

The Right has never felt at home with the city. For the old Right cities have traditionally been the source of insurrectionary mobs and subversive ideas. For the new Right cities are the places where their narrow individualism and denial of society seem most out of place, irrelevant to the collective problems of transport and health, clean air and water, green spaces and safe streets. It is no coincidence that it is in the cities that the flaws of Thatcherism have been most apparent, as riots simmer and erupt and as transport systems collapse; nor is it any coincidence that despite the prime minister's repeated call for a dynamic new approach to the inner city, no vision has been forthcoming.

The Right's historic unease makes it all the more remarkable that the Left has so clearly failed to sustain a coherent city politics. Although the Left in Britain evolved out of the cities, first implemented its ideas in municipal politics and still controls nearly all the major cities of Britain, it too has no real vision of city life in the 21st century: of how cities can be good places to live, and of how a balance can be struck between collective consumption and diverse identities. In other countries the Left has often used cities as long-term showcases, models of planning, redistribution and civic responsibility. In the Britain of the 1980s by contrast, the urban Left has seemed more interested in using control of cities as a stepping stone to national power, a means rather than an end.

There is also a deeper historical problem. Though Britain has long been a very urban society, its experience of large cities is relatively recent by comparison with southern Europe or north Africa. Despite the strong civic traditions of cities like Birmingham, Manchester or Leeds, Britain has none of that subterranean memory of a time before the consolidation of national states that gives a special resonance to the city politics of a Barcelona, Milan or Hamburg. On both Left and Right, particularly in England, there has always been a powerful nostalgic attachment to a rural past of small towns and cottages. For William Morris and Blatchford, Hardie and Macdonald, the city was at best a necessary evil. Come the millenium, the satanic mills would be levelled, the green and pleasant land restored. In the late-19th century many English socialists followed Kropotkin in believing that electricity would remove the need for concentrations of work and housing around sources of energy, returning society to a purer era of rural workshops; a promise that is echoed today in the telecommunications-inspired electronic cottages of writers like Alvin Toffler. There is a long tradition, in other words, of coping with the problems of the city through escape.


But as the city again moves to the head of the political agenda, placed



New Times

# A Tale Of New Cities

The cities of the Western world are at a turning point. They are being remade. **Geoff Mulgan** argues that we need a new vision of what they can and should be like



there less by politicians than by a widespread public unease about the direction of city life, physical ugliness and insecurity, endemic inequality and the decay of infrastructures, it is clear that this approach is inadequate. Over half the world's population now lives in cities and even previously declining cities like London are growing again. Cities will survive the effects of telecommunications just as they survived the effects of electricity, and with them will survive the debate about how cities can be made to work, about what makes them good places to live in, and about how they can become more equal and more shared places.

In this article I will argue that the end of the 1980s may come to be seen as a historic moment for the cities of the First World. Tendencies towards global sameness in product brands, retailing chains and cultural products are being matched by equally powerful tendencies to favour whatever is local and different. Paradoxically, the integration of European countries into the single market of the 1990s is giving regions and cities a higher profile. Vast new building works (well criticised by David Harvey in January's *MT*) and rapid change in the economy of cities have coincided with a new interest both in the physical architecture of the city and in its soft architecture, its feel and atmosphere, its social networks and its sense of community and citizenship.

The Left has been very good at criticising what's happening to the city, at revealing its imbalances and its new oppressions; first the London Docklands Development Corporation and now the urban development corporations, the vast developments in Canary Wharf and now Kings Cross have all been subjected to devastating critique. What has proved much harder is the articulation of a practical alternative. Amidst the chaos of new industries and old, and of attacks from central government that leave local councils hard-pressed just to stand still, this is perhaps not surprising. But some of the elements of a new vision of the city are slowly beginning to emerge.

**A**longside new policies for housing, transport and education it is becoming clear that the new vision of the city will also emphasise its nature as a means of communication, a place where people meet, talk and share experiences, where they think and drink together. Policies for the creation of industrial districts and 'milieux', for civic videotex systems and town cards, and for vibrant evening economies of entertainment and retailing, show that city councils are much better placed for the kinds of holistic approach that make the ecology of a city work than either national governments or untrammelled markets. Like most of the urban social movements of the past this emerging vision of the city combines the three themes of collective consumption, local

control and the preservation of identity against the one-way flow of international, standardised information and images. As yet it remains only half-formed, caught in the contradictory trends of the city economy, and ever more marked inequalities of access to the pleasures of city life. Cities will probably get worse before they get better. But in the long run it suggests that cities have the potential to develop as political units more human in scale than the nation-state and better able to offer insulation from the volatilities of a turbulent world economy.

**A good starting point for any analysis** of cities is their position within the economic system. It has become a cliché that within a more global economy, national economic boundaries have increasingly lost their significance. Cities and regions negotiate directly with transnational corporations and institutions (whether IBM or the International Olympic Committee). The economy of a city or region can evolve directly counter to the lines of development of the nation: obvious examples include London's role as an international financial centre, and Silicon Glen's role as a staging post for transnational computer companies entering the European market. Many cities have lost their close relationship with a hinterland of countryside and towns, becoming instead part of a more extensive, less rooted kind of economic life, competing for footloose capital, for manufacturing plants, research laboratories and corporate headquarters. Others evolve as the core of industrial districts, like Munich and parts of Bavaria, the M4 corridor or Kumamoto on Kyushu, again often with little relationship to the surrounding region.

Communications technologies have played a decisive role. The great power of capital has always been its ability to choose, to decide where to locate and when to withdraw. The satellite, cable and microwave greatly enhance this mobility and the leverage it confers, allowing for much more sophisticated location policies: mental labour can be separated from production, skilled labour from unskilled, service tasks from manufacturing ones. Logical organisation becomes more important than physical proximity. In the financial sector, while head offices tend to remain in the city centres, back office operations are moved to the suburbs and the more routine operations are removed either to peripheral towns or to countries like Barbados, offering cheap labour for routine data processing (the phenomenon of tele-colonialism).

A complex economic geography is unfolding. A few cities have emerged as world cities, linked by the trans-oceanic networks of fibre-optic cable. Cities like Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore increasingly function as hubs in world financial

markets, as concentrations of the 'advanced producer services' of advertising, consultancy and law that service the transnationals, and of the low-wage service and manufacturing sectors that support them. Financial services, at first glance the most footloose of all industries and the most dependent on the telecommunications that allow businesses to disperse, remain clustered around a handful of streets in London, Tokyo and New York. Banks still cling to the prestige of a central location, and managers fear exclusion from the dense informal networks of the city centre.

In the industrial age, the great cities were defined by their position within systems of material flow. Cities like Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow, Pittsburgh and Chicago were located near deep-sea ports, on major waterways such as the Great Lakes or the Rhine, near railways and roads, and within easy reach of supplies of energy. Cities could be understood as material switching centres that processed materials into new forms. Production was labour and energy intensive, and was limited by access to both. Today the economy of the city can be better understood by its position as a centre for switching information and knowledge. Much of the new manufacturing has moved to smaller factories and industrial zones on the city periphery, to greenfield sites and new towns like Stevenage or Telford. In the larger cities an information economy has arisen alongside older ones based on manufacturing and service. Within this economy the key scarcities are no longer energy and labour but rather knowledge and creativity, and the key exports are knowledge products rather than material ones. In New York, for example, legal services overtook clothing as the city's primary export-earner at the end of the 1970s.

The redefinition of the city as a system for switching information is highly visible. Across Britain satellite and microwave dishes proliferate and streets are dug up to lay fibre cables. London's Docklands, the point where materials once came and went, is now centred around the teleport, a cluster of satellite and microwave dishes, receiving and transmitting information. New York has the world's most advanced teleport, built by the city administration and the port authority on Staten Island: through a fibre optic network it links Wall Street to the outside world, completely bypassing the local public network, an 'executive highway' for communications. The changing physical infrastructure of communication is permeating the physical fabric of city life. It is estimated that 30% of the cost of new office buildings in central Tokyo is now accounted for by electronics, control systems for heating, lighting, security and communication. The 'smartness' of a house or office has become a decisive selling point.

**The changed image of a city like Glasgow makes it easier for firms like BP to persuade their staff to relocate there'**

This new emphasis on smart communications infrastructures has also inspired some of the bolder Utopian experiments of the 1970s and 1980s. The American 'wired city' movement that grew out of Lyndon Johnson's social programmes promised to use technology to build participatory, community-based cities. Utopian dreams fused with the more prosaic interests of telecommunications companies in large-scale experiments like Hi-Ovis in Japan, US projects like QUBE in Columbus to Project Victoria in California, and Biarritz in France, each of which linked homes to an array of interactive services, such as video-on-demand, community information and instant referenda. These 'teletopias' and 'telecommunities' were built not only as test beds for technology but also out of a faith that technology could be used to recreate communities disrupted by the fragmentation of the traditional city, bringing 'neighbourhood without propinquity'.

Despite often confused goals, some of the projects hinted at how a communications infrastructure could sustain new kinds of social relationship: health training and distant education projects on cable television, teleshopping for the old and disabled, on-line access to councils and assemblies (as in the California State Assembly) and videophones for housebound women are all examples. Unfortunately few sponsors, whether private or public, have had the will to sustain the experiments: QUBE, Hi-Ovis and Biarritz are all either closed or much reduced in scope. The real 'wired cities' of the late 1980s, such as Aberdeen or Coventry in Britain, are based on relatively old-technology (coaxial copper), privately-owned cable systems that do little more than deliver international television channels such as Sky and Lifestyle to a small minority of households.

Yet the long term promise of the wired cities experiments is undeniable. In France, nearly 200 cities, most run by the Left, now offer a wide range of information on videotex, often providing possibilities for interaction, such as polls on local issues, and systems for finding information about housing opportunities or making a reservation at the local municipal theatre. The better ones have tried to create systems of two-way communication rather than simply dumping propaganda on an inert citizens. Grenoble has developed probably the most sophisticated set of tools for communicating with its citizens, an approach which has been vindicated by record turnouts for local referenda on such issues as tram policies.

Another example of the use of technology as a tool for asserting the identity of the city and its citizens is the town card, using 'smart card' technology similar to that used in credit cards and now being developed for satellite tv subscription. In the 1990s, rather than

simply being private tools of consumption and debt like the Access or Visa, these cards could be given to everyone as a citizen's right, offering scope for organising access to civic facilities (swimming pools, theatres etc.), for cheap shopping (as retailers give discounts to local people) and for referenda. Already cards like the Thamesdown Gold Card or the Wakefield Passport to Leisure are being used to offer discounts to the unemployed, pensioners or disabled. Wilmslow near Manchester offers a town credit card, used by 5,000 holders and supported by 170 retailers to encourage spending within the local economy. In the USA there are affinity cards, local credit cards which give a percentage of interest to local charities and regeneration projects. All could be extended and differentiated, offering distinct mixes of services to the different groups of the city, simultaneously fostering collective consumption and diverse identities.

In Britain cities long ago lost control over their own infrastructures. The privatisation of water and electricity will remove accountability even further. But the privatisation and break-up of the old utilities also serves as a reminder of the 19th-century municipal traditions of local control of electricity, trams, gas and telephones that preceded their consolidation into monopolies and their nationalisation. In the context of the wired city these traditions again become attractive, offering efficiency and accountability in ways that are impossible for privatised and nationalised utilities. It is surely significant that probably the most efficient part of the local telephone network in Britain is run by Hull Telephone Company, the last remaining municipal phone company, and a possible model for a future when British Telecom's local networks are placed under local control. In countries like Holland it has always been assumed that local councils and housing associations should play a leading role in building and running cable networks.

In Britain the private cable companies that are now being franchised city by city and borough by borough also unwittingly recreate the scope for local control of the communications infrastructure. Ideally, municipal control of the infrastructure would coincide with a much wider access to channels, as in the US with its hispanic, black and neighbourhood television channels.

**If British cities have little direct control over their communications infrastructures they are at least able to influence their softer infrastructures, their environment of work, shopping and leisure. These soft infrastructures are turning out to be as crucial to the post-Fordist economy as fibre-optic cables and just-in-time networks. As cities compete for capital and skilled labour, they are also emerging as tools of local industrial policy. Education is particularly important, involving both**

the provision of a skilled and flexible workforce, and open academic institutions with which business can collaborate. The new economic geography of the knowledge economy has brought clusters of new industry around cities like Cambridge and the leading scientific universities. By 1985 there were 47 science parks in Europe, all attempts to create living communities around research and its application (and all dependent on public support).

As important as education is the overall environment of a city. Even the most powerful transnationals depend on their ability to attract the most skilled workers, who are even more mobile than capital, and who now increasingly demand an attractive physical location, a congenial and convivial setting within which to work and live. The success of the post-Fordist industrial districts such as Silicon Valley has focused attention on the economic role of milieu, the social atmosphere of an area and profession within which people develop new ideas. Transnational companies alone are unable to create environments of this kind. In the USA the dynamic districts of high technology emerged not in New York and New Jersey where IBM and AT&T concentrated thousands of PhDs, but rather in the more convivial and open environments of Palo Alto and Boston.

**T**hese lessons have not been lost on declining cities desperately seeking the means to attract new industries. Many have seen arts spending as one of the easiest ways to change the feel of the city and give it the appearance of conviviality. Spending on theatre groups, visual artists and concert halls could also be justified as a cheap way of creating jobs and masking the physical manifestations of decline. Murals on the walls of deserted factories somehow seemed to make economic collapse more acceptable. More recently, however, it has become clear that arts and cultural policies can do much more than that, that they too can be understood as part of a soft infrastructure supporting new industries.

In its recent study of the arts economy, the Policy Studies Institute estimated that each of the 14,735 arts jobs in Glasgow gave rise to a further 2.7 jobs because of spending by arts customers and organisations, with a similar figure applying in Merseyside. There was also a less quantifiable multiplier effect as the level of cultural provision brought in firstly restaurants and shops, and later higher value-added activities. The changed image of a city like Glasgow, designated as European City of Culture in 1990, makes it easier for firms like BP to persuade their staff to relocate there. Conversely, Birmingham's rather dismal cultural image was held to have seriously undermined its Olympic bid. Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania is often cited as the classic success story, a terminally run-down

**'New forms of retailing are busting apart the ecology of the city centre'**



industrial city that used arts as part of a broader strategy of regeneration that resulted in it being voted the most liveable city in the whole USA.

In Britain the use of art and culture as tools to reverse urban economic decline has been primarily associated with some of the larger Labour councils, particularly Glasgow, Liverpool and Bradford. Starting from gallery projects (like the Tate Of The North), garden festivals and museums (Bradford being the most successful example), councils have learnt that rather than simply supporting a thin layer of subsidised activity, they can also mobilise the economic potential of the arts more directly, to create thriving cultural industries producing designs, films, television programmes, comics and records. One of the ironies of the modern, global cultural industries is the cultural and economic success of the records, books and films most rooted in the decayed cities of the industrial age, Detroit and the Bronx, Liverpool and Sheffield. Relative decline can be turned to advantage. In the past, however, this advantage has rarely benefited the cities themselves. With many of their creative workers inadvertently funded by the DHSS and its counterparts, and lacking a local infrastructure of support, the profits of cultural success for a Human League or Frankie Goes To Hollywood went elsewhere, to London and New York rather than back into the urban economy.

**C**ouncils in Liverpool, Sheffield and elsewhere are now trying to develop the means to retain local control and reinvest profits in the local economy. Equally important, they are supporting the kind of environment within which the creation of ideas, images and designs can take place. Even more than fields like computing, the cultural industries depend on critical masses of activity, an organic and convivial milieu in which people emulate and argue, and eat and drink with each other. Examples include Sheffield with Red Tape studios and other projects in the music industry, Birmingham in the film and broadcasting industry with plans to create an 'audio-visual district', and Cardiff which seeks to promote itself as a media city, reflecting the fact that 4,500 are now employed in broadcasting, compared to 11,000 in the South Wales coalfield. Other examples include Glasgow in the visual arts, the most visible example of the use of arts in urban regeneration, Oxford in book publishing, and the emergence of East London as a thriving centre for the visual arts.

It has to be said that in some cases the use of art is suspect: there is a tendency to favour high arts, and to orient cultural provision to an executive and professional audience in a sterile wine-bar culture (witness the bitterness many feel towards Glasgow's claimed rejuvenation). The arts

can also serve as a wedge to drive out the original inhabitants as property prices rise. This has been well-documented in New York where relatively impecunious artists have moved into an area, thereby gradually increasing its cultural cachet, and also its property prices. Developers have come to understand the dynamics of the 'loft living' phenomenon, and now seek to emulate it synthetically, using the artists and small galleries as unwitting tools. Similar phenomena are already apparent around the centres of some British cities. Properly conceived, however, cultural regeneration strategies can marry economic goals with the political one of giving expression to the marginalised communities, to those living on the run-down estates, and to the young and old of the ethnic communities which remain largely cut off from the mainstream of urban cultural life.

**Nearly all the attempts to create cultural milieux and industrial districts have focused on the centre of cities. Despite occasional exceptions (like the recent, essentially suburban, movements of Acid House and Balearic), it is towards the city centre that cultural life has always tended to gravitate. Traditionally the centre of the city also acted as a magnet for shops, cinemas, pubs and restaurants. Areas like the West End of London sustain a vibrant evening economy where people congregate, perform, hang around and feel themselves plugged into the life of a city. In most towns and cities the same few streets collect both retailing and entertainment, together with the public buildings, the town hall, libraries, advice bureaux and churches.**

But new forms of retailing are busting apart the ecology of the city centre. In 1987 it was estimated that an unprecedented 500 shopping-centre applications were being processed in Britain. Many aimed to move retailing out of the city centre, to malls and superstores on the city periphery, to carefully controlled environments, self-contained shopping capsules. Retailing becomes cut off from the rest of city life in more ways than one. New centres like the Metro in Newcastle tie the local retailing economy yet more closely into that of national and international chains, the Nexts, Boots and Crabtree Amd Evelyns. Rather than being rooted in the history and buildings of the old city, the vivid spectacle that shopping becomes is removed from the generality of city life, from public buildings, parks, theatres and pubs. Those deemed unproductive as consumers, particularly the young and the homeless, are often physically excluded from the new shopping centres.

This retailing-led restructuring of city life can prove extremely destabilising for the rest of the city. As retailing moves away from the city centre, like manufacturing before it, economically

bereft wastelands are left behind. Physically and psychologically the centre decays, and, as fewer people use it for shopping or entertainment, its streets tend to become less safe, setting in motion a vicious spiral of decline. This trend is as damaging for the suburbs as for the city centre itself.

Some cities, particularly in North America, have tried to reverse the trend, with policies to rebuild the evening economy and emphasise their nature as social centres. Planning powers can be used to concentrate restaurants, entertainments and independent shops (as in Covent Garden or Faneuil Hall in Boston). Policing policies, late-night transport and good lighting can be harmonised to make it easier and safer to come into the city centre. Transport in the city centre can be free as in Denver. Busy streets can be shown to be safe streets, and to favour spending in the local economy, setting in motion a virtuous circle of improvement. Busy streets also make the city an easier place to live in, particularly for women who have become increasingly incarcerated in their own homes.<sup>1</sup> People can also be brought into the city by spectacular events. Alongside the idea of shopping as spectacle, cities can themselves be turned into spectacles, as in the vast pyrotechnic displays of Philip Alain-Huppert in Berlin, Algiers and Paris, Jean-Michel Jarre in the Docklands and Houston, the festivals of Rome and the GLC in the mid-1980s, or the modern counterparts of the ancient traditions of carnival that turn the city into a theatre and a world turned upside down.

**U**nfortunately, in Britain at least, there is a wide gulf between what is possible and what is likely. Few cities retain either the resources, the planning powers or the political will to move in these directions. In the immediate future, a more likely trend may be the recreation of the council as private corporation, as in Bradford, which in the past provided a model of how to use culture, with its tongue-in-cheek publication of the Bradford-English dictionary for tourists, and the building of the hugely successful Museum Of Film, TV And Photography. The current Conservative-run council in Bradford is now trying to project an idea of the city as a corporation providing a defined set of services to its 'consumers' and dividends to its shareholders.

But though we can denounce the trend to civic privatisation it has at least revealed just how emaciated the alternative civic and public traditions have become. The weakness of these traditions has also shone out clearly from the debates about architecture sparked off by Prince Charles, Rod Hackney, Richard Rogers and others. For though it is not hard to understand how the piazzas and boulevards of the past asserted an idea of public life, it is much harder to apply their lessons to

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cities riven by roads and studded with shopping precincts. It is worth recalling just how much the 19th-century civic tradition was carried through its physical forms.

The town halls and concert halls of the northern cities and, perhaps grandest of all, the town hall in Walthamstow in London (modelled on Versailles), and the public architecture of phone boxes, parks, clock towers and museums, all asserted an idea of the city as a shared and public space. Public provision was not philanthropic (that is to say provided by the rich for the poor) but could be for all, a means of creating social solidarity across classes through the shared use of transport, health and educational facilities. The vision of the city was one of active congregation and communication. These various traditions of public and civic architecture stood in stark contrast to the very different traditions of the temple, the arch and the palace, traditions which are sustained today in the monumental buildings of AT&T in New York, of NatWest and Lloyd's in London, and of Citicorp in many of the cities of Latin America, buildings which baldly assert their power and wealth.

It is an indication of the weakness of socialism in the 1980s that it is almost impossible to conceive of a physical manifestation of socialism that could match Morrison's armies of red buses, the LCC's housing and schools or indeed Stalinist gothic. The standardised public goods of the past certainly seem less appropriate in the 1980s.

Uncertainties about how to crystallise a vision of the city echo those of socialist politics more generally, the problems of achieving diversity without inequality, balance without excessive central planning. But it is also hard to visualise the physical forms of public life in the 21st century for another reason. This concerns the vulnerability of the very idea of public life to an era of electronic communication and what Raymond Williams described as mobile privatisation. Any plans for the creation of convivial cities inevitably find themselves struggling with a long erosion of the traditional political structures of the city within which people think, argue and organise.

Most of our conceptions of politics derive from the theories and practices of city life. The Greek *polis*, from which the word politics derives, was the city. The city was defined as a political entity, human in scale and shaped by the active interaction of its citizens. The city also was clearly understood to be shaped by its means of communication. Plato limited the size of the ideal city to the number of citizens who could be addressed by a single voice. Historically, democracy is closely associated with the rhythms of dense city life, from Athens and Ghent to Paris and Glasgow, instant and egalitarian in nature, and based on the

streets, outside the factory gates and in the great squares of the city. The popular imagination of the Left is filled with images of public city life, with speakers on street corners, assertive crowds, soap boxes and barricades.

Yet it is precisely this kind of public life that now seems to be withering as public spaces are privatised for retailing developments and as other activities relocate to the home. Marx argued that capitalism was creating the seeds of its own downfall by concentrating people into factories and neighbourhoods where they would learn to organise and co-operate. Now, as late capitalism disperses people to new towns, smaller workshops and offices, and to the private pleasures of the living room these cultural roots of democratic, public life are under threat. The same communications technologies that permit the dispersal of production are also part of a broader privatisation of life: the relocation of leisure, work and democracy in the home. Some of the underlying pressures are economic: atomised, electronic communications are potentially much cheaper than socialised, face-to-face ones. Electronic, push-button democracy could be much cheaper than the ballot paper. The television costs 2p each hour compared to £2 at the cinema or more at a theatre: off-licence drink and take-away food are also cheap alternatives that have rapidly shifted the locus of social life.

This trend need not be entirely anti-social. Many people have discovered that the VCR can be a more social tool than the cinema: but what is changed is the nature of the social or public experience. The public is no longer general, but rather comes to be composed of a myriad small groups and of the spaces, described by Sharon Zukin as 'liminal', that lie between the public and the private, spaces like the apparently public piazza of a private office development, the street of a private housing development, the club that replaces the pub. It is the world of the Dagmar rather than the Vic, a world of separate tables and hushed voices rather than a communal bar.

There is a sense in which this trend away from a 'mass public' is irreversible. And it is in the city more than anywhere that people need privacy and the means of excluding others. But it is also here that the economic pressures towards providing a liveable city run the risk of generating divisive social consequences. The economic value of a convivial milieu for creative and scientific work provides an obvious incentive for developers and public authorities to support it. But conviviality for others, particularly for the underclass, the homeless and the unemployed, is if anything seen as threatening, to be cordoned off, monitored and policed (as in Coventry's new system of videos to monitor the city's shopping centre).

The old stereotype of a convivial

working class counterposed to a domesticated suburban middle class, cosseted behind the lace curtains of detached houses, is turned on its head. Instead conviviality is offered to those for whom it has an economic value, those involved in the many forms of knowledge work, while those in less skilled work live an increasingly privatised existence, away from the city centres, and dependent on home-based entertainments. Marx's comment threatens to be turned on its head: perhaps in the 21st century it will be the dominant classes that learn the experience of co-operation and organisation in the wine bars of the City while the working class sits at home behind steel doors watching re-runs of those innumerable films that have portrayed the city either as a prison (*Escape From New York* etc.), as a jungle for survivalists (*Omega Man* etc.), or as an arena for vigilantes (*Death Wish 1-45*).

The dangers posed by such a rift in public life hardly need to be spelled out. There is a real sense in which the achievement of a new vision of the city and practical policies to realise it are essential if much of the political life of the larger cities is not to be reduced to the confines of the sound bite and the opinion poll. Yet the new vision of city life remains only half-formed. Though some of its themes are clear - new forms of collective consumption, the emphasis on liveability and conviviality, the idea of an interdependent ecology of city life, of the city as a means of communication, and of the city as a potential defence against the volatilities of an overconnected world - these still need to be fleshed out, experimented with and articulated.

Their ultimate promise is that out of the ashes of recession and deindustrialisation a new greener, and more social city can arise. For me, Tony Lane offers one of the best accounts of why a vision of this kind could become compelling. Lane foresees 'the Garden of Kent turned into a huge car park and railway siding for cross-Channel traffic and the rest of the Home Counties made impossible by the density of people crushing in to look for the jobs squeezed out of the North.' Early in the 21st century, he writes, 'horrified northern viewers will be seeing videotapes in which the metropolis and the South East are portrayed as a rat-maze of a modern urban hell. Life in Liverpool meanwhile, but also in Newcastle and Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford ... will be extraordinarily civilised. Relieved of overdensely populated acres, these will be spacious, open cities of tree-lined streets, coppiced corners and wooded hollows, teeming with wildlife where tenements and tower blocks once stood ...'<sup>2</sup>

1 See for example the excellent CLES pamphlet: *City Centres, City Cultures*. 1988.

2 From Tony Lane's *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1987.