



University
of Glasgow

Beck, D., and Purcell, R. (2015) Everyday experience and community development practice. *Radical Community Work Journal*, 1(1).

Copyright © 2015 The Authors

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/121758/>

Deposited on: 18 August 2016

Everyday Experience and Community Development Practice

Dave Beck and Rod Purcell
University of Glasgow

Abstract

This article explores the potential to apply what is generally known as ‘theories of everyday life’ and psychogeography to understanding how the experience of place affects individuals concept of self and their position within the world. We suggest that community development practice can become over focused on the practicalities of organizing, at the expense of understanding the daily life experience of individuals and communities. If community development practitioners applied an analysis based on the theories and experiences of everyday life they could better facilitate individuals to work collectively for personal and social change. The article explores the basic ideas of everyday life and psychogeography. We then identify a methodology for using these ideas in community development practice and provide an experimental example of such an analysis set in Las Vegas. Finally we discuss the potential for community development workers of linking such an analysis to the work of Freire and the ideas of Gramsci to increase the effectiveness of their practice.

Theories of Everyday Life

Highmore suggests that everyday life is the cultural experience of modernity; a patchwork of different times, places and intensity of experience (2009: 174). However, as this is our everyday experience we seldom stop to critically reflect upon it or the effect it has on shaping how we understand ourselves and by extension our understanding of how we fit in the world. As Hegel put it what “is familiar is not necessarily known” (Hegel, 2010).

Theories of everyday life are in reality a loose collection of works that have been developed from the late 1800’s and are still in a state of flux. These ideas start with early modernist analyses of Parisian as explored by Baudelaire, incorporate Marxist cultural themes from the Frankfurt School (particularly the work of Walter Benjamin), and continue through what could be called late French Marxist theory, to post structuralism and postmodernism. Interestingly, Paris as both subject and location of writers is central to these developments.

Georg Simmel in his 1903 essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (2000) argues that life in the city challenges the individual to maintain their autonomy and individuality in the face of time, space, cultural pressures, mental overstimulation and fragmentation. The effect of these pressures and the increasing specialization of behavior force the citizen to both limit their self-expression and to see themselves as a distinct individual. In such a context the idea of the public good, co-operative and collective activity becomes problematic.

Simmel suggested that art movements could be used as templates to explore the true nature of modern life and its effect on citizens. Indeed, the role of art as a method to make us see the reality of the everyday has a long history and was taken up in particular by the Surrealists. During the 1920’s and 1930’s the Surrealists experimented, albeit in a rather haphazard way, with

art, writing, music and films to shift consciousness beyond the everyday; to lay bare the psychological truth behind modern life. As the Belgian artist Rene Magritte said “everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see” (quoted in Torczyner, 1977: 172). A favorite approach of the Surrealists was through automatism: spontaneous behavior that could be public events but was more usually based around automatic writing or drawing to provide the unconscious with a route of expression. Other and perhaps more fruitful approaches were developed based on collage and juxtapositions of words and images.

Although the manifestation of the Surrealist movement is through cultural products, the stated intention was to promote a revolutionary change on how life is lived. A challenge the Surrealists never overcame was how to take their ideas drawn from an artistic elite to the masses. Andre Breton’s famous comment that “the man that cannot visualize a horse galloping on a tomato is an idiot” perhaps demonstrates the gap between the Surrealists and the possibility of seriously engaging the working class in reflecting on their everyday life as a springboard for action.

Running alongside the Surrealists was the work of Walter Benjamin who provided some Marxist rigor to the understanding of everyday life and culture. One of Benjamin’s central concerns was to explore how art, and the politics of art, can be developed for revolutionary potential. Benjamin was clear in his belief that to understand the present we need to understand the broader historical context that has created it. He believed that modernity had overwhelmed us with consumption and objects. Like Simmel he argued that the intellect could not process the pressures of urban life and as a result we silence ourselves. This is a theme that reappears with Freire (1972) as the ‘culture of silence’ (although Freire has a different take on how this condition developed).

In some ways Benjamin’s writings on art, especially *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008), and the unfinished *Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999 and Hanssen 2006) prefigures postmodernism. He suggested that before modernism works of art were original pieces that through their uniqueness and existence only in a specific place had an ‘*aura*’; that is a cultural attachment of awe and reverence. In the modern age not only has everyday life been mechanized, so has the production of art. The aura of an original has been lost amongst the plethora of mass-produced reproductions. Freed from place and ritual, art could become emancipated and available for revolutionary purposes. Benjamin had a preference for film and saw the old elitist painter being replaced by the democratic cameraman. Film could through close-ups, juxtapositions and narratives help us see the real in the everyday.

In the unfinished *Arcades Project* Benjamin developed a critique of the Parisian bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century through a cultural analysis of consumption as played out in the then new shopping arcades. Underpinning the project is his analysis of how everything became commodified as an integral and inevitable part of modernity. For the purposes of this article the important thing is the methodology he developed. Benjamin created 36 categories of analysis (for example fashion, prostitution, boredom, dream city, advertising, photography) each one constructed as a montage of quotations and reflections. In an IT literate world it would be easy to expand this approach to understanding the city through sound and video clips, photographs, poetry and personal narrative into an on-line hypertext experience.

While this deeply complex work was being undertaken in Paris, Britain had a simpler version known as *Mass Observation*. The idea of *Mass Observation* was to record everyday life in

Britain through using local volunteers to record their own, and other peoples, activities and conversations. There was an inherent class position embedded in this work as the leaders of Mass Observation tended to be middle class intellectuals living in London. Key people included an anthropologist (Tom Harrison), filmmaker (Humphrey Jennings) and poet (Charles Madge). The objects of the observations were mostly working class people living in northern industrial cities. For example a series of working class studies were produced under the heading of Worktown which in reality was life in the poorer parts of Bolton (Mass Observation 1970)

In the 13 years of Mass Observation a considerable amount of information was collected (the archive is now located at the University of Sussex: <http://www.massobs.org.uk/index.htm>). A variety of methods were used to form an understanding of what everyday life contained. Attempts were made to use montage and juxtaposition reflecting some links between the group and the Surrealists, although many of the records are simply collections of micro details and conversations from the home, street, pubs and work. Mass Observation has been accused of invasion of privacy to simple nosiness. However, it did train local people in basic anthropological methods and on occasion allowed ordinary people to present the information without 'expert' reinterpretation. This reflects one of Benjamin's positions: "I don't need to comment, just exhibit"

A strength or weakness of Mass Observation was the seemingly random nature of the material required. One guidance note gave the following headings for data collection (quoted in Highmore 2009: 90/91)

- Shouts and gestures of motorists
- The aspidistra cult
- Anthropology of football pools
- Bathroom behavior
- Distribution of the dirty joke
- Female taboos about eating

Or this collage of interview questions:

- What is your class?
- Did you ever hate your Father?
- Do you hate your boss?
- Do you want a son or daughter?
- What is your greatest ambition?
- Do you approve of marriage?
- Are you religious?
- What are you most frightened of?
- What do you mean by freedom?

Henri Lefebvre (1991, 2008) wrote extensively around the nature of everyday life from a late Marxist perspective. Lefebvre believed that life is constructed by the rhythm of capital and like

Benjamin argues this led to the bureaucratization and commodification of the everyday. Our lives are structured to engage us in work and for the consumption of goods created by work. The meaning in our life is based upon these two actions, although we are brought up to believe otherwise.

Life is not therefore as it appears to us. We live on the surface of things and the challenge is to find the hidden reality that has been mystified by the dominant culture. This position is both clearly influenced by Gramsci and his writings on Hegemony and an influence of Freire and his different levels of consciousness (we live in naïve consciousness but need in his view to develop a critical consciousness)

Lefebvre argues that to break down the mystification of life is difficult as we live our lives through a socially conformist and mythic reading of social texts which surround us. We are also contained within this social text; in effect we are simultaneously both subject and object. According to Lefebvre there are two kinds of myths at play. Firstly, top down myths that define narrow limits to acceptable behavior and explanation for the world. They also function to hide the reality and power of the dominant ideology. In contrast everyday myths are generated by our own experience of an alienated life. These may be inherited family folklore, media dreams (when you grow up you can... falling in love means....) and promises of freedom that comes from consumption and earning an income.

Lefebvre suggest that this modern life is played out in various urban spaces where the historical legacy, global influences, local perspectives, economics, politics, ideology and social affairs mix and battle out their various contradictions. In the modern world these spaces are artificially constructed and controlled by the dominant order. We have gone from the piazza of medieval cities where public life manifested itself in competing forms, to plazas owned and controlled by corporations and policed by state or private security so work and consumption can continue unmolested. Although the normal daily experience is one of alienation, Lefebvre suggests there are moments of vivid sensation that can give some insight to the nature of reality. Art and carnivals can break up the rhythms of the everyday and help us see the reality of existence, because they can create temporary structures that take us outside of the normal daily rhythms and order of space.

Michel de Certeau picks up on these themes and writes directly on the practice of Everyday Life (1984). Drawing on Lefebvre, de Certeau was also influenced by structuralism and post structuralism, which brings a different perspective to some of these questions. Accepting the centrality of space in the creation and maintenance of everyday life, de Certeau argues that the institutions of the dominant order control space through various 'strategies' that enforce, usually informally, what we do, where we do it and when we do it. This leads to the colonization and regularization of daily life; the commute to work, work time, shopping, journey home, organized recreation, packaged holidays, the weekend and so on.

Alienated and individualized, people try to make their lives more liveable and develop 'tactics' to this end. Tactics are usually responsive and spontaneous, seeking to subvert authority, bend rules, and find gaps to operate in. Conquergood (1992: 83) describes tactics as a 'performance repertoire' of displaced, disenfranchised, and dominated people, deploying 'improvisational savvy'. Existing within what Freire would call naïve consciousness (since they are not based on any critical analysis of the world) tactics take many forms; they may be based on self-

interest, individualized, reactionary, collective and oppositional in various combinations. Tactics can be minor such as surfing the Internet at work, escapism through gardening, political activity such as opposing immigration or campaigning against globalization. You can live a regular life and hold down a job but operate your tactics at work (escape without leaving). A tactic of resistance to the strategies of domination can be to do nothing (refusing to play).

For change to take place tactics need to be developed from a more critical perspective. Posing the questions of 'what have I got' and 'what will I do' de Certeau talks about the assembly of what is, and creative imaginings that are different from the products of authority. He calls this bricolage but it also has elements in common with postmodern resampling; taking things as they are and repackaging them to alternative ends. Capitalism is good at this, taking for example protest songs and turning them in to marketing for commodities. de Certeau is suggesting reversing this process, something the Surrealists would have approved of. As an example de Certeau proposes cooking as a tactic. He discusses the social practice of cooking, the oral tradition of handing down recipes, the resistance to buying packed and processed goods, and taking control of time to create your own food.

Psychogeography

From the late 1950's to the early 1970's the Situationists picked up the legacy of the Surrealists, Marxism, the centrality of space, concern with how everyday life is lived and the avant-garde in general and attempted to find ways of realizing repressed human passion and desires. Debord the most influential of the Situationists believed that under advanced capitalism, everyday life is reduced to an immense accumulation of spectacles, a triumph of mere appearance where "all that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (1992, Thesis 1). In their opening statement the Situationists declared that "each person must seek what he loves, what attracts him" (Situationists International #1 1958). Raoul Vaneigem in *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (2006) explored how the working of society led to personal repression. He believed that communication between people and participation in formal and informal events are perverted by the nature of social relationships created under capitalism. People are manipulated 'objects' whose lives have been focused on, and defined by, consumption. Vaneigem proclaimed, "all space is occupied by the enemy. We are living under a permanent curfew" (quoted in Gray 1998: 26) and that walking in occupied space is in itself a revolutionary act.

Walking in space was to become one of the key legacies of the Situationists. One of the products from this movement was psychogeography. This was described by Guy Debord as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals"(1955). Urban life for Debord was characterized by the "sudden change of ambience in a street within the space of a few metres; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres' and the appealing or repellent character of certain places". The way to understand and expose this was through the *derive*.

The idea of the *derive* comes originally from Baudelaire who in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* in which he discusses the new class of idle and wealthy men who spent their time watching the Parisian world go by; people he called 'flaneurs'. Benjamin debates their role in his

Arcades project, and it is still a hot topic of discourse. Are flaneurs always men, is flaneury really about watching women, can there be a gay/lesbian version of flaneury and so on. The Surrealists picked up on the idea and Aragon and Breton saw 'strolling' the streets of Paris as way of reframing the mundane; everywhere you look there is something marvellous to see.

For Dubord the derive is walking with a purpose, with a critical mindset but without preconception. In the last decade or so the derive has been taken up in a number of forms, most often as literature. For example Iain Sinclair (2002, 2003, 2009) has written a number of books exploring the historical shaping and current cultural manifestation of London based on extensive walks. From a more academic perspective Ben Jacks has been exploring New York. Derives also open themselves up to exploration through video, photography, art and personal narrative.

There are of course critiques of psychogeography. For example Smith (2010) argues that Psychogeography as a radical practice died with the failed Paris uprising of 1968. He suggests that its current revival as an activity, mainly in the UK and USA, is essentially depoliticized and has been reimagined and promoted within the tradition of the flaneur (Cloverley 2006). The derive as currently practiced is often simply looking at things with some detachment rather than a revolutionary practice. In its current formation it is more akin to wandering in the style of Rebecca Solnit (*Wanderlust* 2000) or romanticized literature. The usual suspects for this are Peter Ackroyd (2000 and 2007), Michael Moorcock (1988) as well as Ian Sinclair.

Bonnett (2009) sees psychogeography differently. He suggests it is as part of the resurgence of romantic nostalgia for a more community focused and less commodified life. Or as what is sometimes called magico-Marxism (Bin 1996) and a vague folk history that valorises old working class buildings, spaces and practices. By rediscovering the radical old we can believe that we are building the radical new, whilst avoiding the capitalist modernist infrastructure of the modern city. In the 1990's a number of groups sprung up in the UK and USA that promoted and practiced variations of this view. These organisations included the London Psychogeographical Association, Manchester Area Psychogeographic, Nottingham, Psychogeographic Unit, New York Psychogeographical Association, Washington Psychogeographical Association.

Alongside the writing on psychogeography are the production of films, most notably Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997). There are also a random but continuing series of events. One of the latest being the 'You Are Here' – mapping the psychogeography of New York exhibition in Manhattan, and the work of the Center for Missed Connections, also in New York. In addition there are a range of psychogeographic works on YouTube and an increasing range of interactive smartphone Apps (for example DRIFT: a tool for getting lost in familiar places) suggesting that the psychogeography is becoming embedded in social media culture.

Methods

Although the intellectual tradition and theoretical perspectives are clear, there are a number of challenges in developing particle methods to unpack people's experience of everyday life. Highmore suggests that work in this area needs clear perspectives and boundaries to create "a range of aesthetics for registering the unregistered: dialectical approaches that reveal the general in the particular; explosive juxtapositions of disparate material; productive assemblages of related

phenomena; a general poetics of the singularity of living” (2009: 174).

We can derive from the above theories a number of practical research methods which can be used by community development and community arts workers with local people to explore their feelings about the spaces in which they live and work and how these feelings affect what they do, and do not do in their lives.

Firstly, there is the perspective of the **flaneur**. As we have discussed the classic flaneur sat and watched the world go past with perhaps an uncritical eye. For research purposes we need to be clear about our ideological lens and filters, and watch with a purpose equipped with critical questions drawn from the bullet points below.

Related to flaneury there is the classic **walking the area**. This can manifest itself as Surrealist strolling or a Situationist derive. A similar approach is used in Participative Rapid Appraisal methodology (PRA) as a transect walk. The difference in approach is determined by what questions are posed to generate the material during the walk. The walk can be undertaken by the researcher / worker, with local people or by local people on their own. A suggested set of questions developed by community development practitioners (Purcell 2011) could be:

- Who owns / controls this space?
- Are there different layers of culture / history / mythology overlaying each other
- Is this space used differently throughout the day?
- Are there regular users, transient users, of this space
- Is it public or private space, or are people acting out their private life in public?
- How the space is used to include people (who is included and why, what are they doing)?
- How space is used to exclude people (who is not there, why)?
- How this space is experienced according to different class / gender/ sexuality / ethnicity / culture / age (as appropriate)?
- Any signs of transgression, if so why here?
- What is the ideological nature of this space (e.g.: does it promote hegemony and if so how, what is normal / acceptable behavior)?
- Can you see institutional strategies of control?
- Can you see individuals or groups using tactics to as defensive / offensive responses?
- What psychogeographic issues arise from the above; for individual for various groups / sub cultures?

Lynch in his classic *Image of the City* (1960) explored how people perceive and organize spatial information to find their way around urban areas. He suggests that people create **mental maps** of their areas in which they live and work. Lynch called this process imageability. This individualized image of the urban space is based around five elements, what he termed:

- **paths**, the streets, sidewalks, trails, and other channels in which people travel;
- **edges**, perceived boundaries such as walls, buildings, and shorelines;

- **districts**, relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character;
- **nodes**, focal points, intersections or loci; and
- **landmarks**, readily identifiable objects which serve as reference points

A useful method would be to work with people record their individual mental maps. The maps can then be discussed to explore why the particular sites and objects have been used, what memories and feelings are attached to these places, and what this means for the people concerned.

From Lefebvre we could explore what he termed **rhythmanalysis**. What happens in a particular space, when does it happen, how fast/slow/often does it happen? These questions can be applied to groups of people, activities and the routines of individual daily life.

Lefebvre was also concerned with the often hidden but **underpinning influences**:

- What are the historical and cultural legacies of the space under consideration?
- In what way does globalization impact on the space?
- What of this is visible, what is invisible but which still leaves cultural traces?
- How do these factors affect private lives and public activity?
- How is the space gendered, and what are the implicit ethnic relationships?
- What are the dominant, residual and emerging cultural practices at play here?

Such questions could be explored through discussion, or built around video, photography, art, poetry, personal stories and other arts based approaches.

From a broader perspective Alistair Bonnet (2014) explores a diverse range of spaces that he variously terms, lost spaces, invisible cities, feral places and so on. The following typography is developed from his work, and can be used to re-conceptualise and analyse our surroundings.

Lost Spaces

- Fantasy space
- One space, multiple identities
- Site of destruction of memory
- Evolution of space v Museumfication
- Detroitism – pleasure in consuming urban decay

Hidden Geographies

- Discovery of new spaces (to you)
- Gated communities (multiple kinds and sizes – physical and mental)
- Marginal spaces
- Legacy of the past, and how people live with it

No Man's Land

- Liminal spaces (between here and there)
- Avoided spaces

- Ignored spaces that become locally invisible

Power Places

- Space as power symbols
- Spaces as empty symbols of power
- Monuments / spaces without purpose

Spaces of Exception

- Spaces where different rules apply
- It might look ordinary, but
- Spaces of exclusion (race, gender, class, etc)
- 'Free' spaces
- Remnants of the past
- Spaces of embedded transgression

Ephemeral Places

- Space of temporary escape (physical, mental, sexual, etc)
- Temporary utopias (festival sites, places where you were happy, etc)
- Children's secret places
- Sensuality of nature

Personal History of Place

Las Vegas: a derive along the strip

"An organic thing responding to the dark dreams of the American people" Anthony Bourdain

This examination of Las Vegas is based on personal observation, videos, interviews, informal conversations and photography. Analysis of these events and artefacts was carried out through ongoing dialogue at the time and discussion of our written records when we returned home. As an initial experimentation with this form of investigation, elements from different theorists and practices were eclectically employed. On reflection, identification of two or three sensitizing concepts might have been useful. Blumer (1954) discusses sensitizing concepts as those which do not give prescriptions of what to see but suggest where to look. Bowen (2006) suggests that this approach tends to lead to greater coherence and depth of analysis. In effect themes suggested themselves through the investigation and perhaps allowing the spaces to speak for themselves gave a more candid and spontaneous analysis. What follows is a selection of the many themes that emerged which exemplify the process of observation and analysis.

Gender

The first theme to emerge borrowed from Lefebvre is that of gendered space. Whether it is the magazines in the street dispensers, the billboards, the pictures on buses and trucks or the lines of immigrant workers (card flickers) who flick cards advertising ladies for rent, the message is clear, "women are a commodity to be bought in Vegas".

We had a conversation with a young man in a bar. He was from the UK, married with a small child; by his account happy in his relationship and settled in his family. He told us that he had never slept with a black woman but since he was in Vegas he had bought one and had been very happy with the result. The refrain, 'What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas' is one which we will return to; it is possible to step out of the normal patterns, values and practices of life and indulge in dangerous or unacceptable consequence-free behavior and then step back into real life as if nothing had ever happened.

We discussed Las Vegas with a community development worker in Los Angeles and asked what she didn't like about it; she was of the opinion that it was "all good". It is striking that this is a highly gendered space is rendered unproblematic; it is either celebrated or invisibilised.

Transgression

We asked a young Texan in a taxi queue what he loved about Vegas, he sang out "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas baby!" The possibility of transgression without consequences thrilled him. He couldn't think of any downside the Vegas experience, "It's all good man, it's all good!" Again the celebration of action without consequence is the idea that underpins his comment. Limitless supplies of alcohol and food, limited sense of time and distorted sense of place, possibility of riches with no effort and the promise of actions without consequences is a heady mixture. It dislocates people from the commonplace and relocates them in the hyper real space where anything can happen – even though my sense is that so little actually does. One couple we talked to come to Vegas several time a year to gamble and to experience a feeling that

you could do anything you want at any time of the day; even though they didn't do that much.

Las Vegas is a city of transgression but it must be seen in the global context, since it has become a global symbol. It is the prime example of escaping but not leaving as discussed above. This bubble of commercially sponsored transgression allows people to rebel and allows capitalism to function with consent intact. People conform in their daily routine, knowing that freedom is only a plane ride away. Months of working earning and saving are rewarded by this hyper-real escape, which never quite satisfies. Maybe a bigger burrito, a more exotic hotel, more sex and of course more money would give the ultimate and satisfying experience. All of which drives people back to a narrow life of working, conforming and silently waiting for the next trip.

Control of Space

On a local level some forms of transgression are strictly controlled. There are no beggars, no street traders, and no sign of homeless people until it gets dark. The nature of the strip blurs day and night, inside and outside, local and global sets a context where the rules are seemingly suspended; if only you can ignore the CCTV, the guards and the polite but firm warnings. Controlled transgression, illusory transgression and above all paid for transgression gives vent to a deeply felt need to rebel in a way which does not challenge to prevailing order; it all stays in Vegas and we go home to our normal lives. It is a glossy tool in the hand of hegemony, which helps secure consent and aspiration for a commodified authentic experience, which can never be realized.

Poor housing flanks the strip where the people on whose labour the dream is built are hidden. Neither are there beggars or hawkers in the open; the poor and the homeless are excluded. Like the shopping malls across the world, customers are protect against anything that would interfere with their shopping experience. Poverty and exploitation is here but in a way that no one has to see.

Juxtaposing and Contradiction (The journey from the Strip to the Air Force base)

As you move out from the strip along Las Vegas Boulevard you pass into business area, then an area that seems to be made up of mainly lawyers' offices. Picking up on Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, the picture is very different after dark when many of these doorways became the sleeping place for homeless people. The contradiction between the lawyers' offices that represent the system, fairness and justice and the people sleeping with nothing shows that our myth of society is an ideology. It is, "culturally produced and socially supported, unexamined way of seeing the world which shapes and guides social action" (Carr and Kemmis 1986 p132). That enables us to maintain the notions of a society where people are free and equal whilst the invisible homeless people of the daytime come out at night to find a place to sleep.

Juxtaposing Cars and People

As you progress further along Las Vegas Boulevard there are many industrial, retail and residential areas but these seem to be broken up and intersect with each other. Often we thought the spaces given over to cars - car lots, places to upgrade your sounds, tint your windows etc. - were better than that for people. Periodically there were blocks of trailers, often called communities or villages (another example of mythologizing our experience), and always walled or fenced off from the rest of the area. Then a series of gated communities with security controlled entrances, definitely walled off from the rest. Everywhere the major roads split their way through the areas, separating and disjointing the urban landscape. The further out we got from the Strip

the streets became increasingly empty of pedestrians. Only a few people pushing their shopping trolleys and others just looking poor or mentally ill - maybe sane people don't walk about here.

Shopping strip beside a large trailer community

The trailer park is separated from the road by a wall and a large area of waste ground and then a main road. On the other side of the road is a bus shelter advertising an immigration lawyer and beyond that is a gated community, guarded by steel gates with written warnings not to trespass. The bus that drew up to the stop had an advertising poster warning about domestic violence and how we should all be on the lookout for it.

The shopping area consisted of two shop front churches, shops where you could get your clothes, tools and TVs repaired and some fast food outlets. There is lots of evidence of multicultural communities; many signs in Spanish etc. The only decent shop is one selling mobile phones. A series of small auto repair shops are located at the back of the retail outlets. The car is definitely king here. Nearby you can raise money on the deeds of your car; this must be the ultimate risk and a desperate last resort in a place where the car is so central.

We wondered how people caught between the Strip and the Air Force base, between the waste ground and the roads, developed tactics to survive to make life enjoyable and meaningful. Three things which impressed themselves were Churches, Fast Food and Pornography. All very visible, albeit very different, forms of escape from the everyday were ever present.

Freire and Gramsci

Many contemporary examples of adult education and community development practice take as their starting point a simplistic identification of the needs or issues within the community. Worse still, they may be the result of centrally conceived, top-down agency or state sponsored programs. As such these processes are unlikely to accord with the deepest needs of people within those communities and therefore result in only very superficial social change. It also leaves community practice open to the charges of dealing only with local issues, being non-reflective and ameliorating symptoms rather than dealing with causes. In order to address some of these issues we suggest the need for an adult educational model of practice, which integrates the ideas of everyday life, the fieldwork psychogeographic approaches with the ideas of Freire and Gramsci to provide a framework for deeper analysis.

The starting point for this model is to take seriously the claims by Hegel that what "is familiar is not necessarily known". If this is the case then we must employ a more sophisticated range of processes to enable people to have an authentic experience of their lives. A way to begin this process is to create moments of vivid sensation as described by Lefebvre. The derive of Las Vegas Boulevard is an example of how that process can be undertaken although many other approaches could be used. These might include Photovoice (www.photovoice.org) and other arts-based approaches. All of these provided ways of seeing one's environment with fresh eyes. By altering the gaze of participants from passive consumers to subjects of reflection a critical curiosity is awakened which questions the status quo and long-held assumptions which trap people into a state of believing that nothing can change. Therefore a process of re-seeing one's historical, social and material conditions is an indispensable first step in a process of transformative social action. On their own these subjective experiences are not enough to initiate and sustain transformative social action since the vivid insights gained through the process of derive, arts-based approaches or other methodologies are of little use if not critically reflected on. It is here we see the need to link up psycho geographic processes with the Freirean approach (Freire 1972).

Freire's structured process of de-codifying the products of the vivid sensation through dialogue links people's subjective experiences with wider frameworks of analysis and sets them in the context of the economic, political and social world within which they occur. This is the development of consciousness works at the level of the individual and also increases a sense of both collective understanding and collective agency and as the basis for transformative action. This collectivizing of issues has always been at the heart of radical community practice. A Freirean approach enables a process whereby critical reflection and action can be combined. This of course brings us to Freire's idea of praxis. This indivisible unity of thought and action ensures that practitioners steer clear of mindless activism and one side and empty theorizing on the other. Of course if practice only reflects on, collectivizes and acts on local issues and structural and systemic causes which underlie those issues remain untouched. It is here that the linkage the work of Antonio Gramsci and his ideals of developing counter hegemony become essential to conceptualizing an effective practice (Hoare and Smith 1971). It is beyond the scope of this article to go deeper into the relationship between Freire and Gramsci. The interested reader could usefully consult Peter Mayo, (1999), Marjorie Mayo (1999), Margaret Ledwith 2001 and for a more practice orientation Beck and Purcell (2010).

Promoting counter hegemony lifts community development practice from the realm of the purely local to one where the possibility of developing a global counter hegemonic block can be considered. This aspect of practice actively seeks out individuals and organizations that share the values of community development with a view to developing a new consensus about what it means to be more fully human and to relate in more equitable ways. The long-term vision of this approach is to challenge the current hegemony thereby challenging the structural forces that give rise to the many forms of oppression which we experience in our world.

Conclusion

Top down approaches to community transformation are bound to fail, and processes where individuals are allowed to choose from prescribed set of options are similarly doomed. Adult educators and community development workers innately understand that all good practice is based on the experience of the people. The challenge is how we engage people in ways that are authentic and lead to lasting change. The approach discussed here gives workers a methodology which allows people to re-examine their world in order to recreate it. It thereby releases an energy and creativity, which both identifies challenges and develops solutions. By blending exploration, critical analysis and the development of counter-hegemonic processes and structures the possibility of lasting social change is greatly enhanced.

References

- Ackroyd, P. (2000) *London: The Biography*, London Chatto and Windus
Ackroyd, P. (2007) *Thames; Sacred River*, London Chatto and Windus
Baudelaire, C. (1995). *The Painter of Modern Life*, London: Phaidon Press
Beck, D. Purcell, R. (2010). *Popular Education for Youth and Community Development Work*, Exeter: Learning Matters
Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project*, edited by Roy Tiedemann, Harvard University Press
Benjamin, W. (2008). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

- Bin, D. (1996) Review of the London Psychological Association Newsletters and Manchester Area Psychogeographic, *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration* 2/3: 120-1
- Blumer, H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review*, 18, 3-10.
- Bonnett, A. (2009) The Dilemmas of Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26:45
- Bonnet, A. (2014) *Off the Map*, London: Aurum Press
- Bowen, G. A. (2006) Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5 (3)
- Breton, A. (1972), *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan
- Carr, W. And Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education Knowledge and Action Research*, London: Routledge
- Cloverley, M. (2006) *Psychogeography*, Pocket Essentials.
- Conquergood, D. (1992). Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 : 80-123.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Dubord, G. (1955). *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*, in Bauder, H & Di Mauro, S.E., *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings*, (p 23 – 27) Kelowna, BC. ePraxis Press
- Dubord, G. (1992). *Society of the Spectacle*, London: Rebel Press
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Gray, C. (Ed) 1998. *Leaving the 20th Century: the Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, London: Rebel Press
- Highmore, B. (2009). *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, London: Routledge
- Hanssen, B. 2006. *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, London & New York: Continuum
- Hegel, G. (2010). *The Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hoare Q and Smith G, (eds.) (1971) *Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebook* London: Lawrence and Wishart
- Jacks, B. *Walking the City: Manhattan Projects*, at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1965&context=ced/places>
- Ledwith, M. (2001). Community work as critical pedagogy; re-envisioning Freire and Gramsci, *Community Development Journal*, 36.3, 171–182.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*, Chichester: Wiley Blackwell
- Lefebvre, H. (2008). *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vols 1-3, Verso
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press
- Mass Observation (1970). *The Pub and People: a Worktown study*, London: Seven Dials Press
- Mayo, M. (1999). *Imagining Tomorrow: Community Adult Education for Transformation*. Leicester: NIACE
- Mayo, P.(1999). *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education*, London: Zed Books
- Moorcock, M (1988) *Mother London*, London: Secker and Warburg
- Purcell, R. (2011). Community Development and Everyday Life, *Community Development Journal* 47(2) 266-281
- Simmel, G. (2000). "The Metropolis and Mental Life." in *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, 3d ed, edited by James Farganis. New York: McGraw Hill
- Sinclair, I. (2002) *London Orbital*, London: Granta
- Sinclair, I. (2003). *Lights.Out for the Territory*, Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Sinclair, I. (2009). *Hackney that Rose Red Empire; a confidential report*, London: Hamish Hamilton
- Situationists International #1 available from <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/situ.html>
- Smith, P. (2010) The Contemporary Derive: A partial Review of Issues Concerning The Contemporary Practice of psychogeography, *Cultural Geographies* 17: 1 103-122
- Solnit, R. (2000) *Wanderlust*, Viking

Torczyner, H. (1977). *Magritte: Ideas and Images* New York: Harry N. Abrams
Vaneigen, R. (2006). *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, London: Rebel Press