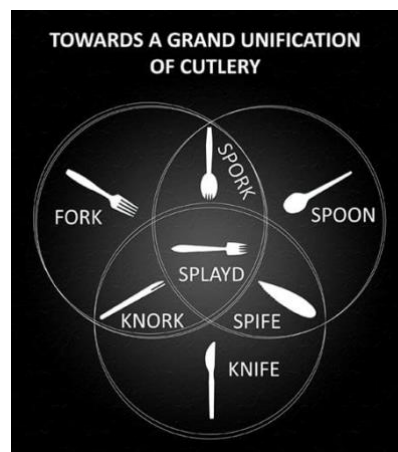# Doing Things with Urban Theory[1]

1). Theorising the urban

In the social sciences and humanities, there are a number of different intellectual traditions that have defined the city or 'the urban'. One way of navigating the field of urban theory is to think of different traditions as emphasising specific aspects of urban processes. On this view, we can identify three broad ways in which cities have been thought about in social research:

> 1. The emphasis is sometimes on thinking about the processes that produce and reproduce cities – that is, on explaining the very process of urbanisation itself. This is often the emphasis, for example, in certain fields of economic geography and regional science. So, for example, understanding urbanisation as a process of spatial agglomeration of functions, activities and practices leads to the sense that all sorts of contradictions and conflicts are clustered together in urban places. From this perspective, urbanisation is understood as a dynamic force in generating issues and contestation. This emphasis on explaining urbanization is also, as we'll see below, a strong emphasis of Marxist strands of geographical thought

> 2. The city is often presented as embodying a certain sort of distinctively modern community: a community of strangers thrown together by circumstance and contingency, shaped by the rhythms and routines of urban life. This is the central concern of classical sociological accounts of the city, including ideas of figures such as Max Weber and Georg Simmel. Here, the urban is associated with the generation of distinctive styles of experience, consciousness and subjectivity that enable people to forge new identifications, new solidarities and new forms of belonging.

> 3. The city is often talked about as a type of subject in its own right, with interests of its own and bestowed with capacities to act in the furtherance of those interests. This is the emphasis found in work in political science, a great deal of urban geography, as well as fields such as planning studies. The idea of 'the city' as subject might be understood with reference to local government agencies, urban growth coalitions or the 'community'.

None of these three strands of urban thought and spatial theory provides a watertight, all-inclusive definition of the urban, or the city, or of place.


TOWARDS A GRAND UNIFICATION OF CUTLERY

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[1] Barnett, C. 2021. Doing things with urban theory. GEO2312 Global Urban Futures, University of Exeter, January 2021.

But perhaps we shouldn't think of the resources of theoretical traditions in this way to start with anyway. It might be better to think of different ideas of what defines a city, or what the urban is, as reflecting different 'problematisations' of spatial issues (see Cochrane 2007; Barnett and Bridge 2017; Iossifova *et al* 2018). By this, all we really mean is that different strands of urban theory might be thought of as representing attempts to respond to recurring problems associated with some aspect or other of urbanisation processes.

Thinking of different traditions of urban and spatial theory in terms of 'problematisations' helps us to see them as responses to recurring problems associated with some aspect of urbanisation processes.

> 1). So, the strong emphasis on explaining urbanisation focusses on identifying *causal process* is a response to issues associated with the clustering and intensification of production, provisioning and consumption in larger and larger concentrations of built environment, with complex divisions of labour, and supported by complex technological infrastructures.
>
> 2). The second emphasis on the city as a distinctive form of *social organism* is likewise an index of the observable problems associated with the displacement and relocation of large numbers of people from different backgrounds into close proximity with one another and the ensuing challenge of forging new forms of sociability and belonging.
>
> 3). And third, the focus on the city as a *scale of governance* is a reflection on ongoing problems of defining just what powers urban governments do and should have over what scope of activity and how those powers should best be exercised and regulated.

If we think of different strands of urban theory in this way, as reflecting distinct problematisations of urban processes, then we arrive at a different approach to making sense of what these theories are good for. Rather than thinking that our task is to arrive at the proper definition of what a city is, or how to characterise urbanisation, we might instead think of these strands as having a certain 'family resemblance' to one another, overlapping in places, but as also drawing out and making visible distinctive 'aspects' of urban life.
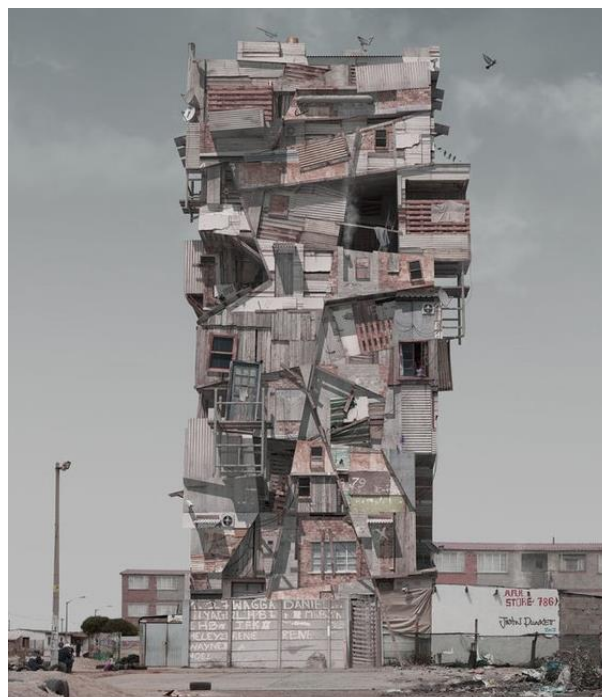
Thinking in this way helps us to regard these different strands of theory not so much as providing definitions, but as opening up *questions* – questions we can deploy analytically in our own investigations of particular urban issues and problems:

> 1). The first type of question we can ask about the issues facing decision makers who are focused on urban problems concerns *causal analysis*. This type of question seeks to understand the processes, practices, interests and actors which generate the conditions through which issues emerge as potential objects of intervention, management and regulation. [Section 2 below]

> 2). The second type of question focuses on how these potential objects of action are *identified* and *recognised*. This type of question focuses on the communicative processes which provide opportunities for people to recognise shared interests, identify a shared sense of grievance or develop collective strategies to express their concerns. [Section 3 below]

> 3). The third type of question we can ask is concerned with understanding the powers that different actors or organisations have to *act effectively* on urban issues. The action-oriented focus of decision makers leads us to ask whether the urban is necessarily an effective jurisdictional scale for managing urban issues, whether it is a scale of legitimate government, or a scene for the exercise of citizenship. [Section 4 below]

Each of the three questions opens up to view one *aspect* of any particular issue (see Barnett 2014). A comprehensive understanding of any specific issue will involve the integration of all three aspects.

We will now move on to look at each of these three ways of thinking about cities and 'the urban' in a little more detail.

2 Explaining urban issues

We have seen that one way of approaching urban theory is to think of different types of questions that different strands of thought can open up – questions about explanation, understanding or action. The **first type of question** focuses on identifying the causal processes at work in generating the stresses and strains, the opportunities and potentials provided by urbanisation processes. There are various traditions of urban thought that adopt a primarily explanatory perspective, but here we are going to focus on Marxism, a key strand of geographical thinking on urban issues. In particular, we are going to dwell a little on the work of David Harvey, who you will perhaps have come across in other modules.

In Harvey's (2012) account of the global financial crisis of 2009, urban processes are given a central explanatory role. Harvey conceptualises neoliberal policy regimes as promoting the financialization of everything, and focusses on the connections between the dynamics of global financial markets and the dynamics of urban restructuring around the world since the 1970s. His strong claim is that his approach represents a more robust and more incisive causal explanation of the current financial crisis precisely because it does explain the internal relationship between, for example, the innovation of new financial instruments such as 'derivatives', which gamble on future commodity prices, and the explosion of sub-prime mortgage products in the USA from the 1990s onwards.

In explaining events in the 2000s, Harvey is drawing on his earlier conceptualisation of what he calls 'the urbanisation of capital' (Harvey, 1985). In this view of capitalist urbanization, there is a constant tension in the resulting pattern of urban development. As the fixed patterns of built environments and material infrastructures are configured to enable the ongoing circulation of capital, there comes a point when these patterns come to act as a drag on further profitability, rather than greasing the path for ongoing accumulation. This is the dynamic, which Harvey calls 'creative destruction', that characterises urban development under capitalism, a tension arising from the internal connection between fixity and mobility in the urban landscape. In this view, capitalist urbanisation:

> "… must negotiate a knife-edge between preserving the values of past commitments made at a particular place and time, or devaluing them to open up fresh room for accumulation. Capitalism perpetually strives, therefore, to create a social and physical landscape in its own image and requisite to its own needs at a particular point in time, only just as certainly to undermine, disrupt and even destroy that landscape at a later point in time. The inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes." (Harvey, 1985, p. 150).
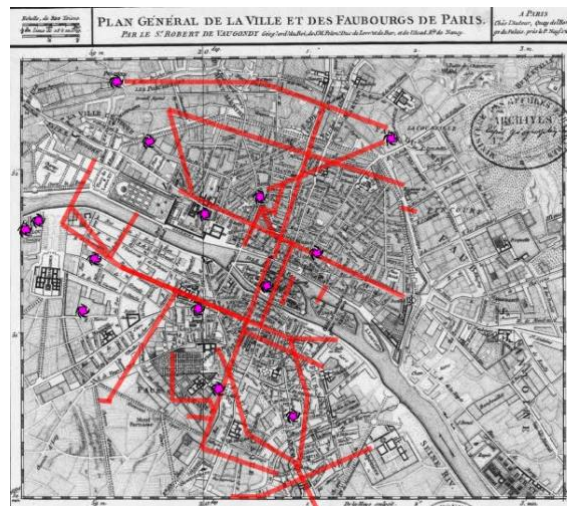
Harvey's causal narrative of the knife-edge between the construction of material infrastructures of movement and circulation, and the destruction of stable built environments and ways of life through which modern urbanisation emerges as such a powerful historical force, informs his account of how the crisis-dependent dynamics of urbanisation have now become the driving force in the generation of a whole host of global challenges.

In Harvey's view of urbanisation, the 'knife-edge' negotiation between investment and devaluation leads to the generation of a whole host of crises:

- environmentally unsustainable patterns of transportation, provisioning and energy use
- financial collapse and insecurity
- underinvestment in public goods of affordable housing, clean water and sanitation or public health.

To underscore the key point, in Harvey's causal narrative, cities are not just the locations in which these crises and challenges are felt; they are the incubators in which the conditions of these crises and challenges are bred and disseminated. In this view, global problems are not externally produced, and then 'impact' on places. They are internally generated by place-specific processes and the modes of relationship between places through which the causes and consequences resonate across space and time.

Harvey's causal narrative of urbanisation makes a particularly strong case for the importance of urbanisation processes: as the generative force in the production of a range of pressing contemporary issues.

But it's worth saying that Harvey also has things to say about the other two aspects of urban issues that we identified at the start of this discussion. So, for example, in his 1989 book, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, he argued that the incessant drive of creative destruction was associated with a range of distinctive cultural forms and experiential modes of life – whole new forms of urban consciousness, expressed in novels and films and paintings. In this work and elsewhere, Harvey has often returned to the history of nineteenth-century Paris is a

favoured example of this relationship between the material transformation of urban space and the emergence of new cultural forms.

And Harvey also has lots of say about the third aspect of urban thought, concerned with thinking about the city as a space of political action. Remember, in Harvey's view, urbanisation processes are central to the increasingly unstable dynamic of accumulation that is resolved through and expressed through ever-accelerating rounds of creative destruction of the urban built environment. In the twenty-first century, he argues, the contradictions of neoliberalising capitalism as a regime of accumulation and mode of governance are increasingly concentrated in the rhythms and spaces of urban life itself. The inherent dynamic for the over-accumulation of capital therefore finds its unstable resolution in the financialised recycling of capital surpluses into the creative destruction of urban environments. And, in turn, this is why the global challenges generated by urbanisation are often experienced in a vocabulary of spatial or urban claims – claims to clean water, affordable food, safe neighbourhoods, local autonomy or clean environments – or, more broadly, of claims to 'the right to the city' (Harvey 2009).

The idea of 'the right to the city' has become a rallying call for activists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social justice campaigners around the world since the 1990s. The idea was first developed by the French urban theorist Henri Lefebvre. The 'right to the city' has also been made central to an assertive claim about urban politics now having a global importance in driving radical democratic possibilities.

Harvey's work on the urbanization of capital and the 'right to the city' idea might be considered to be one version of an increasingly common view about the importance of cities: on the one hand, he provides an explanatory narrative in which urbanisation processes are identified as being causally responsible for the generation of fundamental challenges to whole societies; and on the other hand, cities are also identified as being crucial agents in efforts aimed at solving these challenges, not least in the forms of place-based, urbanised movements and organisations.

We have emphasised Harvey's explanatory narrative because of the clarity with which it picks out the causal forces of urbanisation processes. In his account of 'time-space compression' and 'the right to the city', it also makes claims about the other two dimensions of our three-way heuristic, the aspects of understanding and action, although it tends to presume that these aspects emerge more or less automatically from the experience of injustice.

There is a danger that Harvey's work is so all-encompassing in its view of capitalist dynamics that it ends up presenting the ordinary practices of urban politics, administration and management – the activities of planners, environmental managers, councillors, NGOs and the like – as, at best, ameliorating the worst effects of these processes or, at worst, as being complicit with their reproduction. The coherence of his explanatory narrative ends up leaving an 'all or nothing' impression about what can be done to address the challenges of global urbanisation. On its own, Harvey's causal narrative doesn't provide the whole story. In particular, it doesn't account for why the problems associated with urbanization emerge as public issues in the forms in which they do – to get a sense of this aspect of urban processes, we need to move on to consider in more detail the second aspect of critical spatial thinking: how cities can serve as the mediums through which people come to recognise their identities and interests.

3   Understanding urban issues

The **second** type of question which urban theory can help us investigate focuses on understanding how potential objects of action are identified and recognised. There is a variety of traditions of thought that think of the city as an arena in which people recognise shared interests, identify a shared sense of grievance or develop collective strategies to express their concerns. In saying that this second aspect focusses on 'understanding' of urban issues, we mean to signal two related things:

- This aspect of analysis is concerned with how participants in urban issues or spatial practices themselves come to understand their own identities and how best to pursue their own interests. Academic analysis can, of course, still seek to explain the processes through which this understanding is developed; however, because properly appreciating these processes requires sensitivity to the perspectives of actors themselves, adopting an observer–participant approach has its limits.

- The second aspect of critical spatial thinking requires a movement between an observer perspective and a sensitivity to participant perspectives, so academic analysis is better characterised here as seeking a form of understanding that is not reducible to causal explanation.

The second aspect of urban thought draws on two related traditions of urban and spatial theory, both of which alight on the distinctive characteristics of modern cities as social and cultural organisms.

First, there is a strand of thought that has emphasised the distinctive forms of social interaction and sociability that characterise the city – a strand best-known for the claim that the city gives rise to a distinctive culture, dubbed 'urbanism as a way of life'.

Second, there is a strand of thought that connects this sense of the distinctive social forms of city life to a stronger quasi-political claim about the city as the scene for the formation of a distinctive type of *public life*, through which urban residents recognise themselves and act as citizens of a shared collective unit.

3.1   Urbanism as a way of life

There is a long-standing tradition of thought, most famously associated with 'the Chicago School' of urban sociology that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in which urban spaces are presented as the locations for the emergence of novel forms of social interaction and personal identity. Succinctly captured in Louis Wirth's formulation of 'urbanism as a way of life', the Chicago School provided a theoretical framework for a much broader cultural narrative in which the modern industrial city was understood as a place where old deferential, traditional forms of organic community life were broken down and replaced by much more individualised, anonymous, mechanical and impersonal forms of collective interaction (Abbot, 1999; Smith, 1995).

As with other traditions of urban theory, this definition of the city is a particular *problematisation*, emerging from the specific contexts of Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and closely related to the experimental styles of academic engagement that members of the Chicago School were themselves involved in research among poor, marginalised immigrant communities in the city.

There is a strong emphasis in the Chicago School's account of urban culture on the ways in which spatial patterns of interaction, heterogeneity, intensity and mobility shape identities, experience and expression. This is, of course, a long-standing feature of spatial theory, in which the problem of thinking about the relationship between spatial pattern and spatial form on the one hand, and social and cultural relations on the other, is a perpetual, unavoidable issue. It's a theme that stretches back to pioneering figures of urban social inquiry such as Charles Booth, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams through to more recent thinkers such as Jane Jacobs Richard Sennett (see Bridge 2009).

One shared feature of this canon of urban cultural theory is a sense of the modern city as an experiential space always on the cusp of anomie, breakdown, isolation, bewilderment or alienation.

In contrast to this distinctively pessimistic view, a counter-tradition of spatial thinking also emphasises the idea of the city as a distinctive social and cultural organism, but does not suppose that this needs to be understood in terms of decline or breakdown. In a tradition of social network analysis developed in analyses of East London and in post-colonial contexts of southern Africa, the city is understood primarily as 'a network of networks'. This is how the urban geographer Jenny Robinson (2006, 51) summarises this idea:

> "Individuals in the city participate in varying types of networks of social relations, involving different qualities or intensities of interaction (from very intense and intimate in relation to kinsfolk, for example, to distant and fleeting in relation to people one passes on the street)."

In this view, the city is not a scene for a singular experience of either pathological alienation or liberating anonymity, but rather is characterised by various experiences depending on the different social networks one is located in – of kin, family, profession or neighbourhood. Just as fundamentally, in this view, the networks of interaction within a place stretch beyond contexts of face-to-face interaction. The urbanity of modern experience is also in part defined by being entangled in mediated networks of print culture or electronic communication.

This relationship between the intense concentration of communicative resources and experiential stimuli has led some analysts to present the modern city as the incubator for distinctively cosmopolitan styles of identification. In this view, the city is understood as a space in which people are exposed to diverse cultures and different identities, both up close

and through pervasive media representations. It is therefore a space in which resources for identifying with people one does not know well if at all – with strangers, near and far – are concentrated, and opportunities arise for learning to appreciate one's implication in wider processes of causality and consequence. This aspect of urbanism as a way of life leads to the second dimension of urban cultural theory, one which emphasises urban life as the condition of a distinctive style of public life and concerted, collective public action.

3.2   Urban space and the public sphere

If sociologists and anthropologists have often used the city as a figure for a distinctive style of social life and personal identity, the same features that these accounts alight on are often presented by political philosophers as models for democratic politics and citizenship practice.

The feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young provides one of the most influential examples of this style of theorising, presenting city life as a 'normative ideal' of democratic participation which is preferable to models of community or liberal individuality that have trouble acknowledging the value of difference and diversity:

> "By 'city life' I mean a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness. City life is composed of clusters of people with affinities – families, social group networks, voluntary associations, neighbourhood networks, a vast array of small 'communities'. City dwellers frequently venture beyond such familiar enclaves, however, to the more open public of politics, commerce, and festival, where strangers meet and interact." (Young, 1990, p. 237)

For Young, then, the diversity, complexity and vibrancy of the modern city is presented as a model of a certain form of sociality, characterised by contingency and difference. But her point is to translate this view, a feature of social science accounts of the city, into a model of democratic public life. In so doing, she spells out the links between the social and cultural characteristics of urban living and the expanded potential for identifying shared interests and chains of consequence:

> "City dwelling situates one's own identity and activity in relation to a horizon of a vast variety of other activity, and the awareness that this unknown, unfamiliar activity affects the conditions of one's own. City life is a vast, even infinite, economic network of production, distribution, transportation, exchange, communication, service provision, and amusement. City dwellers depend on the mediation of thousands of other people and vast organizational resources in order to accomplish their individual ends. City dwellers are thus together, bound to one another, in what should be and sometimes is a single polity." (Young, 1990, pp. 237–8)

What Young is doing in this extract is spelling out the conditions for the emergence of a shared sense of belonging as a citizen to a public. It is, remember, an ideal image of city life she is reconstructing here – the city as a model of a certain sort of social *and* political life.

The image of the city as a social and communicative entity can, in fact, be traced back to older traditions of urban theory.

For example, Robert Park, the leading figure of the Chicago School, is both a key figure in modern urban theory and a forebear of media and communication studies. Park's academic writing spanned work on the urban immigrant press, on the connections of newspaper circulation and urbanising culture and, notably, on the 'natural' history of the newspaper. For

Park, the newspaper was a countervailing force against the complexity of the modern city, instilling among its readers an awareness of, and interest in, an unprecedented common urban cultural world. As a 'printed diary of the home community' (Park, 1925, p. 85), the newspaper became a condition of possibility for mobilising the city as a social–political body: it provided the medium through which people could identify themselves as members of larger 'imagined communities' of class, city or nation.

3.3   Cities as communicative spaces

These understandings of urban space as both a kind of social organism and as communicative arena lead us to think of the city as serving multiple purposes in the recognition of consequences and interests through which issues emerge as matters of shared concern.

Robert Park's work is just one example of a broader emphasis on the role of media – news media and popular culture – in mediating the relationship between urban space and concerted public action. Mediated communications play different roles in the emergence of public life: they make available substantive topics as public issues; and they provide opportunities for the performance and representation of styles of identity and identification (see Rodgers, Barnett and Cochrane 2009, 2014).
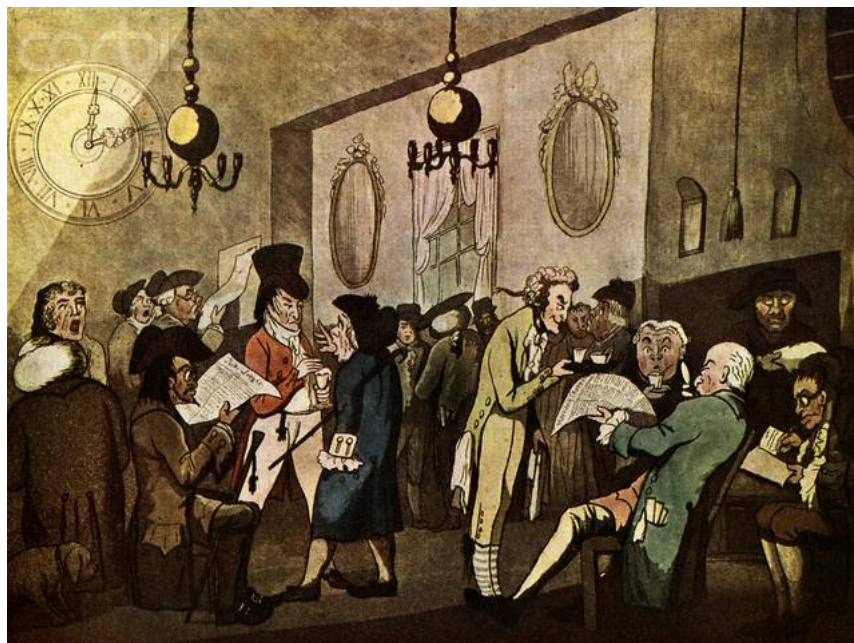
The work of the Australian geographer and planning theorist Kurt Iveson (2009) is helpful in order to better appreciate the importance of urban space as a medium for the communicative practices through which public action is formed around issues of shared concern.

Iveson provides an analysis of urbanisation as a process which involves the generation of myriad spaces of *public address*. He distinguishes between the city as a venue for communication, and object of communication, and the city as a collective subject itself, as 'the public'. This three-way distinction overlaps nicely with the three aspects or 'problematisations' of urban processes discussed at the outset.

1. The dimension that Ivesen identifies of urban space as an *object* of public concern overlaps with the first aspect we have identified – the ways in which urbanisation generates potential issues of public concern.
2. The dimension in which places serve as the *venues* of public address maps on to the aspect which is the main focus of this section: understanding the role of urban space in providing the communicative resources in which people come to see themselves as parts of larger collectives sharing identities and interests.
3. And the third of Iveson's dimensions, where the city is itself understood to represent 'the public', speaks directly to the third aspect of urban thought, in which the key focus is the question of which actors are empowered to act effectively in response to urban issues.

Once we recast the public qualities of urban space in the mediated, open-ended geographies of address, and recognise that the city is a site where mediated communicative practices are particularly concentrated, then our sense of the role of urban spaces in the development of concerted public action should be freed from a focus on dramatic urban events like protests in the street or the occupation of public squares or public buildings.

There is certainly a long-standing tradition of presenting urban space as the privileged stage for the formation of publics (e.g. Mitchell 2003). In geography and urban studies, the emphasis tends to be on the spectacular dramaturgy of street protest and confrontational forms of mobilisation. Examples might include the pro-democracy campaigns staged in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989, or the protests held in Tahrir Square in Cairo in 2011. This tradition succeeds in foregrounding the importance of claims-making as an important dimension of political contention.

It's worth noting that if public space is defined in relation to opportunities for addressing and interacting with audiences, a stark opposition between real material spaces and virtual media spaces does not hold up: such an opposition fails to register the extent to which modern public life uses 'real spaces' as part of dramaturgical strategies for mobilising public opinion; that is, as stages through which to attract public attention through spatially extensive media networks. The audience for such events is, after all, rarely if ever contained within 'physical' urban space itself, in so far as such events are usually aimed at attracting certain sorts of mediated attention.

4   Acting on urban issues

In the previous section we looked at the spatial processes through which people come to see themselves as sharing an interest in particular issues with people they may never have known or met. We saw how Iris Marion Young suggested that urbanisation processes play two roles in this process: throwing people together so that they may come to see each other as sharing certain concerns, and also recognise their dependence and affinities with others; but also providing the mediums through which people can address and be addressed by others as potential members of a wider public.

But we need to turn to the third analytical question that urban thought can help us with. Once people have identified themselves as members of wider collectives – perhaps as members of a public with shared interests, or perhaps as members of an interest group with specific grievances it wants to redress – what is to be done about their concerns?

And, more to the point, at what spatial scale does effective power to do something about issues lie?

The answer to this question is likely to vary according to the issue involved, between, for example, toxic air pollution, inadequate housing, or the imminent threat of flooding.

Who can and should act in response to urban problems: to pre-empt them, reconfigure them or respond to their consequences?

A common assumption in urban studies and spatial theory is that the importance of urbanisation processes in generating issues, and in enabling them to be identified and recognised as potential political, public concerns, must also inform a distinctive style of urban politics, contained at the urban scale and consisting of actors with distinctively localised, place-based interests. This issue is often central to ongoing debates about the concept of *scale* in geography and urban studies.

However, much of what we have already considered this week should lead us to think that the politics of urbanisation processes does not necessarily lead to urban politics in this sense at all. We are returned to the challenge laid down by Harvey's all-encompassing causal analysis of the dynamics of urbanisation – does this type of explanatory account of the factors shaping any and all localities necessarily imply that purely local action, contained within and enabled by place-specific factors, is doomed to failure or to be merely ameliorative?

We should certainly not overestimate the potential of local action to make a difference in the context of this sort of causal, explanatory understanding of the degree to which particular places are shaped by, and in turn shape, processes that pass through and reach beyond them. Geographers and planning theorists such as Mark Purcell (Purcell, 2006) and Murray Low (Low, 2004) have warned against falling into 'the local trap' – of assuming that local-scale initiatives are always a preferable option. Local problems might not necessarily have local causes, for one thing. And localities might face real constraints in being able to act effectively in relation to extra-local processes.

On the other hand, recognising that 'the local' or 'the city' is not a privileged scale for concerted, effective political action should not lead us to dismiss the importance of activities at this scale. It is not necessary to assume that local institutions are somehow more democratic because in closer 'proximity' to people's concerns in order to recognise, nevertheless, that those local institutions are empowered to act effectively in certain modest ways. This is particularly relevant for organisational fields such as town and country planning or environmental management, which are often by definition institutionally organised at local, territorially bounded scales and oriented towards the goal of bringing about locally specific objectives.

So, while locally embedded actors embedded in urban-scale governance structures do not necessarily command the efficacy required to be able to respond to their concerns and demands. But this should not, however, lead us to despair. It might actually encourage us to think of cities as *experimental spaces*, enabling us to recognise the ways in which particular places are empowered to act in relation to complex causal processes without necessarily overestimating the political efficacy of the urban as a scale of governance (see Caprotti and Cowley 2017, Barnett 2018).

5 Conclusion

We have outlined here a way of thinking about the key questions that a broad range of social science research on urban issues can help us ask when presented with an example of a pressing urban issue or a spatial problem. It is a way of thinking based on a threefold understanding of the *problematisations* to which definitions of the urban are a response:

1. The urban represents a complex of issues, problems and objects which generate contention, gathering together myriad indirect consequences that are both locally generated and generated from afar. [Section 2]

2. The urban is a field where the diversity and interconnectedness of effects operate as a seedbed for issue recognition. The recursiveness of urban life is also important in the formation of signs and symbols that can represent purposes and help anticipate consequences. These objects of recognition and intervention are also the medium out of which political subjectivities can be enhanced and people can learn to be affected. [Section 3]

3. The urban remains the site of institutional architectures that might be useful in the development of further democratising impulses, either through challenge and alternative institutions or further democratisation of institutions that already exist. [Section 4]

It's worth noticing, too, that according to this way of thinking, 'urban problems' are no longer limited to a set of conventional spatial issues, such as housing or crime. Rather, all sorts of public issues of the most global scope – from climate change to humanitarian crises – are now understood as issues that might well have urban 'causes' and, even if they don't, might certainly be creatively addressed through different sorts of urban-based activities (see Barnett and Parnell 2016).

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