# 5 Culture

Cultural studies may be defined as an interdisciplinary, critical, historical investigation of aspects of everyday life, with a particular emphasis on the problem of resistance, that is, the way that individuals and groups practice a strategy of appropriation in response to structures of domination.

(Ben Highmore)

## Introduction: capital, culture and the sign

The period since 1975 has seen cataclysmic shifts in the previously cosy separation between culture and production, and some would argue that the Marxian distinction between the economic base and the superstructure has completely collapsed. Culture is now being rapidly absorbed into the realm of production, along with new significance accorded to *the culture industry* (Scott 2000). Problematically, 'one of the most perplexing features organically built into the logic of contemporary cultural production is that it is agnostic – anyway up to a point – about cultural values and predilections as such, just so long as profitability is assured' (Scott 2000: 212). Such activity provides the bedrock whereby the commodification of all aspects of human life becomes impacted. In consequence, a concept of culture is generated that, in the sphere of the personality, 'scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odours and emotions' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 167).

The spectre of culture integrated with production, requisite shifts in social class and the replacement of needs with desire heralds Debord's idea that 'Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation' (Debord 1983: 2). The processes of commodification are gradually supplanting those of traditional culture, where the social becomes a system of signs displacing the needs of normal human emotions to those of commodified attitudes, values, objects and symbols. Signs therefore become the central method of communication, the living medium

of social relations. As I have mentioned previously, the commodity is not a material thing but a social relation. The use value of the object is clearly material, but the commodity itself is symbolic, constituting a code that mediates several relationships, between buyer and seller, between use values and exchange values, between brand and image, and between sign, signifier and signified.

I have covered these concepts at some length in FOC3: 65–9, but, briefly stated, culture and its components, such as language, architecture, food, dress etc., can be interpreted as forms of communication whose materiality stands as a sign for other things (emotions, ideas, desires, philosophies etc.). As signs are systemic, they can be decoded, i.e. they are enveloped by culture (During 1993). The sign constitutes the union of a form (signifier) with an idea (signified). If I can transpose an example of Roland Barthes, the Parthenon in Athens can be used to signify democracy. When it does this, the Parthenon is the sign that mediates the relationship between the actual building (object) and democracy (the signified). This relationship is locked into the Parthenon as a sign that encompasses both medium (building) and message (democracy). As culture may be defined as 'an assemblage of imaginings and meanings', where 'capitalism shifts more toward the exchange of meanings, products become more intensely symbolised through advertising and the social discourse of "taste"'. Value is placed on products according to their social status, as well as on their cost and scarcity. Products and services begin to attract symbolic value which can then be attached to the owner. With increasing frequency it is the symbolic value that is being purchased over use value (Lewis 2002: 6, Jensen 2007). This process can become self-consuming, as *branding*, and, in the realm of the urban, it starts to define urban policy and strategy (Greenberg 2003, Kumic 2008).

Without these relationships incarcerated in the commodity, capitalism as we know it would collapse. For this reason, Baudrillard ultimately came to the conclusion that nowhere do signs organise reality more than culture, and for this reason everything can now be understood as *cultural*. In fact, he noted that 'culture is the production and consumption of signs to the point where signs have begun to produce cultures' (Kumic 2008: 122). He goes on to argue that, in consequence, a role reversal takes place between the object and the sign or brand. Where one normally assumes that brand and sign are set in place to sell objects, in fact it is the brand that is actually being consumed. The extent to which the object vanishes is epitomised by a recent description of 'one of the world's hottest models'. She was described by the swimwear company Seafolly as 'the most significant *brand ambassador signing* in Seafolly's thirty three year history, and is *an international brand coup*' (Hoyer 2008: 9; my italics). As such, the individual had disappeared, to be replaced as a mere signifier of commodities and the simulacrum of a brand. Applied in an urban design context, the spatial logic of late capitalism is such that spaces and places are also established to support the brand and the overall production of a commodity-inspired culture.

Bourdieu argues that the material consumption of commodities is liberated from objects into symbolic exchange, whereby a vast array of signs are enclosed within material products and services. Hence,

> the tasteful selection and consumption of products is used as a social insignia for the privileging of particular individuals and groups. The selection of a product and the display of its value necessarily implicate consumption in the symbolic positioning of people and their everyday lifestyle and practices.
>
> (Lewis 2002: 268; Tolba *et al.* 2006)

Reduced to basics, this means that one's community is also a symbolic construct where taste, branding and image are all-enveloping and constitute simulacra – the imitation of an imitation, where sign value competes with, or even overrides, use value. This is particularly true of New Urbanist communities, where the brand authenticates the sign. Baudrillard suggests that the mediation of signs then becomes the dominant reality.

## The urban symbolic

In the preceding chapter, the ideological dimension of urban politics was addressed. But ideology is not only represented by extension into the three-dimensional formal properties of the built environment, into buildings, spaces and monuments as elements, but also into a binding synthesis of much greater complexity. Although politically sanctioned interpretations of national accomplishments abound, the dark side of patriarchal, racist, xenophobic and manipulative aspects of societies is usually marked by its absence.

All states tend to present sanitised and ideological representations of their own history, some going as far, like the Incas, as having history recounted as an idealised version of events. History is usually written as the dominant authority would like to see it, rather than as how it was experienced by those collectively involved in its creation. As a general rule, men and male values also dominate. When women appear, it is frequently in support of their reinforcement of male values, for example the monument to women's contribution to the Second World War next to Downing Street in London (Figure 5.1). Women and children are seldom seen, and monuments recognising resistance to state oppression as well as violence against individuals and groups are conveniently expunged. The same is true of external acts of war, the horrors of colonialism or massacres carried out against minorities whose religion, philosophy or merely the colour of their skin somehow displeased ruling elites. Massacres of one's own people in war are referred to as heroism. Therefore, the transcendent imaginary of social, political and gender equality is seldom seen, or, to quote Jean Paul Sartre's famous dictum, '*L'enfer, c'est les autres*' ('hell is other people'). We can take this further, in another quotation that closely ties culture to the concept of death and transfiguration:

> For Marx, then, for revolution to succeed a relationship has to be established with death – with the dead. Looking around our cities we are

*Figure 5.1* Monument to the women of the Second World War. Sculpture adjacent to Downing Street, London

Source: The author

> continually faced with the figures of the dead: the officially mourned and celebrated figures of politicians, inventors, heroes, fighters and suchlike. There are also memorials to the dead who have died in wars. And yet the un-mourned, the un-acknowledged dead, the dead who might spoil the image of civic pride are absent.
>
> (Highmore 2006: 170)

The same is true of society's unacknowledged anti-heroes – evil dictators, corporate fraudsters, corrupt politicians, contentious authors, gangsters, serial killers and other reprobates. Hence, our fifth space is inhabited only by the good, the successful, the justifiable, the brilliant, the saintly and the moral. It is a space largely sanitised of blame and critical self-reflection and, therefore, to a great extent, of responsibility and correct moral judgement. What monuments portray

does not necessarily convey what we know and experience. This is, of course, quite understandable, but at the same time it is a profoundly ideological and dishonest portrayal of society. For this reason, and in order to understand all the representations contained in fifth space, they must be deconstructed at a variety of levels in order to reveal their semiotic content – from historical development, prevailing values and power, to the political subterfuge of the state and its enemies, and to the network of associated representations across urban space. Therefore, the overarching rule in the design of fifth space as a totality is that it constitutes a veritable minefield of stated and unstated discourse, on societies in particular and civilisation in general.

The cornucopia of monumental forms encompasses a vast diversity, from immense buildings to small sculptural elements, where the physical size of the monument bears no necessary relation to its significance. Examples would include palaces, churches, war memorials, triumphal arches, crescents, boulevards, obelisks, towers, sculpture, monumental artworks and fountains, as well as specific elements in grand architectural compositions. Closely related is the concept of public art, which I view as largely apolitical and therefore not monumental in my adopted sense of the term. If public art is funded by the private sector, it is usually for its own aggrandisement or to present a distorted version of reality. If it is funded by the state, it is usually for its entertainment value, serving as a soporific for the masses. I view public art as differing from monumental art in two significant dimensions, although clearly there is a blurring of boundaries. First, public art differs from the monumental in having its meanings largely eviscerated, as in any other form of mass media. For example, public art is either donated by, or demanded from, the private sector as compensation for development privileges, as in California's 'one percent for art' policy, where 1 per cent of the cost of major buildings in downtown areas had to be contributed for the purposes of art as decoration and entertainment. Second, monumental art has primarily an ideological function in building nationhood, sustaining religious commitments, promoting ethical and moral values, respecting the advances of science and technology etc. A good example of boundary conditions, where the difference between monumental art and public art is difficult to define is Richard Serra's sculpture *Tilted Arc* (FOC4: 98). As a case in point, as public art the sculpture generated so much public discussion that it was eventually removed from its site in Manhattan.

For this reason, I will adopt a definition of the concept *monument* as any object that is used in structuring the material world of fifth space but whose prime function is *ideological*. One immediately calls to mind examples such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Nelson's Column in London, *The Little Mermaid* in Copenhagen (Figure 5.2), *The Walter Scott Monument* in Edinburgh (Figure 5.3), Ossip Zadkine's statue in Rotterdam (Figure 5.4), the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome (Figure 5.5) and countless others. However, methods of classifying monuments have the same problems as any other taxonomy, whether by form, substance, historical location, design, content or other qualities. The sheer variety of monuments defies any simple categorisation that would be

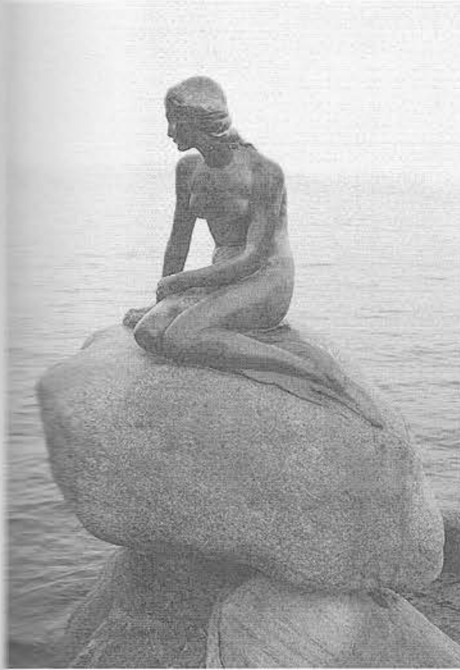

*Figure 5.2*
The *Little Mermaid* sculpture, entrance to Copenhagen harbour, Denmark
Source: © Lucjan Podstawka/iStockphoto

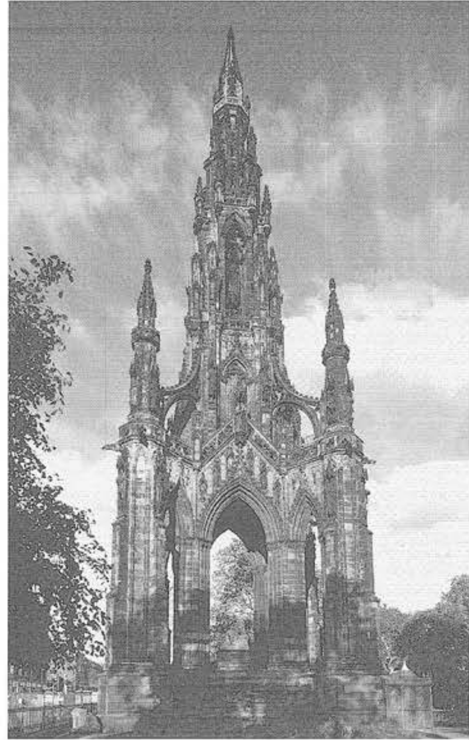

*Figure 5.3*
The *Sir Walter Scott Monument*, Princes Street, Edinburgh
Source: © John Pavel/iStockphoto

meaningful in itself, and this has seldom been attempted to any useful degree. Most relate to the realm of archaeology or ancient monuments and are purely functional in reach.

Probably the most noted attempt at a more general taxonomy is that of the Vienna Classification of Monuments, based upon the Vienna Agreement of 1973 and contained within what is headed 'The figurative classification manual of the Office for Harmonisation in the internal market' (2002). Section 7.5.1 denotes ten categories of monument, a tiny fragment of the overall agreement. This overall classification system runs to sixty-six pages and deals with intellectual property rights and trade marks. Hence, its entire focus is economic, and there is no attempt to build in any qualitative system of values, judgement etc. Rather than classifying objects for aesthetic or cultural preservation, it actually charts the potential boundaries of commodified wealth with the mental and physical worlds. Virtually all the sources of capital accumulation from the material world have been classified under a single umbrella. Similarly, UNESCO includes monuments in its categorisation of specific sites for the award of World Heritage

*Figure 5.4* Ossip Zadkine's sculpture, *The Destroyed City*, Rotterdam
Source: AKG Images/Bildarchiv Monheim

Site, to be protected under its agreement of 1972. This includes such icons as Venice, Mohenjo Daro, Borobodur, Persepolis, Delphi, Abu Simbel (Figure 5.6) and others. The overall categories are forest, monument, mountain, lake, desert, building, complex or city. Prior to 2005, separate criteria were established for culture and nature, under the overarching umbrella of having outstanding universal value, a separation no longer recognised. As of that date, ten criteria have been established, no doubt to dispel the artificial separation between the two qualities, and moreover:

*Figure 5.5* Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome
Source: © Luis Pedrosa/iStockphoto

- to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design;
- to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation that is living or that has disappeared;
- to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape that illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use or sea-use that is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment, especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- to be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial,

*Figure 5.6* The Great Temple at Abu Simbel, Egypt
Source: © Vincenzo Vergelli/iStockphoto

fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

- to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-site conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

(www.answers.com/topic/world-heritage-site)

Conservation apart, the central motivation is again economic, as the accolade of being denoted a World Heritage Site is thought to boost tourism and development. Paradoxically, however, this is an extremely dubious proposition, as benefits are by no means guaranteed and, in several cases, sites have been known to suffer losses (Tisdell 2010, Tisdell and Wilson 2011). Many other forms of classification exist, but these are usually highly specialised, dealing with, for example, archaeological sites, medieval fortifications, geological formations, places of ecclesiastical significance etc.

Arguably the most notable method of classifying monuments, one that has survived the test of time, was that of Alois Riegl in his seminal study of monuments in 1903 (Riegl 1982). He distinguished between *intentional* and *unintentional* monuments, where the difference is between that of prospective

or retrospective cultural memory. Intentional monuments were those concerned with historical memory or recall, commemorating some historical event. These contain what he called commemorative value. Riegl considered that this type of monument was the only kind known until the Renaissance period. Unintentional monuments were those whose meanings were determined by the perceptions of the observer rather than the sculptor, architect or other person who created them. Such monuments contained age value, art-historical value and use value. Although, on the surface, they would seem to be the same, age value refers to the concepts of aura and authenticity, whereas art-historical value merged aesthetic qualities with its representation of human development. Use value refers to any functional attributes the object may have. Riegl considered that the distinction between art value and historical value was rejected during the nineteenth century, when it became obvious that monuments possessed both qualities simultaneously. Only by grappling with some of these associations can the psychological, cultural and political impact of monuments be understood, as they encompass every aspect of human history and consciousness.

So we may consider that the semantic content of monuments constitutes a form of apprehended memory, whose recall is continually retranslated in human experience and changing historical circumstances. By this, I mean not only that the object has a political function, but also that it forms part of an interlinked semiotic system throughout the urban areas of towns and cities. Seldom are monuments dissociated from the space and culture within which they are embedded (although the Statue of Liberty in New York is clearly an exception). A dominant trait, however, within this overall system is that monuments traditionally underwrite bourgeois values and present them as a false representation of majority aspirations. Paradoxically, this does not necessarily imply any conspiracy, as it is in the nature of any symbolic form that a multiplicity of interpretations can be given as well as received, and that the principle of distorted communication rules (Canovan 1983). Needless to say, such distortion can also be used to a variety of effects. In addition, it is in the nature of individuals to support the very system that holds them captive. The definition of ideology as a lived system of values has very blurred outlines. This situation is compounded by the fact that buildings frequently lie to us, and that the accepted norms apparent in architectural form may often present a false reality, as in the example of Greek architecture given above. Such is the nature of all monuments in the public realm of cities.

Both monuments and the processes of conservation are closely related, as the same value systems and ideological practices frequently inform both. This is certainly true in core economies, but it attains even greater significance for colonised people. In researching an article on conservation in Hong Kong, the political substance of what I was involved in was emphasised in an article in the *South China Morning Post*. A guilt-ridden expatriate suggested,

> that the best examples of colonial architecture are relics of a barbarian culture, and that conservationists would best be advised to concentrate their

> efforts on Euston station or the Roman Forum, and leave the Chinese people to decide what is or what is not part or their culture.

One local Chinese guru took up the challenge a few weeks later, deciding that 'all buildings that remind people of their colonial past should be torn down' (Cuthbert 1984: 102–12). The same seems to be true of monuments, and the sentiment was also echoed in Hungary after the Russians departed:

> In Budapest the city council has removed in excess of twenty monuments including those of Marx and Engels. Veterans of the 1956 uprising were among those seeking their removal. The Red Army Monument, however, has been retained in one of the City's main squares, but it is constantly under police protection.
>
> (Johnson 1994: 51)

*Figure 5.7*
Soviet Army Memorial, Main Square, Budapest, Hungary

Source: Peter Erik Forsberg/Age Photostock/Photolibrary

Although fifth space is the place where people communicate with each other and experience the city in all of its complexity, it is also the epicentre of urban conflict and the main locus for its expression. It is the space where ideology adopts a concrete and material form. There is no part of the urban fabric that is incapable of serving ideological purposes, no matter how poor or fragmented it may become. Urban forms constitute the vehicles whereby dominant values are stored and transmitted, where stories are told, individuals are exalted, nationhood is established and where the institutional power of the state, the military and organised religion is reified. The site of the monument, and its extension to other monuments and spaces, is as critical as the monument itself. Monuments can signify events that took place anywhere in the world or at the same location. As they also convey historical memory, they may be reproduced in countless forms across towns, cities and nations, commemorating, for example, the Second World War of 1939–45. Urban streets and squares can also mark the locus of countless internal political struggles, where governments have been overthrown, resistance has been crushed, individuals have been massacred and buildings have been destroyed. The public realm is therefore the site of collective consciousness, tradition, association and conflict, a symbolic universe of society's aspirations and historical development.

## Monuments and design

Although the monument forms a critical part of the urban designer's portfolio, the significance and meaning of monuments are seldom explored. They tend to exist as reference points in a Euclidean exercise of two-dimensional geometry. The idea of the axis, which usually begins and ends with a monument as its focal point, is central to the methodology of urban design. It originated in antiquity and has been implemented as such for centuries. Axis, gridiron, street, square and monument are the dominant components of urban design in the Western world. Christopher Wren's 1667 plan for rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666 (Figure 5.8), Thomas Holme's plan for Philadelphia of 1683 and James Craig's plan for Edinburgh New Town of 1766 (won in a competition when he was 22 years old) are all historical amalgamations of these principles. More recent examples might include Walter Burley Griffin's plan for Canberra (1913) and Leon Krier's Luxembourg project of 1979. However, Baron Haussmann's plan for Paris is probably the consummate example of this principle, where monuments form the basis of his axial plan of 1853, the impetus for which had begun with Napoleon I sixty years previously, in 1793. Within this plan, the most outstanding example is the 5-kilometre axis originating at the Place de l'Étoile. This was only recently completed, in 1990, with the construction of La Grande Arche of La Défense, rising 110 metres into the air on a 100 metres square site designed by Johann Otto Von Spreckelsen. It is also notable that the triumphal arch that sits at the centre of the Place de l'Étoîle derives from the monuments to war named after the victories of Roman emperors over their adversaries.

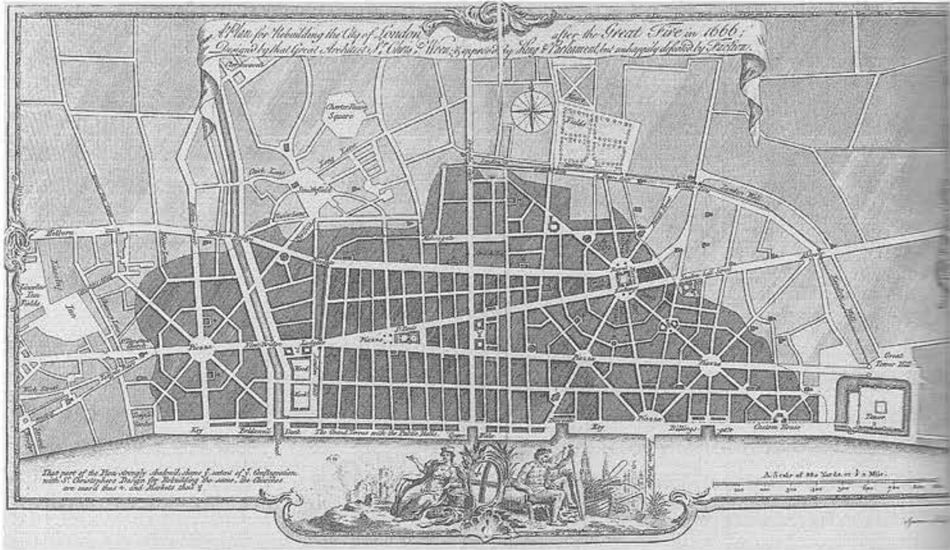


*Figure 5.8* Christopher Wren's plan for rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666
Source: © Corbis

The expressive function of physical scale is also important in the designer's vocabulary. Embedded in the term monumental is an association with the grandiose, but the term has no necessary connotation with scale, and many monuments, although small, contain meanings and associations inversely proportional to their size. Hence, in English, there is a semantic confusion inherent in the use of the term. Some monuments are indeed monumental, such as the Statue of Liberty in New York; others, such as the *Manneken Pis* in Brussels, are less than 1 metre tall (Figure 5.9). Monumental architecture, however, frequently conveys the message that the citizen is inferior to the dominant authority (the king, dictator, government or god). This strategy has not only been put to great effect by many totalitarian states, fascist and communist alike, but also by orthodox religion, for example Gothic cathedrals, St Peter's Basilica in Rome etc., although the Basilica of the Sacré Coeur in Paris (Figure 5.10) is an exception to this rule, standing as a symbol of conflict and struggle in French society between the Communards and the Royalist forces (Harvey 1989). By its very nature and its tendency to an oppressive use of scale, monumental architecture conveys the message of individual subservience to institutional authority in the form of religion, state, monarchy and politics. In reference to Tatlin's monument to the Third (communist) International, Negt and Kluge state:

> What Tatlin's monument signifies becomes apparent only when it is contrasted with the design of bourgeois monumental architecture. The architecture of the French Revolutionary era too is by and large extant only in the shape of plans. These comprise huge static monstrosities, which aspire

*Figure 5.9*
The *Manneken Pis*, Brussels: symbolic of various Belgian legends
Source: © Ziutograf/iStockphoto

to the cosmos, the landscape, or to vast ideas such as justice; never monuments to which human beings can relate.

(Negt and Kluge 1993: 279)

The smallest scalar elements involved in scripting monuments are probably plaques on buildings and street names, which have enduring significance in the commemoration of historical figures and events (Johnson 1994). For example, the Boulevard des Champs Élysées, begun by Marie de Medici in 1616 and opened in Paris by Louis XIV in 1667, is internationally famous and is frequently described as the most beautiful street in the world. For the French, the name translates literally as 'The Elysian Fields' and derives from the place in Greek mythology where the blessed went after death. Street names are political simply owing to the fact that their naming is seldom democratically executed, and they usually support an edited version of history (Azarayahu 1986, 1996). Naming streets and other urban spaces can be a profoundly political gesture that enduringly masks the truth. Tiananmen Square, for example, means 'The Gate of Heavenly Peace', a somewhat odd name for the site where university students and workers were massacred. This event symbolised the cataclysmic death of Chinese socialism, where a fundamental tenet was breached when the People's

*Figure 5.10* The Basilica of the Sacré Coeur, Paris. Monument built on the site traditionally associated with the martyrdom of St. Denis, patron saint of Paris

Source: © Christian Musat/iStockphoto

Army was used against the very people it was supposed to protect. Needless to say, the square was not renamed to commemorate and signify these events, as exemplified in Beirut in the Martyr's Square (FOC5: 120–2). Street names are frequently handed down by the state, for example '. . . after the unification of Germany under Prussian hegemony in 1871, street names in Berlin commemorated not only members of the ruling Hohenzollern dynasty, but also mythical heroes structured in the fabric of German nationhood' (Azarayahu 1996: 314). This included Bismarck, who unified Germany and, for his efforts, has some 400 monuments erected in his honour (Figure 5.11). In contrast, since the takeover of Hong Kong by China in 1997, street names such as 'Queen's Road West', places such as 'Victoria Harbour' and monuments to colonial authority such as that of King George VI all remain.

Not only naming but also renaming can take place for political reasons. Azarayahu quotes Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1985), regarding the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, where the signs denoting streets and cities disappeared overnight, leaving the country nameless. Under colonialism, destroying prior signs is usually the first strategy of invaders, and readers will be aware that the first act accompanying the United States' invasion of Iraq was to broadcast internationally the fall of a huge sculptural monument of Saddam Hussein, an act that, at the time, appeared to have more significance than the actual invasion. As a general rule, this process underwrites

*Figure 5.11* Bismarck statue, Berlin
Source: Jonathan Carlile/imagebroker.net/Photolibrary

colonisation, and the symbolic destruction of memory is the first method of eroding nationality and imposing a new regime (Fanon 1965, 1967, Said 1978, Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999). For post-colonial societies, the reconstitution of memory in symbolic forms is frequently agonising, and the regeneration of a new identity for a new society is fraught with angst, as the history of colonisation is now embedded as part of the history of the colonised people. Elsewhere, I have discussed this problem in the context of societies that now have fascist architecture as part of their own history and the problems this entails for urban and architectural form (FOC 3: 67).

In the panoply of monumental imagery, war takes front stage. Few countries do not, in some manner, eulogise war as a method of representing nationalist supremacy. Defeats are seldom recognised. For example, there is no monument in the German Republic to the countless thousands of men who died in the catastrophic siege of Stalingrad and the fateful retreat back to Germany:

> Publics have been trained to view monuments and historical markers, whether massive obelisks, towering representational statues or modest plaques, as carrying a unity of universality and timelessness. Yet the decisions about what sites to mark and the formal aspects of the monuments are often highly contentious and politicised.
>
> (Walkowitz and Knauer 2004: 5)

This statement is clearly demonstrated by contrasting monuments in Washington DC, in the United States, where, on the one hand, controversy is marked by the insignificance granted to events of monumental import, whereas, on the other, controversy raged over a single war memorial. On a small street corner marker off Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, the vast scale of Chinese, Soviet and Cambodian annihilation of their own people by Mao, Stalin and Pol Pot is commemorated. It is the only monument to approximately *100 million* victims of communism (Kennicott 2007). Overall, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial is probably the most contested of all war memorials in the twentieth century (Figure 5.12). Completed in 1982, it is a testament to the fallen, both men and women. The design is a simple wall of polished black stone in a V shape that changes in elevation along its length. Its very blackness was criticised for looking like a gravestone rather than a eulogy. Virtually every element of the wall came under a barrage of vitriolic abuse, from the use of materials, to the abstract nature of the monument, and to Lin's Chinese ancestry. Racism, prejudice, bigotry and ignorance were all brought to bear, primarily, but not exclusively, by the remaining veterans. Lin had won the competition when she was a 21-year-old student, over another fifteen hundred entrants. In order to quell the tide of criticism, another monument was built close by in the somewhat universal heroic style, depicting three Americans of different race staring into space (MacCannell 1992). Despite the criticism, Lin's design is now one of the most visited and respected sites in the United States. There is also a half-scale touring simulacrum that visits other American cities, for those who cannot get to the original. This significance of war monuments in cities is underscored in *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Urban Space* (Walkowitz and Knauer 2004). It is telling that, with a single exception, that of Lithuania, all other examples from the book deal with conflict, torture, death and nationalism (Table 5.1).

As wars between countries have resulted in countless possible forms of representation, so the recognition of gender is seldom noted (Nash 1993). Monuments reflect the political and ideological foundation of society in patriarchy, and the

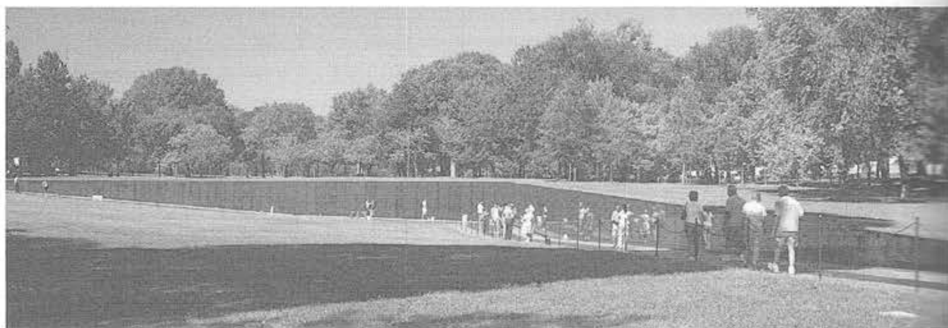

*Figure 5.12* The Vietnam Memorial, Washington DC, designed by Maya Lin
Source: © Rob Meeske/iStockphoto

Table 5.1 Examples of monuments, their location and representation

| | Monument | Location | Date | Memory |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Marian Column (now empty space) | Prague, Czech Republic | 1650 | End of Thirty Years War |
| 2 | Wallace's Monument | Stirling, Scotland | 1860s | Wars of Independence |
| 3 | Paradise Temple | Harbin | 1923 | Consolidation of Chinese sovereignty |
| 4 | Peace Memorial Park | Hiroshima | 1950/ 1992 | Civilian deaths of atomic war |
| 5 | Veterans Memorial | Washington DC | 1982 | Vietnam War |
| 6 | Parliamentary complex (unbuilt) | Sri Lanka | 1985 | National unity |
| 7 | Lake Xolotlan | Nicaragua | 1985 | Sandanista victory over Somoza dictatorship |
| 8 | Villa Grimaldi | Santiago | 1990 | Military use of torture against patriots |
| 9 | Unbuilt spaces of solidarity and remembrance | El Salvador | post-1992 | 8000 persons tortured or killed |
| 10 | War memorial | Poklonnaia Gora, Moscow | 1995 | Victory over the Germans |
| 11 | Masada | Israel | 1995 | Zionist struggle for survival |
| 12 | Holocaust memorial | Berlin | 1998 | Genocide |
| 13 | Memorial for the disappeared | Santiago | 1999 | Victims of Pinochet's death squads |
| 14 | Bali remembrance sculpture | Sydney | 2003 | Assassinations by Islamic extremists |
| 15 | Museum of Memory | Buenos Aires | 2003 | Interrogation and torture |
| 16 | Palace reconstruction | Vilnius, Lithuania | 2010 | Genealogy of place and culture |

Source: D.J. Walkowitz and L.M. Knauer (eds), *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*. London: Duke University, 2004, p. 68

erection of monuments exists almost exclusively to honour the activities of men in war, government, sport, the arts, science and other regions of human endeavour. This process attains enormous dimensions, as in the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome, built in marble to commemorate the first King of a united Italy (1885–1911). The incorporation of women into the fabric of buildings has a long history in the symbolic portrayal of human aspirations, states of consciousness etc., for example, Athena – wisdom, Venus – love, Kali – death, as in the Statue of Liberty in New York, representing the pursuit of freedom for all Americans, but nonetheless originating in France. Women seldom appear as leaders, but as 'other', not of themselves but as a symbolic representation of love, motherhood, truth etc., or otherwise objectified for the beauty of the female body

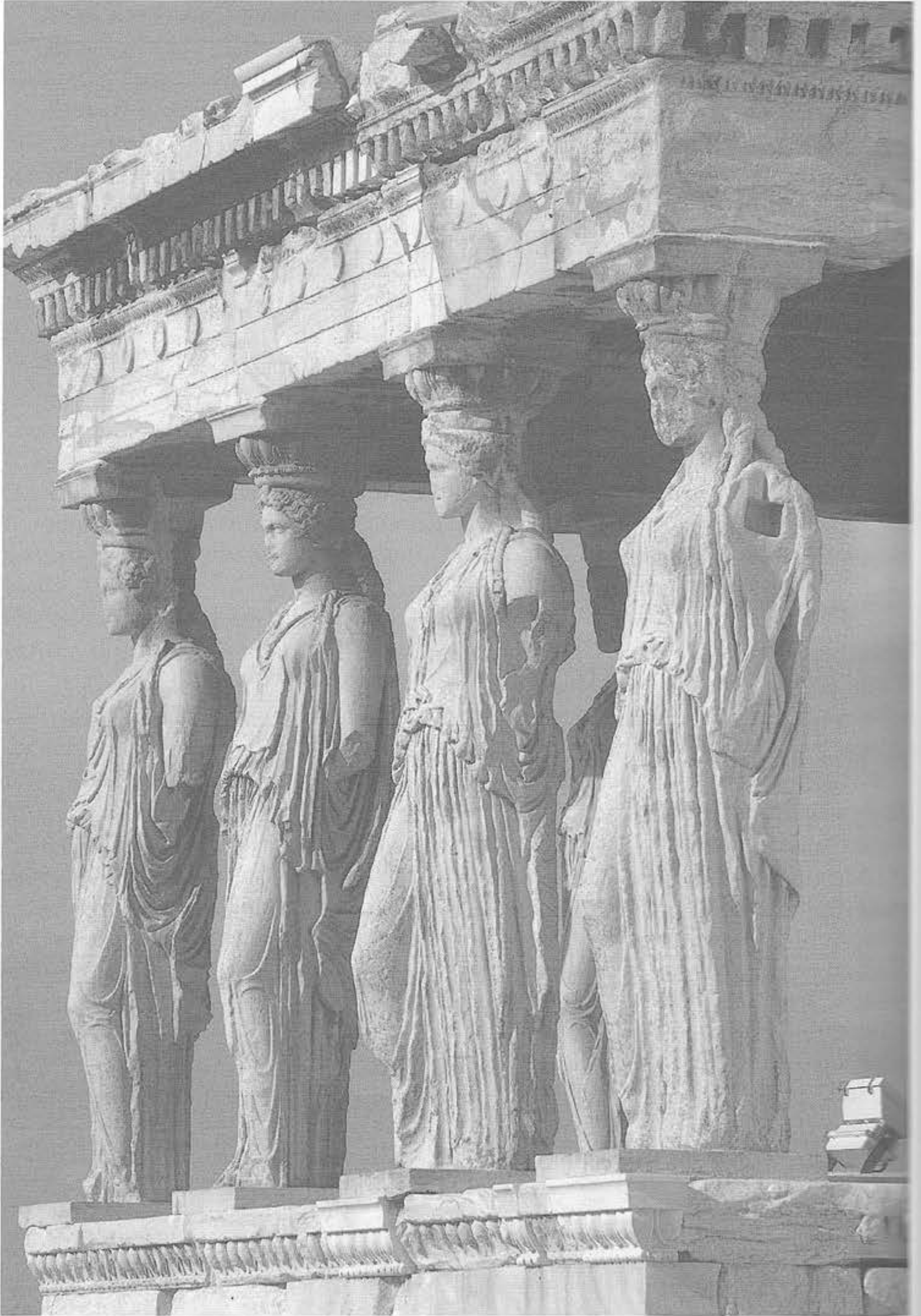

*Figure 5.13* The Erechtheum building of the Acropolis in Athens, showing the caryatids used as pillars (from the Greek *Karyatides* meaning 'maidens of Karyai')

Source: © oversnap/iStockphoto

Warner 1985). Whereas men are represented in monuments as conquerors and heroes, with the focus on individual or collective accomplishment (as in the alternative Vietnam memorial), the method of representing women has been dominated by allegorical representation and passive compliance. Possibly the most classical method of representing women is in the depiction of the caryatids in the porch of the Erechtheum building on the Athenian Acropolis, first recorded by Vitruvius in *De Architectura*, his famous architectural treatise of the first century BC. The women's bodies substituted for columns on the basis that they could dance while carrying baskets on their heads (Figure 5.13). The extent of national passion evoked by such images was recently demonstrated in regard to the bronze 1.2-metre statue of a mermaid that has guarded Copenhagen Harbour since 1913. A national outcry ensued when the Danish government agreed to loan the statue to the Chinese as part of the World Expo to be held in Shanghai in 2010.

The symbolic representation of culture in the public realm is clearly a highly charged political activity. In representing only the positive aspects of culture, distorted communication occurs, and society is presented with a false image of itself. Much of this has the overarching intention of generating political acquiescence to a commonly shared ideology, with heroic images of society's most famous sons dying in battle or standing erect, staring into the cosmos. Luckily, there are also significant failures in this process, sufficient to maintain intellectual freedom and resistance to a monolithic portrayal of culture. Even abstract art, perhaps not the most obvious method of stimulating human passions, frequently generates unholy dialogue over the meaning of object, site, convention and value, and we have seen how Maya Lin's Veterans Memorial, or Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in Federal Plaza, New York, possessed the ability to generate meanings far beyond that of their immediate presence (FOC4: 397, 398).

Monuments are ubiquitous in Western urbanisation and, to a degree are part of its uniqueness, the concrete manifestation of culture as politics. They infuse the public realm of cities with ideologies that are simultaneously exposed and hidden, true and false, fantasy and reality, and where individual experience is subsumed, distorted and sacrificed to national and civic identity. However, culture is not only condensed in the public realm of fifth space. It has its domestic counterpart in the private realm of home and community, as exemplified in the globally emergent architectural movement called New Urbanism.

## Heterology and the New Urbanism

There are two types of New Urbanism, not one as we are usually led to believe. The first is reified by Neil Smith in his paper, 'New globalism, new urbanism: gentrification as global strategy' (Smith 2002). Smith argues that, owing to the neo-liberalism of the third millennium, the relationship between capital and the state has been restructured:

> This transformation, the outlines of which we are only beginning to see, is being expressed more vividly through an altered geography of social relations – more correctly, through a rescaling of social processes and relations that creates new amalgams of scale, replacing the old amalgams broadly associated with 'community' 'urban' 'regional' 'national' and 'global' . . . in effect a new urbanism.
>
> (Smith 2002: 430)

As such, the first form of the New Urbanism reflects a sea change in the international division of labour, the shift from industrial economies to informational economies and the development of electronic communication and an informational economy among other phenomena. This situation allows traditional ideas of 'scale' to be scrambled and, with them, concepts of community that were previously based on shared employment and physical association of some kind. The burgeoning cost of commuting, due to diminishing oil reserves, has also been exacerbated, despite the expectation that electronic communication would supplant the physical transport of individuals. In addition, the demise of the welfare state and the shift from *social reproduction* to *socialised production* have devolved from the conflation of private-sector interests and the public good to state neocorporatism. Smith remarks that a serious escalation of social control has also occurred in the face of terrorism, mass migrations and crises in social reproduction.

Smith's (economic) New Urbanism also marks a monumental development in the accumulation of capital, where the shift to consumption referred to above has permanently altered social life (see also Sassen 2000, Smith 1996, Castells 1996, 1997, 1998). Whereas the old industrial order was marked by social provision in the realm of collective consumption in order to create efficiencies in production and hence capital accumulation, the new order depends on individual and luxury consumption to extend and deepen the process. The other New Urbanism (capitalised to retain continuity) – that of the architects and urban designers – is situated within this reconstruction of social space and social relations, a context from which it derives both its cues and its methods. In contradiction to the idea that the (architectural and urban) New Urbanism was invented by a specific architectural practice (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Co.), like other social forms, it arose as a consequence of prevailing economic and social conditions during the 1970s, with its roots planted firmly in the nineteenth century, albeit at the *fin de siècle* (Rutheiser 1997). It already existed in England in the form of neo-traditionalism, and came into being in the United States on the basis of a pre-existing imported architectural practice, a necessary shift in ideology, its own historically derived typologies and vernacular, and a brilliant marketing exercise (Slater and Morris 1990, Franklin and Tait 2002). Indeed, its claimed originators, Patrick Geddes, Ian McHarg and Christopher Alexander were all British citizens. Whatever the sources, the New Urbanism attempted to counteract the wastelands of American suburbia with community-based developments that were human scaled, crime-free, racially integrated and oriented

to public transport – laudatory objectives without doubt. What has been questioned in the literature on several fronts, however, is that both forms of the New Urbanism are caught up in a pre-existing built environment, where the formal architecture of New Urbanism can have little impact on global suburbification. Additionally, serious questions have been raised as to the New Urbanism's sociocultural prescription, and the claims that it has made in regard to fulfilling specific social objectives (Audirac and Shermyn 1994). Hence, questions have also been expressed about its capacity to improve on other forms of suburban and urban development (Hall and Porterfield 2000):

> To date however, the New Urbanist literature has not involved social scientific theory building and empirical testing, but rather marketing and manifestos instead . . . Unless New Urbanism is part of an overall strategy for revitalising inner-city neighbourhoods, it remains simply a shell, to be filled by what the marketplace wills. As an isolated approach, New Urbanism is open to criticism that it represents a quick real estate fix that relies on the discredited notion of physical determinism.
>
> (Bohl 2000: 777, 795)

While these material considerations are all welcome and undeniable, the transition to the new economy has been paralleled, as it has been in the past, with new forms of consciousness, perception and awareness. Unlike past eras, however, these qualities have been linked to capital formation in ways that dissolve many of the boundaries between object, product, profit and identity. We observe what we need and become what we desire. Promoting this process, the method of postmodern design lies in the creation of simulacra, the design of deceptive substitutes that replace so-called 'objective reality' as the foundation for life, while designing with images that are representational fictions, but nonetheless 'real' for the designer and client. The New Urbanism fits perfectly into this concept, where belonging to a New Urbanist community reflects one's good taste in selecting an appropriate brand, despite the fact that hyperreality prevails – a construct that conveys an appropriate language of signs and discrimination. Whether one wishes to place a value on this is a somewhat fruitless question, as it is a fact of global capitalism and postmodern culture – the era in which we live.

Hence, it is important to focus on the symbolic value that attaches to notions of cultural distinction where a new style of architecture and urbanism has come into existence. The concept of heterology assists in examining the substructures that underlie the principle assumptions of the New Urbanist epistemology in regard to the physical construction of culture and community – the important discourses and methodologies that allow the New Urbanism influence in the realm of cultural and symbolic capital. So what do we need to be thinking about when we think about urban design in the form of the New Urbanism?

Like most designers, architects are obsessed by style and taste (symbolic capital). Their concept of architecture is usually defined by it. Hence, we have

Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman, and, later, Victorian, art deco, art nouveau, modernist and postmodernist, and many others. Modernism had its own form of ethnic cleansing in its attempt to expunge all historically derived details and decorative features. God was in the details, as long as they were functionally expressed (a phrase originating from Flaubert, not Mies van der Rohe, as is commonly believed). As a reaction to such sterility, postmodernism decided that 'anything goes', feeling free to borrow or juxtapose any referents it decided were appropriate in context. Consequently, the latter tends to make architects uneasy, because there is no identifiable style to postmodernism. It is quite possible, therefore, that the rise of New Urbanism over the last fifteen years has, to a degree, offered the security lacking in a world struggling under the weight of a nebulous postmodernism (Marshall 2003). It offers both salvation and happy certainties in a time of confusion, taking the form of derived theory, land use, building typologies, design codes and the psychological security of an organised identity and community of like-minded people.

Although the iconic town of Seaside, Florida, was begun in 1981, Peter Katz's book *The New Urbanism* was the first to assemble a portfolio of projects sufficient to rationalise, with some authority, that a new movement in architecture and urban design was well established, at least in the United States (Katz 1994). So we can date the New Urbanism as originating from fifteen to twenty-five years ago. Since that time, a plethora of books and articles have emerged that debate many of the assumptions of this new philosophy (Duany and Talen 2002, Talen 2002a, Bell and Jayne 2004, Talen 2006). The historical origins have also been well documented in Al Hindi and Staddon (1997), and the neotraditionalism that has followed (Audirac and Shermyn 1994, McCann 1995, Tiesdell 2002). Beyond that, there is a fair measure of utopianism in the New Urbanist agenda, as well as a major cultural shift away from the traditions of mainstream American urbanisation (Saab 2007). Associated theoretical and methodological problems have been discussed in Banai (1996), Ford (1999), Ellis (2002) and Grant (2008), and an evaluation of land use and central commercial areas is given in Banai (1998). The movement also has its relationships to natural disasters (Talen 2008), its adaptation to ethnic minorities (e.g. Latino New Urbanism, Mendez 2005), social schisms (Bohl 2000, Smith 2002) and globalisation in articles about Moscow (Makarova 2006), the Middle East (Stanley 2005) or Malaysia (Sulaiman 2002). The methods of incorporating sustainable principles into New Urbanist projects have also been raised (Fulton 1996).

Following Antonio Gaudí's famous dictum, in order to be original, we need to return to the origin of things, in this case to Patrick Geddes or even Frederick Le Play (see FOC9: 206–8). Geddes was a polymath and arguably the originator of modern town planning (Boardman 1944, Mairet 1957, Kitchen 1975, Meller 1990). From these references, it is clear that interest in Geddes has not waned over the last century, the most recent major commentary being that of Welter (2006). Geddes's knowledge was immense, and he influenced a whole series of protégés, from Lewis Mumford to Ian McHarg (1969) and beyond, into the contemporary world of the New Urbanism. The central heterology used by

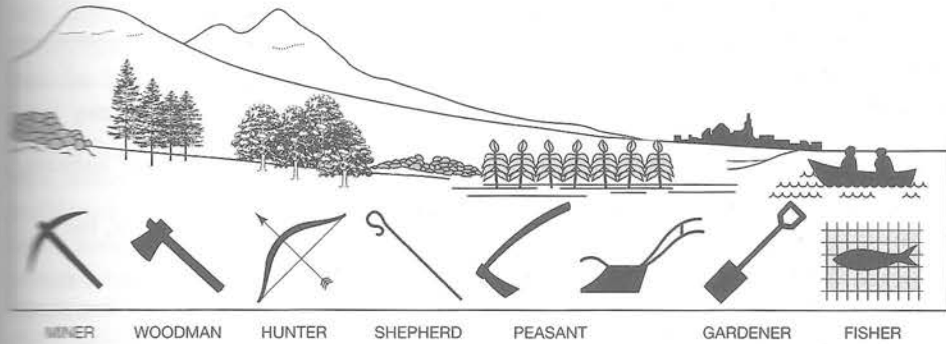


*Figure 5.14* Patrick Geddes' original valley section with associated occupations
Source: Town and Country Planning Association

Geddes, stemming from around 1915, was what he called 'the valley section' (Geddes 1997 (orig. 1915): 15). However, the use of the term *section*, which instantly conjures up the fixed geometry of architecture, conveys a vastly oversimplified version of Geddes's philosophy. Geddes's valley section was, in fact, a constellation of the geography of place, including its inhabitants, the landscape, terroir and bedrock (Figure 5.14).

This idea informed the core of New Urbanist theory (Duany 2000, Duany *et al.* 2000, Brower 2002, Talen 2002b). Duany recognises Geddes's valley section as a point of origin, forming the theoretical and intellectual base for the New Urbanism (Grant 2005). Despite this, Geddes's idea of the valley section was not a *design* concept, as it has been used in the New Urbanism, but a commitment to natural process. Using the transect as such constitutes a fundamental misreading of Geddes's work, however well intended (Table 5.2). It is claimed that the transect is a new approach and an alternative to traditional methods of land use zoning practices:

> the transect approach is an analytical method and a planning strategy. It can be formally described as a system that seeks to organise the elements of urbanism – building, lot, land use, street and all of the other physical elements of the human habitat – in ways that preserve the integrity of different types of urban and rural environments.
>
> (Talen 2002b: 294)

In one major sense, this is quite revolutionary, simply because it assumes that all existing codes of practice for planning, building, construction, development and design can be suspended, akin to Alexander's pattern language (see Cuthbert 2007: 202). In so doing, the general thrust of capitalist urbanisation, based on profit and speculation, will have to be renegotiated to promote authenticity, a

*Table 5.2* Description of transect zones

| *Zone* | *Main characteristics* |
|---|---|
| Rural preserve | • Open space that is legally protected from development in perpetuity<br>• Includes: surface water bodies; protected wetlands and habitats; public open space; and conservation easements |
| Rural reserve | • Open space that is not yet protected from development, but should be added to the Rural Preserve zone<br>• Includes open space identified by public acquisition and areas identified as TDR (transfer of development rights) sending areas<br>• May include flood plains; steep slopes; and aquifer recharge areas |
| Sub-urban | • The most naturalistic, least dense, most residential habitat of a community<br>• Buildings consist of single-family detached houses<br>• Office and retail, on a restricted basis, are permitted<br>• Buildings are a maximum of two storeys<br>• Open space is rural in character<br>• Highways and rural roads are prohibited |
| General urban | • The generalised, but primarily residential, habitat of a community<br>• Buildings consist of single-family detached houses and rowhouses on small- and medium-sized lots<br>• Limited office and lodging are permitted<br>• Retail is confined to designated lots, typically at corners<br>• Buildings are a maximum of three storeys<br>• Open space consists of greens and squares |
| Urban centre | • The denser, fully mixed-use habitat of a community<br>• Buildings include rowhouses; flexhouses; apartment houses; and offices above shops<br>• Office, retail and lodging are permitted<br>• Buildings are a maximum of five storeys<br>• Open space consists of squares and plazas |
| Urban core | • The densest residential, business, cultural and entertainment concentration of a region<br>• Buildings include rowhouses; apartment houses; office buildings; and department stores<br>• Buildings are disposed on a wide range of lot sizes<br>• Surface parking lots are not permitted on frontages<br>• Open space consists of squares and plazas |

Source: Adapted from *The Lexicon of the New Urbanism* (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Co. 2000). Taken from an article by Emily Talen (2002) 'Help for urban planning: the transect strategy'. *The Journal of Urban Design*, 7(3): 293–312.

sense of civic republicanism and virtue, and a formulaic approach to aesthetics. This would seem a singularly unlikely possibility.

It is also clear that there is nothing new about *the New Urbanism*, and its concepts of what constitutes *urban* are barely skin-deep. Not only this, but there is a remarkable naivety with regard to how cities actually grow and change, a vast urban complexity that cannot be ordered by the simple application of physical models. Despite claims to promote racial integration, socio-economic

mix, collective security and other societal objectives, the evidence to back up these claims is singularly lacking, and we are left with the symbolic capital locked into the brand. The transect assumes a standard progression of six zones, from rural preserve, rural reserve, suburban, general urban, to urban centre and urban core. These six zones each correspond to a pattern of density, building type, natural elements etc., which is seen as prototypical of each zone. The central problem here is that the valley section (one dimension) is then translated directly into a zone (two dimensions), and the resulting neighbourhood typology is determined as much by appearance as by any other factor. However, problematically, 'Residents, however, value appearance less for its intrinsic qualities than for its social implications. Duany's transect facilitates the creation of distinctly different compositions. Residents on the other hand look for distinctively different residential experience' (Brower 2002: 313, Volk and Zimmerman 2002). So the method of applying the New Urbanism seems to focus on the purchase of symbolic capital, which the brand guarantees.

However, Geddes's ideas do not provide the only heterologies for the New Urbanism, and American urbanists have been criticised for selective amnesia when it comes to their own history (Saab 2007). They forget that 'many earlier American utopian urban plans not only closely resemble the New Urbanist vision, in many ways in their attempted application, they are responsible for many of the conditions that the New Urbanists are trying to rectify' (Stephenson 2002: 196). Therefore, the New Urbanism has been informed by at least a century of experimentation with all kinds of model – theoretical, ethical, physical and economic – few of which are ever recognised. We can trace all of these to a point of origin in the City Beautiful movement in the United States, which began with the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, sponsoring a whole new vision of civic dignity and aesthetics. In addition, Ebeneezer Howard's classic text *Tomorrow* was published in England in 1898, containing his idealised model of country living in satellite towns. The construction of the archetypal Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn (1920) as the foundation for the Garden City movement followed soon after (Figure 5.15). Mumford notes that even then, Howard was reintroducing Greek concepts of natural limits to organic growth as alternatives to 'the purposeless mass of congestion of the big metropolis' (Mumford 1961: 515).

The New Communities movement during the 1920s and 1930s, established by people such as Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Lewis Mumford and Alexander Bing, generated a host of experiments to integrate physical form with concepts of community. Many such community models were built, and the icons of the time were places such as Forest Hills Gardens on Long Island, Baldwin Hills Village in Los Angeles and Radburn in New Jersey. Howard's design model for what we might call 'Victorian New Urbanism' was of course paralleled by physical models of cities and residential locations in the Chicago School of Urban Ecology (FOC3: 58–60). Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City of 1934 continued the experimentation with new forms of community, and the 1939 New York Fair and the New Deal provided a much-needed planning impetus for improved planning practice through the Second World War. Hence, the New Urbanism

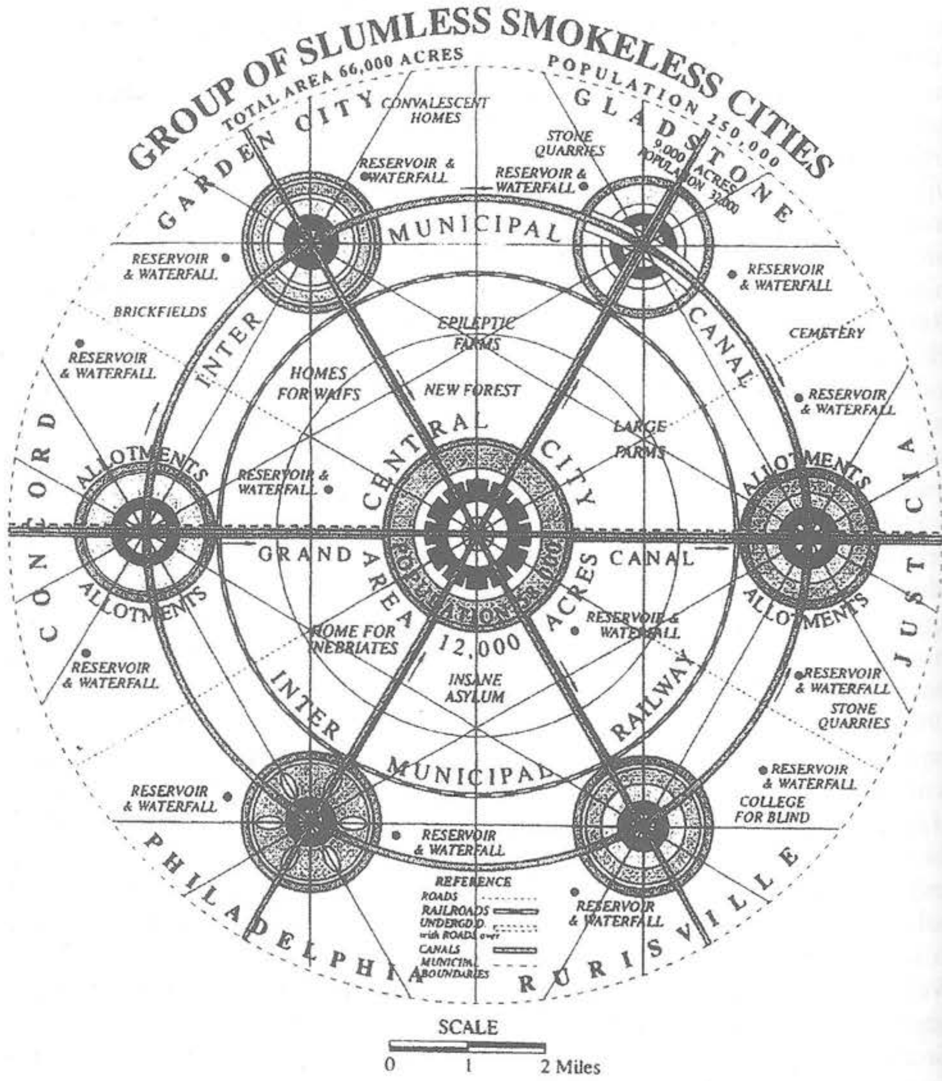


*Figure 5.15* Ebeneezer Howard's prototype for the garden city

Source: M. Pacione, *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 169, Fig. 8.2

owes much to its origins in the Garden City, City Beautiful and New Communities movements, and to the many architects and planners involved in promoting new methods of furthering community development. The New Urbanism also perpetuates the enduring myth that physical determinism can automatically craft communities on the basis of specific demographic limits and building codes.

The importance of this historical legacy has meaning for the New Urbanism for several fundamental reasons. In searching for the *authentic* community, it

relies on the past, rather than imagining the future, for justification in a diversity of manifestations – style, civics, social relations, community, imagery, institutional frameworks and demographics. Closely linked to concepts of authenticity and symbolic representation is the idea of style. Symbolic values *qua culture* require a medium (architecture, sculpture), a message (justice, democracy) and a form (art deco, abstract) synonymous with the style. The reason for this distinction is that these three methods of communication sit uneasily together. If you ask an architect what form his/her building takes, he/she has a variety of possible responses – it is a house (architectural form), it is an apartment (typological form), it is high rise (building form), it is New Urbanist (stylistic form/brand). The concept of form and style pervades all social transmission, from speech to architecture. In this context, I use the term *form* to denote the style/manner of accomplishment of a work, rather than its typology or construction.

The archetypal image/style of a New Urbanist community would seem to depend heavily on the idealised lifestyle of small-town America in the 1950s, without any of the problems, despite the fact that many New Urbanist projects have distinctly urban locations. This is truly the urban imaginary, the simulacrum of a perfect place that never existed, one that can seemingly be reproduced in the present, and it is no accident that this has been referred to as 'Planning the American Dream' (Bressi 1994: xxv). Here, history, reality, authenticity and nostalgia are intertwined (Boyle 2003). Historical referents abound in a neo-conservative image of urban life. The New Urbanism places great stress on the idea of the authentic community, 'But how do they determine what makes a community authentic? Is this merely a marketing device, a means of differentiating their product from the competition? (Saab 2007: 195). While Ellis (2002) notes that nostalgia is used as a term of derision, it has been defined as 'a product of shared historical consciousness of general displacement that is able to make parochial misfortunes and individual losses socially meaningful. It provides to lonesome strangers a common refuge in history, even while it says their losses are irreversible' (Fritzsches 2004: 64–5). The idea of authenticity is one that can never be 'real', in the sense that reality is not one-dimensional, and so what is defined as real has a multiplicity of possible sources and representations. The word *authentic* is also used in opposition to fake, and, as Baudrillard and others have indicated, this distinction has no meaning in a world where we now live in hyperreality. The New Urbanism adopts (or copies) pre-existing imagery from 1950s small-town America, Cape Cod fishing villages, Victoriana such as Savanna, Charleston etc. and a myriad of other referents. Hence, the New Urbanism is a copy of a copy, the originals themselves being derivative from other forms of architecture. As Audirac and Shermyen point out, even fakes of 'genuine' New Urbanist projects are being built: projects that have the image but not the content of actual New Urbanist projects, based on their manifesto and design guidelines:

> As the TND [traditional neighbourhood development] prototype bearing Krier's imprint, Seaside remains utopian in its isolated evolution. Yet

> Seaside look-alike houses have sprouted in the neighboring resort developments, and traditional low-density beach-front sub-divisions catering to the demand for turn of the century architecture are mixing in Caribbean vernacular for inspiration. While Florida's 'Redneck Riviera' is adopting postmodern architecture, one wonders if it or the rest of the U.S. will give up suburban space and privacy and the automobile habit to adopt lifestyles promoted by postmodern urban design.
>
> (Audirac and Shermyn 1994: 171)

Therefore, while the New Urbanism is frequently criticised for its utopian reconstruction of past cultural icons, like fake watches, copies at various levels of authenticity to the original fake are being reproduced across the United States. So much postmodern suburbia is becoming a fake of a fake of a fake. That paradox, as Baudrillard has pointed out, is now the order of social life, and he claims that there is nothing fake about any of it. Trying to separate out the real/authentic from the fake/simulacrum has become a meaningless task. In a recent trip to Indonesia, I was offered a choice of a fake watch or a better-quality fake of the same thing. The difference between a watch and a home, however, is that we live inside rather than outside the brand and therefore associate with it much more powerfully. It is the brand value of the New Urbanism that is significant, rather than the social context or images of the architecture. In the context of small-town America and other self-contained New Urbanist projects, the brand 'Seaside' would be lost without the New Urbanism to support it, in much the same manner that the city brand *Bilbao* would be diminished without Frank Gehry's Guggenheim museum, but, significantly:

> In this sense a building is often said to have signature value that carries the auratic signature of its author. However, where the iconic properties of a building could generally be said to be important in revealing the architecture as brand, the specific signature of an architect refers specifically to the aura or brand of the architect. In marketing parlance, this runs the risk of confusing 'brand architecture or structure' required to induce the master brand, which is this case is the city.
>
> (Kumic 2008: 227)

## Conclusion

Overall, the public realm constitutes an enormous stage, where memory, historical consciousness, space and form collide. But this is also the realm of urban politics, where power is represented in forms that frequently deny any objective truth. It is the place where history becomes sanitised and censored prior to approval by state and publics, one where regions of conflict do not necessarily coalesce round traditional definitions of social class. The construction of the nation-state in urban form is a universally adopted practice, and, for anyone

involved in the design of spaces and places, this is the alpha point of monumental architecture. It is the locus of a culturally established collective memory. Monuments as signs and typologies as brands have a significant impact on cities that only seems set to deepen. However, we can hazard a guess that most of the aura surrounding monuments belongs to a pattern of ideological practices firmly fixed to past forms of accumulation. Currently, the concept 'brand' and its potential impact on the form of cities emerge as a reflection, not only of a new way of *seeing*, but also of a new way of *being* (consciousness). This is not the place to debate whether the phenomenon is good or bad, whether forms of consciousness take second place to materiality, or whether new horizons in the accumulation of capital are implicit at all scales of brand identity. Nonetheless, the New Urbanism as *brand* is yet another reflection of deepening commodity relations manifest in the built environment. Without doubt, practitioners of the New Urbanism are genuine in their belief that a vast improvement to the built environment will ensue from their methodologies, and indeed this may be true. But the overtones of a born-again architecture and urban design do not sit well with the actual ravages of capitalism and its practices. The bottom line is that the New Urbanism is contained within the capitalist economy and is subject to its rules. As long as the brand does not threaten any fundamentals within the urban land nexus, it will succeed, as indeed would any good architecture not incorporated into the New Urbanist ideology.