- Fleisher, M.S. (1995). *Beggars and thieves: Lives of urban street criminals*. Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press.
- Fyfe, N. (Ed.). (2006). *Images of the street: planning, identity and control in public space*. London: Routledge.
- Gallagher, M and Prior, J. (2014) 'Sonic geographies: exploring phonographic methods', *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(2): 267-284.
- Gilroy, P. (2004). *After empire: melancholia or convivial culture* Routledge, London
- Grannis, R. (1998). The importance of trivial streets: residential streets and residential segregation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(6), 1530-1564.

- Hall, S.M. (2012). *City, street and citizen: The measure of the ordinary* (Vol. 9). London: Routledge.
- Hall, T., & Smith, R. J. (2014). Knowing the city: maps, mobility and urban outreach work. *Qualitative Research*, 14(3), 294-310.
- Harms, E. (2011). *Saigon's Edge: On the Margins of Ho Chi Minh City*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press.
- Helmreich, W.B. (2013). *The New York nobody knows: Walking 6,000 miles in the city*. Princeton University Press.
- Highmore, B. (2002). *Everyday life and cultural theory: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Hubbard, P. (2017a). *The Battle for the High Street, Retail Gentrification, Class and Disgust*. London: Palgrave.
- Hubbard, P. (2017b). *Key concepts in geography: city* (second edition) London: Routledge.
- Imai, H. (2017). *Tokyo Roji: The Diversity and Versatility of Alleyways in a City in Transition*. London, Taylor & Francis.
- Jackson, P. (1988). Street life: the politics of Carnival. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6(2), 213-227.
- Jacobs, J (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York, Vintage Books.
- Jones, A.J. (2016). *On South Bank: the production of public space*. London, Routledge.
- Jones, P., Bunce, G., Evans, J., Gibbs, H., & Hein, J.R. (2008). Exploring space and place with walking interviews. *Journal of Research Practice*, 4(2), 2.
- Kidder, J.L. (2013). Parkour: Adventure, risk, and safety in the urban environment. *Qualitative sociology*, 36(3), 231-250.
- Knowles, C. (2005). *Bedlam on the Streets*. London, Routledge.
- Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life*. Paris: A&C Black.
- Lyon, D. (2016) 'Doing audio-visual montage to explore time and space: The everyday rhythms of Billingsgate Fish Market' *Sociological Research Online* 21 (3), 12: <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/21/3/12.html>.
- Merrifield, A. (2000). Henri Lefebvre - A socialist in space. In Thrift, N. and Crang, M. (eds) *Thinking space* London: Routledge.
- Miller, J. (1995). Gender and power on the streets: Street prostitution in the era of crack cocaine. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 23(4), 427-452.
- Mitchell, D. (2003). *The right to the city: Social justice and the fight for public space*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Mok, D., Wellman, B., & Carrasco, J. (2010). Does distance matter in the age of the internet?. *Urban Studies*, 47(13), 2747-2783.
- Mould, O. (2009). Parkour, the city, the event. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(4), 738-750.
- Mowla, Q.A. (1997). Settlement texture: study of a Mahalla in Dhaka. *Journal of Urban Design*, 2(3), 259-275.
- Nijman, J. (2007). Introduction—comparative urbanism. *Urban Geography*, 28(1), 1-6.
- Neal, S., Bennett, K., Cochrane, A., & Mohan, G. (2013). Living multicultural: understanding the new spatial and social relations of ethnicity and multicultural in England. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 31(2), 308-323.
- O'Neill, M., & Hubbard, P. (2010). Walking, sensing, belonging: ethno-mimesis as performative praxis. *Visual Studies*, 25(1), 46-58.
- Quayson, A. (2014). *Oxford Street, Accra: City life and the itineraries of transnationalism*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Reckless, W. (1926) *The Distribution of Commercialized Vice in the City: A Sociological Analysis*. *Publications of the American Sociological Society* 20:164 –76.

- Redmon, D. (2003). Playful deviance as an urban leisure activity: Secret selves, self-validation, and entertaining performances. *Deviant Behavior*, 24(1), 27-51.
- Roy, A. (2011). Slumdog cities: Rethinking subaltern urbanism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), 223-238.
- Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and planning A*, 38(2), 207-226.
- Simpson, P. (2012). Apprehending everyday rhythms: rhythmanalysis, time-lapse photography, and the space-times of street performance. *cultural geographies*, 19(4), 423-445.
- Smith, N. (1996). *The new urban frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Spradley, J. (1970). *You owe yourself a drunk: Adaptive strategies of urban nomads*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Stavrides, S. (2013). Contested urban rhythms: From the industrial city to the post-industrial urban archipelago. *The Sociological Review*, 61(1_suppl), 34-50.
- Stevens, Q. (2007). *The ludic city: exploring the potential of public spaces*. London: Routledge.
- Sundaram, U. (2016). *Theorising Place as Practiced Object of Consumption: A Street Ethnographic Story*. Exeter University, unpublished PhD.
- Temelová, J., & Novák, J. (2011). Daily street life in the inner city of Prague under transformation: the visual experience of socio-spatial differentiation and temporal rhythms. *Visual Studies*, 26(3), 213-228.
- Teo, S. S., & Neo, H. (2017). Encountering enchantment: stories from the street football court in Singapore. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 18(8), 1106-1128.
- Urry, J. (2004). The 'system' of automobility. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21(4-5), 25-39.
- Vergunst, J. (2010). Rhythms of walking: History and presence in a city street. *Space and Culture*, 13(4), 376-388.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024-1054.
- Watson, S. (2006). *City Publics: The (dis)enchantments of Urban Encounters*. London, Routledge.
- Whyte, W. F. (1943). *Street corner society; the social structure of an Italian slum*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Wilson, H. F. (2017). On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders, and difference. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(4) 451-171
- Wunderlich, F.M. (2008) 'Walking and Rhythmicity: Sensing Urban Space', *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(1): 31-44.
- Wunderlich, F.M. (2013) 'Place-Temporality and Urban Place-Rhythms in Urban Analysis and Design: An Aesthetic Akin to Music', *Journal of Urban Design*, 18(3): 383-408.
- Zukin, S., Kasinitz, P., & Chen, X. (2015). *Global Cities, Local Streets*. New York, Routledge.