

THE CULTURE OF THE INDIAN STREET

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In this chapter, I examine the culture of Indian streets to provide a contrast to the Western streets considered elsewhere in this volume. It is important that explorations of the street should not blunder into the ethnocentric pitfalls of so many social and cultural theories, which examine distinct Western contexts and produce ideas that are taken as universally applicable. My principal aim is to highlight the increasingly regulated qualities of Western street life by examining the rich diversity of social activity in Indian streets. It is not my intention to idealise or romanticise the Indian street as a space of the 'Other' but I realise that my position as a Western scholar will leave me open to the charge of 'othering'. I recognise that Westerners seek out the different experience offered by the Indian street partly because they have consumed fantastic narratives and images of India. However, I go on to argue that these socially constructed preconceptions may be mediated or undermined by the sensual and social experience of space. This is part of a wider argument which insists that streets are not merely texts to be read. Those passing through, living and working in streets interpret their experience through social, sensual and symbolic processes. Thus, whilst the description I provide of the Indian street is necessarily general, it is not intended to convey any ideal, and although it may seem as if I am reinforcing a binary distinction between West and 'Other', I insist that the material and social distinctions between Western and Indian streets do exist, but they exist within an uneven global process whereby space is becoming more commodified and regulated.

After a discussion about the social practices, forms of movement, regulation, and sensual experience of Indian streets, there is a comparative section on the forms of social life and regulation of the Western street. I then explore the relationship between Western and Indian streets, arguing that the latter are 'othered' partly because similar material and social qualities have been expunged in the West by the intensification

of consumer capitalism and the Appollonian urge to rationalise and regulate. Accordingly, this 'overdevelopment' has meant that 'other' spaces such as Indian streets retain a fascination for Westerners hungry for temporary disorder. I end the chapter by interrogating some of the most influential metaphorical concepts used in cultural geography, namely the *flâneur*, 'heterotopia' and pedestrian 'tactics' to show how their application can be widened and contextualised in different processes of social spatialisation.

SOCIAL PRACTICES

The Indian street is part of a 'spatial complex' which also comprises the bazaar and the fair and together they constitute an unenclosed realm which provides a 'meeting point of several communities' (Chakrabarty, 1991: 23). Thus, the street is located within a cellular structure that suggests a labyrinth, with numerous openings and passages. The flow of bodies and vehicles criss-cross the street in multidirectional patterns, veering into courtyards, alleys and cul-de-sacs. The busiest streets, the main arteries of this spatial network, are never merely 'machines for shopping' but the site for numerous activities.

This is reflected in the diverse spaces in and around the Indian street. Shops co-exist alongside work places, schools, eating places (see Figure 14.1), transport termini, bathing points, political headquarters, offices, administrative centres, places of worship and temporary and permanent dwellings. The multifunctional structure of the street provides an admixture of overlapping spaces that merge public and private, work and leisure, and holy and profane activities. This diversity contains a host of micro-spaces: corners and niches, awnings and offshoots.

In the bazaar a sense of familiarity is maintained through particular modes of address, types of economic exchange and the maintenance of formalised and convivial obligations. These strategies for dealing with the unfamiliar contribute to the formation of a gregarious environment which privileges speech and removes barriers between backstage and frontstage so that visual and verbal enquiry is facilitated. This provides a congenial environment for economic exchange, typified by barter, which, as Buie describes, is a sensual as well as economic activity; an 'art', a 'ritual' and a 'dance of exchange' (Buie, 1996: 227). Besides this particular form of economic activity, the proliferation of spaces provide contexts for a range of social practices that range from the commercial to the recreational, and from the industrial to the ritual. Such streets are 'centres of social life, of communication, of political and judicial activity, of cultural and religious events and places for the exchange of news, information and gossip' (ibid.).

As a commercial realm, the street is occupied by diverse enterprises, organised according to a variety of time-space constraints. Whilst there are fixed shops, the street is also the work place of mobile providers of services such as dentists, fortune-tellers, shoe-shiners, barbers (see Figure 14.2), letter-writers, shoe repairers, bicycle fixers and tea-wallahs, as well as mobile stalls of all kinds. Moreover, the open fronts of most workshops mean that the activities of engineers, smiths, potters (see Figure



FIGURE 14.1 Cooking on the street, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Source: author

14.3), bookbinders, metal workers and others spill out onto the side of the street, further blurring frontstage and backstage realms and activities.

As well as being a social space for transactions of news and gossip, particularly organised around particular micro-spaces such as rickshaw termini and tea stalls, the street is a site for announcement, and is host to adverts transmitted visually or by loudspeaker. For instance, vans publicise the current movie attractions with samples of the soundtrack, and when there are elections or local political disputes, loudspeaker vans broadcast political slogans. Demonstrations by political parties, and religious processions, theatrically transform the street into a channel of embodied transmission, and striking workers hold meetings and occupy spaces. The street thus becomes a temporary stage where political dramas and religious observances are played out.

As a site for entertainment, children make their own amusement, playing cricket and other games, whilst adults play cards, chess and *karam*. Moreover, travelling entertainers such as musicians, magicians and puppeteers set up stall and attract crowds. Besides these travellers, there are disparate hawkers and beggars as well as bands of religious adherents, *saddhus* and holy men, occasionally performing acts of abstinence and endurance. There is thus a constant stream of temporary pleasureable activities, entertainments and transactions. But there are also more mundane social activities such as loitering with friends, sitting and observing, and meeting people that also form distinct points of congregation.



Since many dwellings are located at the side of the street, it is also the site for domestic activities such as collecting water, collecting dung for fuel (see Figure 14.4), washing clothes, cooking and child-minding. For the pavement dwellers, the street is also a temporary home, necessitating the carrying out of bodily maintenance such as washing. Such temporary sites and activities dissolve preconceived notions of ownership, and question the distinction between private and public (Chandhoke, 1993: 69).

This proliferation of multi-use spaces can be dramatically contrasted with colonial attempts to demarcate single-purpose spaces, dividing cities into industrial, commercial and domestic areas, and more dramatically, constructing a physical separation between colonisers and colonised. Central to European concerns was the perceived erasure between public and private realms: colonisers were affronted by the ways in which open space was used for the domestic tasks and rituals of washing, changing, sleeping, urinating and cooking. The colonial enclaves built by the British testify to the urge to reconstruct urban and suburban aesthetics and order upon what was imagined as urban chaos. The erection of private bungalows, gardens, administrative buildings, and the laying out of parks and leisure facilities such as tennis courts, gymkhanas and golf courses, impose an alternative metropolitan spatial order wherein a network of manicured, broad avenues are marked against the imagined disorder of the 'native' quarter. Today, in many Indian cities, the colonial quarter has been reclaimed by bourgeois, commercial and administrative groups who attempt to re-imprint a power-in-spacing by appropriating these boundary-marking distinctions.

The range of social activities and demands in the bazaar tends to deny the pedestrian the option of seeking refuge in a distanced disposition; the social immersion that such an environment demands disrupts any lofty detachment.

MOVEMENT

It is difficult to move in a straight line on an Indian street. The pedestrian has to weave a path by negotiating obstacles underfoot or in front, avoiding hassle and teasing, and remaining alert about the hazards presented by vehicles and animals such as monkeys, buffaloes (see Figure 14.5), cows, pigs and dogs. Walking down the street cannot be a seamless, uninterrupted journey but is rather a sequence of interruptions and encounters that disrupt smooth passage.

The abundant simultaneous cross-cutting journeys means that purposive travel towards an objective must take account of others who will cross one's path. Rapid progress is usually frustrated. The variety of activities that are played out on the street are enacted at different speeds. Some linger or lounge, others gather in groups for long spells. Given the diversity of social activities played out in the street, there are a host of differently constituted time-space paths as people pursue diverse aims.

FIGURE 14.2 Street barbers and cycle rickshaws, Agra. Source: author

FIGURE 14.3 Roadside pottery, Agra. Source: author

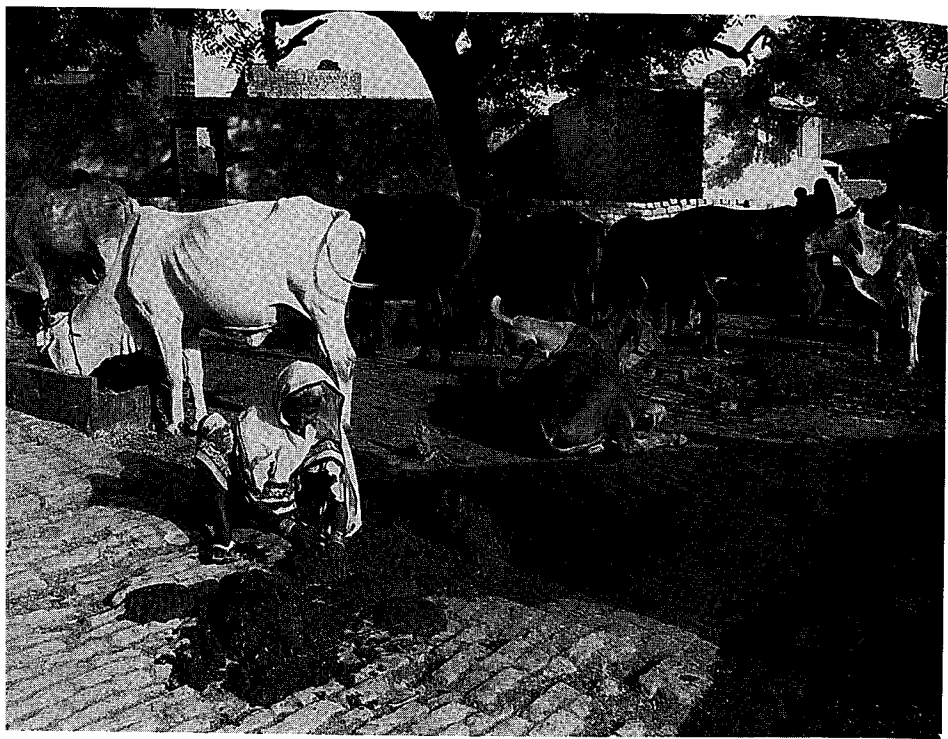


FIGURE 14.4 Collecting dung for fuel, Agra. Source: author

The miscellaneous collection of vehicles that use the street: bullock-carts, cars, bicycles, motorbikes, auto- and cycle-rickshaws, buses and other diverse forms of transport, all move at different speeds as they manoeuvre for space, providing an ever-changing dance of traffic which contrasts with the controlled flow and pace of traffic movement on Western thoroughfares.

Thus passage is marked by disruption and distraction, not only by the exigencies of avoidance and the physical collision with others, but also by the distractions and diversions offered by these heterogeneous activities and sights. The choreographies of the street, with intersecting movements differing in direction and tempo, and constituted by humans, vehicles and animals, continually change, incorporating the necessarily contingent character of the pedestrian's dance.

REGULATION

The bazaar and street are subject to regulation but this is contingent, contextual and local. Rather than security guards, video surveillance and policing (see Chapters 15 and 17 of this volume), local power holders exercise policies of exclusion and control. Overall, however, surveillance is not the dominant mode of regulation in the street.

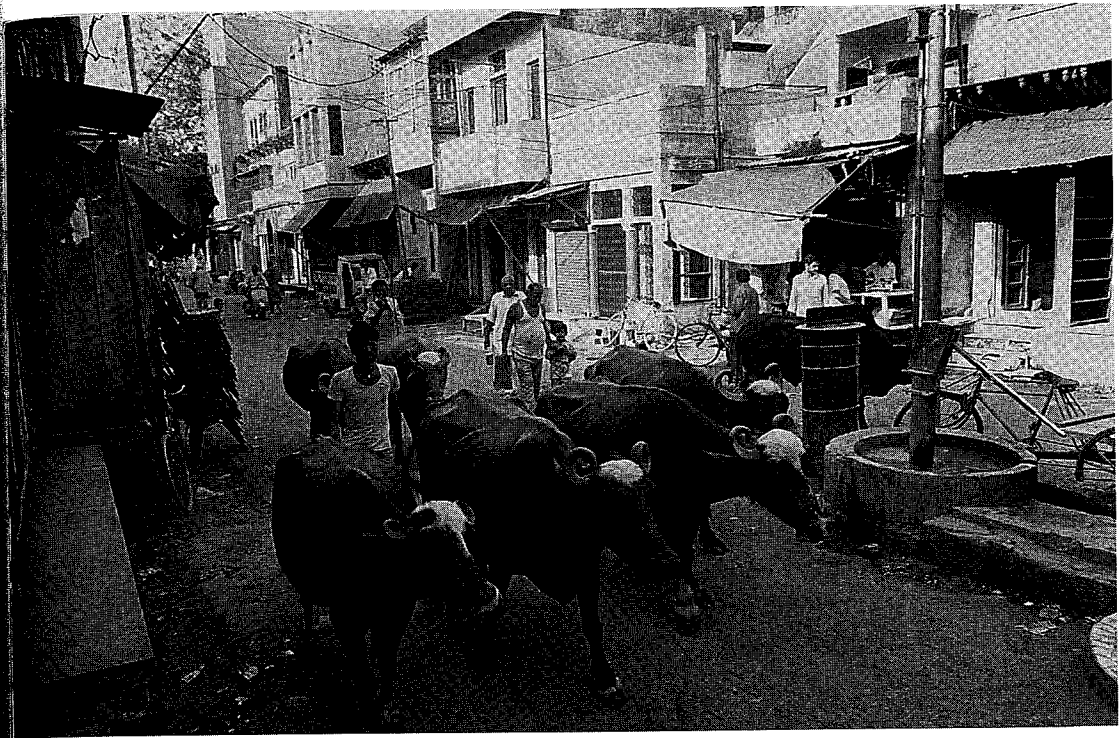


FIGURE 14.5 Driving buffaloes through a main thoroughfare. Source: author

and physically handicapped are not confined to institutions. The domestic, stray and wild animals that share the streets with people may suffer cruelly but there are few systematic attempts at controlling their movements or numbers. As I have mentioned, in most urban areas, small shops and makeshift dwellings spring up overnight on the borders of streets without seeking planning permission.

In a similar fashion, streets and bazaars are not subject to aesthetic control other than by force of convention. Streets are rarely planned to convey a particular overall impression or theme, and neither are street dwellings and other buildings policed to maintain an 'appropriate' appearance, with *ad hoc* signs, embellishments and crumbling masonry usually permitted.

This seeming disorder and lack of regulation disguises the forms of power that are played out in the street. For instance, a gendered distinction between private and public is evinced in that most of the shopkeepers and artisans in the public realm are male since it is generally considered unsafe and unrespectable for women to spend much time in certain public spaces. Similarly, in many villages and towns, the spatial divisions of caste are rigidly adhered to, although this is less marked in large urban areas. However, the demarcation of religious quarters can be rigidly maintained and the brutal communalist policing of religious others may flare up in times of political tension, as in the recent spate of 'fundamentalist' Hindu attacks on Muslim areas in mixed urban areas following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Power

also works its way onto the street in less obvious ways. Bribes and favours are often needed to secure commercial sites and violence may be held in reserve to control lower castes and religious minorities from occupying particular domestic and work areas. Even in the most seemingly chaotic spaces of the shanty town, slum lords may wield control (Chandhoke, 1993: 70).

But even in the most regulated spaces, the 'unintended city' of the 'shanty town' insistently projects into and subverts 'planned urban spaces', challenging the spatial ordering of cities and hence, the social order. Chandhoke argues that the 'urban poor make and remake space . . . seize spaces and reshape in this way the entire urban form';

They intrude into individual consciousness at traffic crossings . . . they inform us that cities are unequally constructed and maintained . . . (they) disrupt the coherence of the planned urban landscape, they retaliate and talk back to history and geography by making the homelessness of these people dramatically visible.

(Chandhoke, 1993: 64)

Whilst norms of movement, activity and appearance exist and are mediated by power, the elastic attitudes to regulating them means that official intervention in one's trajectory through the street is less likely than that of the contingent decision of local power holders to exercise regulation over what might locally be regarded as inappropriate.

SENSUAL EXPERIENCE

I particularly want to bring out the rich sensual encounter that is promoted by the aforementioned processes of structuring, moving through, performing in and regulating the Indian street. The relationship between sensual experience, and spatial form and practice, has been barely touched upon and represents a rich field for further exploration (although see Porteous, 1990; Rodaway, 1994). Material spaces provoke particular forms of sense and feeling, and are themselves produced out of local social practices and meanings, including those which account for the senses. It is my contention that the pedestrian enjoys an infinitely more vivid sensual experience in the Indian street than in the Western street.

I have discussed the divergencies of movement in the Indian street, the cross-cutting interplay of bodies and machines in motion. This panoply of living motion against a backdrop of randomly arranged buildings and objects produces an ever-shifting series of juxtapositions. Unforeseen assemblages of diverse static and moving elements provide surprising and unique scenes. Such haphazard features and events dis-order the gaze and spatial regularity. The flow of distracting sights negates scopic surveillance and easy visual consumption as the eye continuously swivels, alighting on changing episodes to the left and right, far ahead and close at hand. The norms of pleurably jostling in the crowd, moreover, engender a haptic geography wherein there is continuous touching of others and weaving between and amongst bodies. The different textures brushed against and underfoot and the heating of one's skin

from nearby stoves render the body aware of diverse tactile sensations which interrupt concentrated gazing.

Visual imperialism is also denied by the powerful combination of other stimuli. The 'smellscapes' of the Indian street are rich and varied. The jumbled mix of pungent aromas – sweet, sour, acrid and savoury – produces intense 'olfactory geographies'. Equally diverse is the soundscape which combines the noises generated by numerous human activities, animals, forms of transport and performed and recorded music, to produce a changing symphony of diverse pitches, volumes and tones.

By looking at the experience of, and negotiation with, modes of activity, movement, regulation and sensual experience, it seems that the body passing through the Indian street is continually imposed upon and challenged by diverse activities, sensations and sights which render a state at variance to the restrained and distanced distraction of the Western street. Here, the imaginative, improvisational predilections of the pedestrian are stimulated into unexpected flights of fancy, and the passage through the street is rhizomic rather than linear.

REGULATING THE WESTERN STREET

According to Chakrabarty, colonial, Western notions have become part of a globalising discourse, of 'civic consciousness' and 'an order of aesthetics'. Indeed, in India, a process is occurring wherein 'the thrills of the bazaar are traded in for the conveniences of the sterile supermarket' (Chakrabarty, 1991: 29). Certainly, in most contemporary Western streets, notably high streets which were previously symbolic spaces for the production and transmission of local identity, their reconstruction or disappearance has resulted in the erasure of much social, sensual and rhythmic diversity in urban space (see Chapter 12 of this volume). The imperatives of modernist planning and consumer capitalism have tended to transform symbolic streets into functional spaces for maximising consumption and facilitating transit (see Chapter 4 of this volume). A battery of concepts and metaphors has been developed to account for these transformations in public space. For instance, Sennett has referred to the growth in 'dead public spaces' (Sennett, 1994), Augé has coined the phrase 'non-place' (Augé, 1995), Mitchell uses the term 'pseudo-public space' (Mitchell, 1995) and Boddy refers to the systems of bypasses, malls and subways that constitute the 'analogous city' (Boddy, 1992). Whether there is a measure of hyperbole in these accounts or not, Indian streets seem vibrant, multifarious and exciting compared to Western streets.

The delimiting processes whereby the range of social practices in Western streets are reduced is captured by Sibley's notion of 'strongly classified' space (Sibley, 1988), constructed out of an aesthetics and rationale which fears mixing of functions and the disintegration of boundaries such as those between private and public, holy and profane and backstage and frontstage. The rise of guarded residential communities, shopping centres and private retirement homes reproduces the multiplication of pseudo-public space which regulates entry, activity and rhythm. Augé argues that these urban spaces are not 'relational, historical and concerned with identity'. Rather, they are realms of 'transit' as opposed to 'dwelling', sites of 'interchange' rather than a meeting place

or 'crossroads', where 'communication (with its codes, images and strategies)' is practised, rather than affective and convivial language (Augé, 1995: 107-8).

Street activity is monitored through surveillance and by what is considered 'appropriate'. Uncontrolled social interaction such as congregating, sleeping, 'hanging out', lounging on the pavement, and washing are all deterred. Moreover, heterogeneous commercial activities are discouraged by the dominance of large corporate retail outlets who control the management of space and refuse entry to smaller stalls, peddlers and mobile services. This also reduces the relations of barter and vocal enquiry in the process of consumption, mechanising and speeding up the relations of exchange. Whilst these commodified landscapes appear to promise a cornucopia of infinite variety, this is a manufactured and 'controlled diversity' rather than a realm of 'unconstrained social differences' (Mitchell, 1995: 119).

This triumph of 'non-space' depoliticises the street, forcing forms of resistance to adopt more covert strategies. Subaltern social movements depend upon the temporary seizure and transformation of public space in order to transmit alternative symbolic meanings, which the regulation of spaces for representation denies (Mitchell, 1995: 18). Whilst the presence of 'mall rats', beggars and shoplifters testify to certain forms of resistance, such opposition seems fleeting and gestural in the face of intensive surveillance.

In the 'expressway world', Western streets are increasingly organised as channels for unidirectional movement by reducing points of entry and exit, so that pedestrians and traffic may move rapidly and safely through, unhindered by idiosyncratic distractions. As Sennett exclaims, 'as urban space becomes a mere function of motion, it thus becomes less stimulating in itself; the driver wants to go through the space, not be aroused by it' (Sennett, 1994: 14). Likewise, the desensitised pedestrian, with little time to linger in the quest for commodities and experiences, marches ahead with no obstructions to prevent passing shops 'in review'. The similar tempos of the consuming pedestrian and the regulated flow of traffic facilitate the uninterrupted, anaesthetised passage through the contemporary urban landscape, reducing the diversity in the rhythms and choreographies of the street.

In her famous account of the New York neighbourhood where she lived, Jane Jacobs described the way in which the neighbourhood surveilled itself (Jacobs, 1995). In the contemporary carceral city regulation is systematic, rationalised and centralised rather than local, contingent and customary. Mike Davis has most vividly exposed how the 'new megastructures and supermalls have supplanted the traditional street and disciplined their spontaneity' (Davis, 1990: 356). Such spaces are increasingly subject to surveillance and are policed to exclude 'undesirable elements'. The gaze of police and security forces, and close-circuit TV systems accompany a reflexive control of the self, the body and the emotions.

The containment and commodification of the new streets encourages a 'controlled de-control of the emotions' (Featherstone, 1991: 105). The range of objects of desire and transgressive practices is reduced and unlike the carnivalesque spaces of Indian

These contemporary bureaucratic and capitalist imperatives of structuring and regulating streets powerfully influence the sensual experience of the pedestrian. Often, the very commodity promised by the marketers of these public spaces is a memorable, sensual experience. Thus the multisensual, complex and direct experience of the Indian street is replaced by a mediated and simulated sensual experience (Rodaway, 1994: 173). Sensually, the Western street is primarily a place for gazing rather than communicating. Theming has imposed a visual order; a predictable spectacle of few visual surprises, generated by the need for the large retail outlets to capture the attention of consumers. Accordingly, the pedestrian's gaze is directed to large window displays and slogans and away from the street (see Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1995).

Along with aesthetic policing and the imposition of design codes, the Western street is comprehensively deodorised, and sometimes re-odorised with commodified smells. The ordering of smell accompanies the process of removing perceived dirt and clutter which clears the street of 'surplus' stimuli and redirects attention towards products in the themed shopping environment. Likewise, the raucous cries of traders, political speakers and recorded or performed music are banned or kept at appropriate volume, reducing the soundscape to the similar rhythms emanating from boutiques. Also, the narrow scope for improvised or contingent movement minimises haptic experience and bodily contact and the smooth continuity of the flooring texture regulates the sense of touch, 'weakening the sense of tactile reality and pacifying the body' (Sennett, 1994: 17). Marked by deprivation in all sensory capacities, contemporary Western streets are marked by their non-sensuality.

TOURIST SPACES AND REGULATION

Having sketched the contrasts between Indian and Western streets, I now want to suggest that in some ways they are flip sides of the spaces of modernity, namely Apollonian cultural aspects which affirm 'structure, order and self discipline', and its opposite, Dionysian culture, representing 'sensuality, abandon and intoxication' (Rojek, 1995: 80). These modern tensions are highlighted by the proclivities of subjects on the one hand, to demand and impose epistemological, social and spatial order, and on the other, to long for disorder and transgression. Whilst the dominant urge is to seek refuge in reconstituted regimes of order in the face of continual change, the desire to transcend regulated minds, bodies and environments constantly bubbles below the disciplined surface of everyday life and finds various outlets (Cohen and Taylor, 1992).

In the same way that the colonisers of the European quarters of colonised cities used to look for excitement, often surreptitiously, in the 'native quarters', it seems that the dwellers and pedestrians in the over-regulated streets are drawn, fascinated by less ordered spaces. The tension between the two spaces is marked by the common-sense, rational appeal of instrumental bureaucratic and capitalist power to control and commodify spaces, and the desires of people to enter magical, Dionysian space. This is nowhere more apparent than in areas designated as tourist space where two forms of tourist space can be identified; organised and disorganised tourist space.

In the production of contemporary leisure, the tendency is for commercial interests to attempt to satiate the desire for otherness and sensuality. The dream-machines of consumer capital provide imagined realms of 'otherness' (Rojek, 1995: 89). Such spaces attempt to arouse the imagery and ambience of the carnival but can serve as no more than 'sites of ordered disorder'.

Early modern forms such as carnivals and fairs have been largely superseded by theme parks, shopping malls and festive marketplaces. A common theme for these new spaces is this marketing of 'exotic otherness'. However, the provision of a safe and familiar environment, and the regular codes of representation minimises the disruption and excitement provoked by confrontation with difference. The tourist gaze is structured by a repertoire of design codes which excludes supposedly surplus elements, and provides a soupçon of exotica and a few key images. Whilst these spaces represent *virtual* 'others', dominant hierarchical systems of spatial classification also construct marginal spaces which are imagined to contain *actual* 'others'. But whilst rhetorically typified as chaotic and dirty, they are also imagined to be spaces of desire, permitting interconnection and hybridity, pregnant with possibility. Here then are the two modalities of tourist space. Organised tourist space is the realm of manufactured otherness, whilst disorganised tourist space is not dominated by touristic commodifying imperatives at all but embraces a diverse range of relatively unregulated activities, people and stimuli (see Edensor, 1998). It is both object of desire and fear.

It is my contention that very few disorganised tourist spaces exist in the West. If we consider what is innappropriately termed the 'developing world' to be at the margins of a global tourist system, then 'otherness' exists in the peripheral regions of global tourist space. Most Western tourists to the non-West are pulled into increasingly standardised tourist space of package tours, air-conditioned travel, consumption and simulated local culture. However, the more intrepid are attracted by the less regulated streets, bazaars and villages of disorganised tourist space. To be sure, the narratives and images of colonial heritage continue to titillate the desires of *all* Western tourists. India, for instance, is fantasised as more 'authentic' than the West, a more spiritual, natural and unchanging realm, and tourist itineraries are shaped according to these preconceptions. However, Indian streets exert a fascination for Western tourists, not only because they contain perceived otherness, but because in their social and cultural organisation, they contrast with the regulated streets of the West and their replanted formations in organised tourist space.

While 'organised' tourist spaces are 'enclavic', shielding tourists from contact with the local populace through surveillance and eliminating potentially offensive sounds and smells, in the disorganised tourist space of the Indian street, services tout for business on the street and cause a certain amount of 'hassle' for tourists. Through haggling and repudiating advances, tourists and locals must mingle with each other. Thus, opportunities for dialogue and exchange are capacitated so that the tourist

accord with mass produced tourist imagery. Within disorganised tourist space, there is more interaction with the local population in shops and restaurants, with beggars and touts, and with people interested in sharing ideas and information with the tourist. The ability to remain shielded from local life in local space is not possible, but in any case, it is these streets that are sought by backpackers in search of 'authenticity' and the thrill of encountering the 'other'. In fact, the less-travelled path has a high degree of mystique and status-conferral.

Admittedly then, the experience of Indian streets sought by Western tourists is mediated by located expectations and presuppositions. Yet such 'escape attempts' (Cohen and Taylor, 1992) may be partially successful because they challenge the physical and mental dispositions, deadened by passage through Western streets and organised tourist space, by confrontation with different orders of sensory experience, social interaction, regulation and movement. This experience feeds into the contemporary need to reinstate desire, disorder and unpredictability into life.

THE FLÂNEUR, HETEROTOPIA AND TACTICS

In the light of the above, I now want to consider three frequently used figures of the modern city, the *flâneur*, Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' and de Certeau's heroic 'tactics' of the pedestrian.

The flâneur

In its original conception, the figure of the *flâneur* is somewhat elitist, distanced from the crowd by his superior aesthetic sensibilities, a detached and self-contained poetic soul 'botanising on the asphalt'. However, the concept has been democratised and now often stands as a metaphor for the contemporary urban dweller, moving through the flux and transience of the city. Smart argues that *flânerie* is now a mode of being in the world rather than the provenance of a marginal character (Smart, 1994: 162) an assertion that seems to be instantiated in the organised and commodified spectacles of the Western city. The inference is that in the modern shopping centre or heritage park we are all *flâneurs*, *homo ludens* consumed by the dazzling spectacles and commodities on show. Yet whilst the democratisation of the concept avoids the elitism of the original dilettante of the street, the notion of these 'postmodern *flâneurs*' misses the central idea that to be a *flâneur* is typified by wallowing in flux, observing the fleeting and the transitory, witnessing unique juxtapositions and incidental meetings.

The random elements that so stimulated Baudelaire's hero are now rarely experienced in Western streets as I have argued, so rather than being at home 'in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite' (Baudelaire, 1972: 399), the contemporary pedestrian is motivated by the purposive acquisition of commodities and commodified sights. In Western urban space, haphazard diversity has been 'liquidised into the lubricant of profit-making contraptions' (Bauman, 1994: 151). The shifting variety that so stimulated the early modern *flâneur* is replaced by the channelling of the gaze to a reduced series of signs that delimits the object of his pleasure. Moreover,

the freedom to loiter, the 'reprieve from time' (ibid.: 140) so critical to witnessing and interpreting the momentary passing scenes and incidents is denied by the policing of activity and the intensified speed of movement. Popular fear of downtown streets means passage through them is swift. The early modern vitality of the city that so stimulated the *flâneur* has become domesticated by imperatives to seek order, convenience, speed and the rapid turnover of commodities.

I suggest that the experience of the Indian street is in many ways akin to that of the early modern European metropolitan street. Accordingly, the diverse social activities, forms and styles of movement, types of regulation and above all, the sensuality of the Indian street, provide a rich environment for *flânerie*. The unpredictable juxtapositions, the fleeting occurrences, the disparate rhythms and multifarious sights, smells and noises facilitate the enjoyment of the urban realm. And the absence of any channelling of the gaze, overarching surveillance, disciplining of movement permit the *flâneur* to savour and contemplate the sensual urban experience.

Heterotopia

The term 'heterotopia' has been widely used in recent years but remains somewhat vague and carelessly applied to a range of discrete phenomena (Hetherington, 1996: 158). This is largely because Foucault's all too brief introduction of the term (Foucault, 1986) tends to suggest a range of exciting possibilities but is suitably unspecific. Rather than straining to identify Foucault's 'authentic' intention, I intend to utilise the concept to highlight the properties of heterotopia that challenge dominant modes of spatial ordering. In heterotopias, the random juxtapositions of disparate objects, activities and people not normally found together challenge hegemonic modes of regulating and representing space. The convergence of such miscellaneous and discordant sights erode epistemological and ontological security, disrupting the common-sense meanings of space. This transgressive potential infers that heterotopias continually speak back to dominant modes of power-in-spacing, interrogating the normativity of their disciplinary regimes and functional purpose.

Accordingly, the power-laden processes of classifying, spectacularising and commodifying difference in the disciplined streets of the West are revealed by the actual admixture and changing juxtapositions of difference found in the heterotopic Indian streets. The pedestrian is an essential part of this heteroglossia of 'otherness' rather than the distanced specator of manufactured spectacle. Enmeshed in its sensuality, he/she is denied an imperialist subjectivity.

As marginal spaces, heterotopia are placed on the borders of the normal systems of spatial representation. In one sense, India remains on the edge of the global tourist economy, yet has partially been incorporated into organised tourist space with the imposition of tourist enclaves. However much Indian streets are reclaimed within dominant systems of representation by tropes of exoticisation or moralising pity (see Hutnyk, 1996), actual passage through them reveals their disruptive heterotopic qualities wherein the flow of expectations learnt in the sterile spaces of the West are shattered. As heterotopias, Indian streets are situated within a global system of spatial ordering

and it is the alternative set of street activities, forms of regulation, rhythms and sensual stimuli that mark their disjuncture from the over-regulated spaces. But in any case, besides this relational distinction, there remains a dis-ordering logic in their material and social organisation that affirm the anarchistic spirit of the heterotopia.

Symbolically then, heterotopic Indian spaces provide an escape route, or labyrinth, an alternative system of spatial (dis)ordering where transitional identities may be sought, sensual and imaginative experimentation indulged, and the Western hegemonic power/knowledge axis bewildered and challenged.

Pedestrian Tactics

Finally, I want to consider the highly influential ideas of de Certeau with regard to the foregoing discussion. De Certeau makes a distinction between the 'strategies', the normative, rationalised practices employed by the powerful in their (re)production of 'technocratically constructed, written and functionalised space' (de Certeau, 1984: xviii), and the contingent 'tactics' enacted by pedestrians to escape these carceral networks. These improvisational tactics, according to de Certeau, 'trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop' (ibid.). He privileges walking as a particularly inventive process through which pedestrians construct stories, thereby weaving places together in improvisational narratives. Thus despite the reduction of the street to a disciplined and sterile space, the pedestrian can reclaim, albeit contingently and fleetingly, a measure of control over material and symbolic space through an escape into memory and imagination.

Whilst de Certeau has been criticised for his optimistic construction of an heroic pedestrian (Rojek, 1995: 106), the suggestion that walking is an inventive activity is none the less intriguing. His evocation of the plethora of desires that are stimulated through the relationship between sensual bodily movement, fantasy and reverie convincingly refute deterministic notions of pedestrians being shaped mentally and physically by urban space and its control.

However, the problem with his account is that de Certeau seems to envisage his technocratic space as universal. Thus it is necessary to reinstate the distinct material and symbolic forms of urban space and regulation. The notion of a homogeneous carceral network suggests a kind of abstract space irrespective of time or place. What I am arguing is that the specific form of urban space influences the degree of tactical innovation and empowerment mobilised by pedestrians. Certain less regulated and commodified spaces facilitate these imaginings, epistemological dislocations and memories better than others. The more heterogeneous Indian street, less circumscribed and framed by the power of capital and bureaucracy, is a 'weakly classified space' (Sibley, 1988: 412) in which different people and activities mingle.

For instance, the Indian street offers an environment where smells, sounds and undefinable 'atmospheres' are apt to stimulate involuntary memories. Moreover, the movement towards the 'other' which de Certeau argues is part of the enactment of 'tactics' is also encouraged by the presence of so many actual 'others' in the street.

The disruption of movement, the jostling of bodies and the necessary sudden swerves similarly may awaken a heightened sensory awareness and disrupt patterns of thought. Likewise, unusual temporary juxtapositions of people, objects and animals may jolt the observer out of distraction and escape normative visual codes. The narratives and desires that de Certeau refers to remain located in the pedestrian but are enabled by the distinctive material, symbolic and social form of the Indian street.

CONCLUSION

The processes of logocentric spatialisation, regulation, commodification and the confining of difference are uneven processes. Simmel (1995) highlighted the juxtaposition of multiple cultural forms and social practices that characterised the rhythm of the modern metropolis. Yet these dynamic elements are increasingly being extinguished from the urban realm, or pushed out to marginal locations. Late capitalism has rendered street life predictable and marked by sensual deprivation by reducing difference to commodified sameness. The destruction of the functional and cultural diversity of the street has thwarted human contact, the desire for difference, and the need to wallow in the obscure and confusing. Appollonian ambition has predominated over Dionysian desire.

In this chapter, I have portrayed the diverse social activities, choreographies, regulatory regimes, and sensual experience of an idealised Indian street in order to reveal the richness of weakly defined, heterotopic spaces and their contribution to human pleasure and an understanding of difference and 'otherness'. This existing other space can and does serve as a refuge from the overdetermined, single-purpose streets of the Western metropolis, satisfying the lust to experience sensuality, the unclassifiable and the ever-changing. In these uncommodified spaces, at the margins of the global tourist economy and barely incorporated into the 'ideoscapes' and 'mediascapes' (Appadurai, 1990) of dominant representation, social and sensual confrontations can dissolve hegemonic preconceptions and disrupt notions of smooth passage, unhindered gazing, detached self-containment, convenience and antiseptic sterility so entrenched in Western regimes of urban spatialisation.

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