

Walking in the city as (model for) “dissensus”

Bert Olivier

Philosophy, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

E-mail: Bert.Olivier@nmmu.ac.za

This paper explores the variegated spatial meanings of “the city” by way of Michel de Certeau’s reflections on “walking in the city” as part of “the practice of everyday life”, which he conceives of as allowing people multiple ways of escaping the straitjacket of the “disciplinary society”. The latter conception, deriving from Foucault’s investigation of disciplinary practices, ostensibly leaves one scant opportunity to escape from the clutches of disciplinary mechanisms such as hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and the examination, which appear to find their counterpart in the apparently carceral spatial design of the city. In contrast to the belief, that one has become inescapably enmeshed in panoptical practices, which tend to reduce humans to “docile bodies”, however, De Certeau traces the multiple tactics employed by pedestrians to subvert their assimilation into the pre-planned geometries of city design. He also alludes to Freud’s claims about repetition of spatially originary experiences, which is here employed to examine the relation between spatial familiarity and foreignness in different cities. These considerations are placed in constellation with Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between striated and smooth spaces, as well as with Hardt and Negri’s distinction between planes of immanence and of control, and Lyotard’s between the modern and the postmodern, thus creating the possibility of conceiving of walking in the city as an act of dissent regarding the society of discipline. This could suggest more robust practices of subverting the ostensibly all-encompassing, pseudo-political realm of what Rancière calls “the police”, by introducing moments of peripatetic “dissensus” into the striated fabric of the city.

Key words: architecture, city, *dissensus*, space, walking

Stadswandeling as (model vir) “dissensus”

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die uiteenlopende ruimtelike betekenis van “die stad” aan die hand van Michel de Certeau se refleksie oor “stadswandeling” as deel van die “praktyk van die alledaagse lewe”, wat volgens hom veelvuldige geleenthede aan mense bied om aan die dwangbuis van die “dissiplinêre samelewing” te ontsnap. Laasgenoemde verwys na Foucault se ondersoek na dissiplinêre praktyke, en laat oënskynlik weinig geleentheid om dissiplinêre meganismes soos hiërargiese observasie, normaliserende oordeel en die eksamen te ontwyk, wat blykbaar die ekwivalent is van die geometries-inperkende ruimtelike ontwerp van die stad. In teenstelling met die opvatting, dat subjekte onontvlugbaar verstrengel is in panoptiese praktyke wat mense tot “slaafse liggame” reduseer, ontbloeit De Certeau die taktiese manoeuvres wat deur stadswandelaars benut word om hul onderworpenheid aan die voorafbeplande geometrie van stadsbeplanning te ondermyn. Hy verwys ook na Freud se insigte ten opsigte van die herhaling van ruimtelik-generatiewe ervarings, wat hier aangewend word om die verhouding tussen ruimtelike bekendheid en vreemdheid in verskillende stede te ondersoek. Hierdie oorweging word in ‘n konstellasie geplaas met Deleuze en Guattari se onderskeid tussen “gladde” en “gestreepte” ruimte, sowel as met Hardt en Negri’s tussen vlakke van immanensie en van beheer, asook dié van Lyotard tussen die moderne en die postmoderne. Langs hierdie weg kan ‘n mens aan stadswandeling as ‘n anderse of afwykende handeling teenoor die samelewing van dissipline dink, en moontlik in die rigting van meer robuuste praktyke beweeg, om die skynbaar allesomvattende pseudo-politieke sfeer van wat Rancière “die polisie” noem met elemente van nomadiese “dissensus” in die “gestreepte” ruimte van die stad te ontwrig.

Sleutelwoorde: argitektuur, *dissensus*, ruimte, stad, wandeling.

“There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons...Félix Guattari has imagined a city where one would be able to leave one’s apartment, one’s street, one’s neighborhood, thanks to one’s (dividual [from “divide” B.O.]) electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what counts is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person’s position – licit or illicit – and effects a universal modulation.” (Gilles Deleuze, *Postscript on the Societies of Control*).

One can hardly write about “the city” without thinking of Michel de Certeau’s now classic study, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), part of which is entitled “Walking in the City”. De Certeau’s book is a radicalisation of what one might call a “transgressive reading” of ordinary, everyday activities, revealing the surprising degree to which such “practices” surpass the “disciplinary” mechanisms that – according to Michel Foucault’s genealogical analysis in *Discipline and Punish* – structure modern life, in the process reducing subjects of the modern state to “docile bodies” (Foucault 1995: 135). Foucault’s genealogy of punitive practices contrasts pre-modern, spectacular punishments (such as executions), which were visible and localised, with modern practices such as (chiefly) imprisonment, as well as related, “panoptical” (quasi-omniscient) practices of surveillance, which tend to be invisible and pervasive. The latter, Foucault claims, are more effective despite being virtually imperceptible, and as a consequence contemporary society can justifiably be regarded as “carceral”. According to him (Foucault 1995: 170-194; Olivier 2010), the disciplinary mechanisms operating in society, which ensure that modern subjects are economically productive and politically powerless, can mostly be subsumed under three headings: hierarchical observation (of inmates on the part of wardens in prisons, and of school pupils by teachers, for example), normalizing judgement (which establishes a continuum in which subjects are inserted and individualized according to quantifiable norms), and the examination (where the latter combines the first two in a way that subjects individuals to panoptical power).

The disciplinary society and societies of control

Discipline and punish, with its relentless exposure of the countless ways in which the “microphysics of power” operates to enmesh subjects in webs of constraint, has the potential of leaving one with the impression of being exhaustively hemmed in, on all sides, by social, educational, economic and political forces that one cannot control (not even those agents who occupy nodal points in the defiles of power; they are mere, easily replaceable functionaries). One should note, however, that Gilles Deleuze, in his brief but powerful essay, *Postscript on the societies of control* (1992: 3-7), has argued that what one witnesses today, represents the emergence of something entirely different from Foucault’s “disciplinary society” – where most of the paradigmatic institutions of discipline, like prisons, schools, asylums, hospitals and factories, were spatially clearly identifiable as “spaces of enclosure” (which are today in crisis, according to Deleuze) – and is recognizable by the fact that “control” is continually exercised, today, along invisible, dispersed networks of numerically coded information, subject to “inseparable variations”. This is not merely an extension of the panoptical spaces of Foucault’s disciplinary society, nor does it exert “discipline” in the Foucaultian sense. It is rather the case that control is exercised in a flexible manner through the rhizomatic defiles constitutive of the so-called “network society” (Castells 2010), which do not leave any area of economic, social, political or cultural activity untransformed. Besides, control is just as, if not more effectively exercised through the coding of economic participation of individuals in terms of credit rating and other enabling or disabling mechanisms, as through military intervention.

Even “individuals” are being transformed into “*dividuals*” (Deleuze 1992: 5), a term that links individual subjects to the market by associatively signifying “dividends” and “divisions”, in so far as the recording of individuals’ consumer habits is an index of anticipated dividends on the stock market, and individual consumers can be numerically “divided” according to specific consumer needs, each of which is linked to a plethora of marketing strategies, so that the new “dividual” becomes itself an index of potential profits. To the extent that “dividuals” fail to live

up to consumer expectations, or worse, actively undermine the conditions of optimal financial gain (through the introduction of computer viruses into corporations' websites, or acts of piracy, or simply by refusing or being unable to incur debt, for example), they risk being excluded from the consumer economy. This system of control, in which everyone is continually recorded or registered through ubiquitous electronic modes of surveillance, tracking and marketing, is in the process of replacing the "society of discipline" that Foucault described and theorized in *Discipline and punish* (1995), according to Deleuze (1992: 4). It should be obvious that resistance to the "society of control" will have to assume different forms compared to the resistance to lingering manifestations of Foucault's societies of discipline – something to keep in mind with regard to De Certeau's inventive analysis of "walking in the city" as strategy of resistance against the tendency of disciplinary society, to reduce subjects to "docile bodies".

Paul Virilio casts further light on the novelty of what Deleuze calls "societies of control" (2005: 61) where he intimates that instances of deliberate over-exposure to panoptical visibility by individuals require "a new **global optics**, capable of helping a **panoptical** vision to appear" (bold in original) – something in which one may see the metamorphosis of panopticism as theorized by Foucault into something constitutive of societies of control, and no longer linked to the institutional "spaces of enclosure" of prisons, schools, factories, and so on. Moreover, Virilio makes it clear that such voluntary panoptical self-exposure is inextricably linked to marketability of individuals (Deleuze's "dividuals"). Accordingly, he observes that such a panoptical vision is indispensable for a "market of the visible" to emerge. According to Virilio (2005: 60), one such individual's (June Houston's) actions, which have since been replicated with different purposes in mind, were revolutionary, transforming the transparency of living spaces to which informational television programmes have accustomed us, towards what he calls "...a purely mediatic *trans-appearance*...", and he attributes the growth of this practice to the requirement, on the part of the globalization of the market, that all activities and behaviour be "over-exposed" (2005: 60): "...it requires the simultaneous creation of competition between companies, societies and even consumers themselves, which now means individuals, not simply certain categories of 'target populations'. Hence the sudden, untimely emergence of a universal, *comparative advertising*, which has relatively little to do with publicizing a brand or consumer product of some kind, since the aim is now, through the *commerce of the visible*, to inaugurate a genuine **visual market**, which goes far beyond the promoting of a particular company."

Walking in the city, smooth and striated space

Returning to De Certeau, it is refreshing to encounter in his discourse of transgression, as one might label it – or in a different idiom (that of Jacques Rancière), of "dissensus" – something that seems to offer some hope of evading the totalizing tendency of what still remains of discipline and, one might add, the far more pervasive reach of emerging strategies of control, with typical (postmodern) "consumers" of today in mind. In contrast to Foucault's emphasis on disciplined toeing-the-line behaviour on the part of modern subjects in terms of a distributed "microphysics of power", De Certeau displays remarkable verve, arguing that the "procedures of everyday creativity" offer resources to subjects that enable them to resist falling prey to the totalization of such disciplinary power. In the Introduction to *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984: xiv) he elaborates:

If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures ... manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and

finally, what “ways of operating” form the counterpart, on the consumer’s (or “dominee’s”?) side, of the mute processes that organise the establishment of socioeconomic order.

These “ways of operating” constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organised by techniques of sociocultural production ... the goal is to perceive and analyse the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of “tactics” articulated in the details of everyday life ... the goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of “discipline.” Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline ...

“Walking in the city” is one of several “ways of operating” that enables subjects to evade the otherwise ubiquitous control exercised over them by anonymous mechanisms of order, including the myriad forms of surveillance, ranging from urban pedestrian surveillance technology to consumer behaviour-tracking via credit card-use, mobile phone movement, CCTV cameras, radar speed traps and parking meters (if not older forms of discipline, such as examination results, census forms and tax returns). De Certeau (1984: 92) contrasts the act of “reading” the complexity of the city visually from the top floor of a skyscraper in a “texturological” manner – which corresponds, as expression of the “scopic drive,” to the much earlier representations of the city by Renaissance painters, as if from a god’s-eye view – with the street-level spatial practices that elude (panoptical) visibility and abstract legibility. These below-the-radar activities, De Certeau intimates, are alien to the “geographical” space of panoptical, visual mechanisms, and he thinks of them as belonging to an “anthropological,” “migrational” or poetic experience of space – something elaborated on by Gaston Bachelard in *The poetics of space* (1969) by means of metaphors such as “burrows” or “nests”, which may be paradigmatically instantiated by some of the secluded spaces that pedestrians could potentially discover in their exploration of interstitial city-spaces.

In terms of a different idiom, one could say that, what one sees from the top storey of a skyscraper (namely, the concrete counterpart of the geometrical, cartographic representation of the city as represented on the city plans) corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 474) call “striated space”, or space that exhibits the marks of “territorialisation” by agencies of power such as the state or corporations. For Deleuze and Guattari this mode of spatiality contrasts with “smooth space”, which is “nomadic” space (corresponding to De Certeau’s “tactical” space of “nomadically” walking the city), not yet “territorialized” or organized by asymmetrical power-relations. Importantly, as they note, these two qualitatively distinct varieties of space exist nowhere in pure form, but always in an admixture of sorts. In their words (1987: 474-475):

Smooth space and striated space – nomad space and sedentary space – the space in which the war machine develops and the space instituted by the State apparatus – are not of the same nature. No sooner do we note a simple opposition between the two kinds of space than we must indicate a much more complex difference by virtue of which the successive terms of the oppositions fail to coincide entirely. And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact only exist in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space. In the first case, one organizes even the desert; in the second, the desert gains and grows; and the two can happen simultaneously. But the de facto mixes do not preclude a de jure, or abstract, distinction between the two spaces.

Implicitly De Certeau has theorized this contrast between the striated and the smooth by juxtaposing the “abstract” structural and textural legibility of street layout (from an appropriate vantage point) with space as it is experienced (or perhaps “produced”, in Henri Lefebvre’s idiom) through concrete, “tactical” activities and practices in the spatial density encountered in the streets, parks and alleyways of the city. What Deleuze and Guattari call “the war machine”

therefore suggests De Certeau's "dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals" which are still to some degree subject to enclosures of "discipline", to which one can add that they are increasingly enmeshed in webs of control. The "war machine" is what anarchistically gobbles up spaces rigorously subjected to disciplinary arrangements, and by extension, introduces nomadic or guerrilla-moments of subversion into the continuum of control, with predictable consequences of dissonance for the system – for example by using the very network-system of omni-visibility to bring to the surface hidden elements indispensable for optimal control. (Think of Wikileaks' exposure of "secret" inter-state communications, or of Edward Snowden's more recent revelations of the American NSA's secret "Prism" surveillance programme – these are "nomadic" or guerrilla-tactics that destabilize the system of control significantly, followed by predictable reactions on the part of the agencies of control-society, to maximize control by closing loopholes, apart from attempting to bring the anti-control guerrillas to book.) The "State apparatus" brings to mind precisely those strategies and mechanisms that typically establish the disciplinary society theorized by Foucault, the contemporary incarnation of which is the society of control as characterized by Deleuze.

One should note, however, that in terms of the "serpentine" characteristics of "societies of control", striated space continually tends to disguise itself as smooth space, so that subjects are easily fooled into believing that their optimal participation in the rhizomatically pervasive neo-liberal economic system (supported by the capitalist states through appropriate legislation, among other things) is tantamount to the optimalization of personal "freedom". What I want to argue here is that De Certeau's analysis of "walking in the city" not only illuminates the always-already existing possibility of subverting attempts at exhaustive control, but also constitutes a model of sorts for what Jacques Rancière has termed "dissensus", to which I shall return below.

City-walking as model of eluding control: the case of Seoul

It is in these practices of invisible, unrepresentable peripatetic movements, peculiar to walkers in cities the world over, that one participates every time you criss-cross cities such as Seoul in South Korea, a colossal urban landscape of 16-million inhabitants, or Prague in the Czech Republic, with its enticingly variegated architecture comprising the walker's referential horizon of spatial markers, intermittently inviting one to change direction for better visibility, or for the sake of savouring a specific perspective opened by one's inescapable visual embodiment. In the case of Seoul one encounters the urban fabric of what is claimed to be the "most-connected" city in the world – one does not even have to inquire at coffee shops, on buses or trains: there is Wi-Fi everywhere – and therefore one would have to rethink De Certeau's walking-tactics in relation to strategies of control, rather than mechanisms of discipline.

De Certeau casts urban peripatetic practices in a new light, for instance one's tendency, to walk more-or-less towards a visible beacon such as the Seoul Tower overlooking the city's downtown area, exploring the interstitial architectural spaces that present themselves, mostly unexpectedly, to your loose directional intentions, and sometimes deliberately walking without any directional intent, surrendering to randomness and changing patterns of traversability of streets. One easily forgets what makes this kind of wandering exploration possible, namely space in its primordial giving (*and* givenness), which – as De Certeau appositely remarks – is a blind spot on the part of the functionalist organization of the city on the basis of technological and economic "progress" that privileges time. To be sure, such "urbanising" operations belong to what De Certeau calls the "Concept-city", with its language of panoptic power, but one should

not make the mistake of believing that they comprise the only field of power in the city. On the contrary (1984: 95):

The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologise the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer.

It is with what De Certeau understands as the decay of the “Concept-city” and the kind of rationality on which it is founded, that the kind of interstitial, pluralistic practices, of which unpredictable (and uncontrollable) city-walking is one, have (always-already) been given a new lease of life. His analysis of the innumerable pathways such walking describes highlights its heterogeneity, its qualitative, rather than quantitative character (the footsteps comprising it cannot be counted), its non-functionalist function of weaving places together, and the intangible manner in which such pedestrian movements constitute a complex, but elusive system which is inseparable from the city “itself.” The qualitative indeterminacy of such walking actively resists the numerical, quantitative coding which is part and parcel of societies of control, for Deleuze (1992: 5), and also subverts the structural strategy of “*perpetual training*” that replaces the school in control societies (1992: 5) by not submitting to the pre-established urban “tracks” for pedestrian movement, but instead refusing such “training” altogether by finding one’s own nomadic way. Moreover, in an exemplary control-city such as Seoul there are other tactics to subvert strategies of assimilation into the serpentine coils of the economic system which is arguably the chief vehicle of control today. Eschewing the consumer trap of expensive cable-cars to get to the top of the hill where the Seoul Tower overlooks the city, one climbs as far as possible up the rocks where they are negotiable, before moving sideways to the stairs that take you past kiosks where consumer goods are displayed. This is analogous with using open-source, freely available software (such as Mozilla Firefox) as internet browser, rather than Internet Explorer, or the AVG free anti-virus programme, rather than expensive anti-virus programmes such as Norton. One’s use of these may be recorded somewhere by agencies of control, but cannot be prevented for as long as the internet-“superhighway” exists, and is symbolic of escaping from the treadmill of consumer-behaviour.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, “walking in the city” constitutes an exemplary modality of “smooth space” eroding the conduits erected by “striated space” – two kinds of space that are locked in an embrace of mutual implication, with the corollary that the latter, which represents the vanishing disciplinary society and the emerging control-society, can, in principle, never be totalized, even when it appears to be the case, as in Deleuze’s “societies of control”. Subversive, anti-control, nomadic activities and tactics emerge in the interstices of the ostensibly exhaustive mapping of the city, (re-)introducing “smooth space” into the organized structures of “striated spaces”.

In a way reminiscent of Lefebvre’s (1991: 26-39) contention, that human social activities “produce” different kinds of space, De Certeau claims that the intertwined movements of walkers “spatialise,” or shape spaces. Anyone familiar with walking in cities all over the world has had concrete experience of this – every walk across the city is irreducibly different. While, as De Certeau points out, city authorities can, through surveys, determine which routes from one end to the other of a city are more frequently used than others, the qualitative activity of walking a route is singular, never exactly the same as before, even when “the same route” is followed. Changing weather conditions also influence these changing patterns of activity in the city. For example, on occasion, when it starts snowing in Seoul, a visiting western woman, who has never seen snow before, responds to the snow in childlike fashion, transforming her pedestrian

appropriation of the street into a veritable body-celebration of what is by then an increasingly familiar space, suddenly shot through with flurries of snow – catching snowflakes in her hands, on her eyelashes and her tongue, and deviating from her intended route under the spell of a completely novel experience of Seoul’s city-spaces. Moreover, this does not carry a price tag in a globalized space where life-world practices such as this one are increasingly colonized by economic imperatives, as Habermas (1987: 356) has demonstrated. Only her tracks in the snow and her memory-traces of the event remain as testimony to this “practice of everyday life”, and if her mobile phone has transmitted the numerically coded, geographic coordinates of her whereabouts to potential marketers, she has the freedom to refuse them in the name of playing in the snow.

It is easy to underestimate the revolutionary potential of what may seem like the perfectly innocuous activity of walking in a big city, functionally organised according to principles of economic and technological efficacy. De Certeau’s analysis leaves one in no doubt, however, that such “practices” impart an experience of precluding the totalization of hyper-mediatized, panoptical control under which one unavoidably lives. And in allowing such experiences, these practices keep the always uncompleted elaboration of freedom alive, and moreover, constitute a model of democratic actions: similar, but different, as I shall attempt to demonstrate with the help of the work of Rancière, below.

Rancière, the “police”, equality and dissensus

Jacques Rancière (2010) has revitalized the sphere of political thinking – which had arguably been stagnant, or at best, caught within the walls of the consensus-oriented liberal tradition (Rancière 2010: location 532) – with his uncompromising insistence on the difference between “politics” and the regime of what he has tellingly dubbed “the police”. The latter represents the organization of society in terms of a variety of hierarchical partitionings, despite its claim of instantiating “democracy” or a “society of human rights”. By contrast, according to Rancière, “politics” only emerges, irruptively, when an event of a certain kind disrupts the unequal social fabric of exclusions and subordinations, manifesting the core of the political, namely “equality” (Tanke 2011: 50-51). The social order of the “police” (a play on the ancient Greek word for the city-state, namely, *polis*) represents an instance of what Rancière describes as “the distribution of the sensible” – a reference to the way that the perceptible social world is ordered, or partitioned according to the categories of who belongs where, who is included or excluded, and what is sayable or unsayable. Rancière brings these concepts together where he observes (2010: location 499):

*...Politics stands in distinct opposition to the police. The police is a distribution of the sensible... whose principle is the absence of void and of supplement. The police is not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social. The essence of the police lies neither in repression nor even in control over the living. Its essence lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible. I call ‘distribution of the sensible’ a generally implicit law that defines the forms of partaking by first defining the modes of perception in which they are inscribed. The partition of the sensible is the dividing-up of the world (*de monde*) and of people (*du monde*)...*

One way of thinking of different “distributions of the sensible” is discursive, that is, as an arrangement of the social realm through language as discourse, that is, by means of the use of language where meaning and power converge, in as far as one may be “spoken by discourse”, or initiate a counter-discourse in relation to such hegemonic discourses (Foucault 1990: 84; 1972). But Rancière goes further than this, pointing out that language, as well as the images encountered

in art, have an *aesthetic* (ancient Greek: *aisthétikos*) function, not in the modernist sense of being confined to their own specialized sphere of “aesthetic” enjoyment and taste (Habermas 1985: 9), but in the etymological sense of belonging to, or affecting the sphere of sensory perception (from Greek *aisthanomai*: perceive). Hence his use of the phrase, “the distribution of the sensible”: the discourse comprising a country’s constitution, the text of an important juridical judgement, philosophical and literary texts, artworks such as paintings, films, sculptures and architecture all have the *aesthetic* capacity of “partitioning the sensible” by way of projecting anticipatory configurations of “sensible” relations among people, and between people and natural entities.

One approaches a tall, hyper-modern skyscraper with two “scenic” lifts, one on either side of its almost surreal “legs”, in hyper-connected Seoul, for example – lifts that provide a panoramic view of the city’s lights as they ascend the fifty-plus floors of the building – to get to the top floor from where one can admire the cityscape comprising a carpet of lights below, where it stretches out further than the eye can see. You soon realize, however, that at night these lifts are only used by the economic elites, patrons of the city’s most expensive restaurant, situated on the very top floor where your scopic desire is taking you. Rather than being put off by the stares on the part of the restaurant patrons, whose sartorial splendour contrasts starkly with one’s own hiking gear, you blithely skirt the periphery of the restaurant to approach the best visual vantage point from a different angle than the one where you are instructed to “wait to be seated”. Cutting obliquely through the hierarchically ordered, striated space of economic privilege, your casual movements impart a blurring effect to the “police-partitioning of the sensible”, embodied in the architectural features of the building as well as the practice of economic exclusion evident in the location of the restaurant and its attendant “etiquette” – a euphemism for financial-economic discrimination. You have to be quick, though, before security guards can ask you to leave – as an instantiation of what Rancière calls *dissensus* in action, your photographic adventure has to assume the guise of an open-source affiliated hacker’s lightning intrusion into the virtual space of the elites to garner information vital to the sustenance of democratic action. Photographs taken, you return to the lifts along a different route, lest security personnel are already converging on the spot where you breached the striated space of the economic elites. And should they intercept you, you were just on your way, anyway. After all, you are a nomad of the city.

Such a nomadic appropriation of the city’s economically striated spaces represents what Rancière calls “dissensus” – the disruption or dislocation of the normalized “distribution of the sensible” according to the precepts of the “police” – and manifests the core of politics, or democracy, for that matter, namely “equality”. In his words (2010: location 532): “The essence of politics is *dissensus*. Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration (*manifestation*) of a gap in the sensible itself.” Fleetingly appropriating the elite-space of an exclusive upmarket restaurant in a Seoul skyscraper may be an ostensibly innocuous instance of the irruption of equality in the thick of the “police’s” parcelled-out city spaces, but it connects metonymically with many other, far-reaching events proclaiming the *equality* of all citizens with one another. The recent “Marikana massacre” in South Africa, where scores of miners were shot dead by the gun-toting police (among the lowliest of the agents serving the “real police” – the symbolic structuring of social space according to criteria of inclusion and exclusion), marks one of these highly significant events functioning as a kind of epiphany of democracy in its unambiguous assertion of “equality” on the part of the miners: their right of participation in society as citizens sharing in the common life of the *polis*. The nomadic ascent of a late-modern Seoul skyscraper that introduces “smooth space” ephemerally into the “striated space” of economic power, as well as such overtly “political” events as the Marikana insurrection in the face of the agencies of control, resonate with De Certeau’s “walking in the city”.

An analogical series

It is therefore not difficult to discern in Rancière's notion of "equality" – the core of the political, that must always be presupposed by any "distribution of the sensible", including that of the "police" – the counterpart of De Certeau's "tactical", anti-disciplinary (and contra-control) practices, such as walking in the city, and of Deleuze and Guattari's "smooth space", which is constantly at work, transforming the scaffolding of "striated space" through its tactical incursions. What one finds here are variations on the theme of an ineradicable tension encountered in social reality. The "police", the disciplinary society, the society of control, the state apparatus, striated space – all of these notions are markers of cratological (power-related) processes that territorialize, arrest, control, constrain life, or specifically human life, in various ways. Countervailing these, "politics" (in Rancière's sense of the term), the practices of everyday life (De Certeau), the "war machine" and "smooth space" (Deleuze and Guattari), denote countervailing cratological processes that promote (human) life in non-hierarchizing ways – something also theorized by Deleuze and Guattari in terms of "desiring machines" in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983: 1-8) and by Hardt and Negri (2001: 76) as the tension between the immanent plane of creativity and the transcendent plane of order/control, which they perceive to be at the basis of historical phenomena such as the 15th century European Renaissance (the immanent plane of creativity) and its sequel, namely the imposition of "modern" state control (the transcendent plane of order). It is worth elaborating on the latter for further clarification of what is at stake.

Hardt and Negri's (2001, 70-78; see also Olivier 2009) observation is historical, in that the Renaissance is here grasped as a dynamic era of becoming (or an era marking a new awareness of humanity's immanent, revolutionary potential or "desire"). For them, this can also be interpreted as the "first mode" of an incipient modernity, as opposed to its historical aftermath, the force of a new, transcendent order (an attempt at domesticating the newly emerged, radically revolutionary, immanent forces of the Renaissance) which comprises the "second mode" of modernity – and which turned out to be historically triumphant, without being able to obliterate the revolutionary moment completely. As they put it (2001: 76):

Modernity itself is defined by crisis, a crisis that is born of the uninterrupted conflict between the immanent, constructive, creative forces and the transcendent power aimed at restoring order. This conflict is the key to the concept of modernity, but it was effectively dominated and held in check.

The first of these is familiar from another source, too – Lyotard's (1984: 79) (given its resistance to the usual periodizing sense attributed to these terms) somewhat counter-intuitive remark that, "A work [of art] can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant". What strikes one immediately is that what Hardt and Negri refer to as modernity's "first mode" (the "revolutionary plane of immanence") corresponds to Lyotard's postmodern moment, while their "second mode" of modernity (the transcendent plane of order) has Lyotard's "modern" as its counterpart. What has been described earlier as an ineradicable tension obtains here, too, and corresponds (to mention yet another analogue) to the evocative quasi-economic and quasi-psychoanalytic description by Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 1-3) of the relation between the stable psychic economy of the Oedipal (Freudian) subject or ego, on the one hand, and the endlessly productive psychic economy of the "schizophrenic" subject – characterized by excess and loss of psychic investment through dissociation and lack of stable identification – on the other. The latter "schizophrenic" moment corresponds to Lyotard's "postmodern", as well as to Hardt and Negri's "revolutionary plane of immanence", to which one can add De Certeau's anti-disciplinary practices, Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space and Rancière's "politics" of

equality, all of which are variations on the theme of becoming *in its tensional relation with being*. The former, “stable economy”-moment, in turn, has Lyotard’s “modern”, as well as Hardt and Negri’s “transcendent order” of control as its counterparts. These may be amplified by Foucault’s disciplinary society, Deleuze’s societies of control, Deleuze and Guattari’s striated space and Rancière’s “police”, all of which represent variations on the theme of being *in its tensional relation with becoming*. What this analogical series suggests, is that a paradoxical spatio-temporal configuration, with the form, “becoming>being” / “being>becoming” (concepts dating back further than Plato) underpins all of these analogous pairs, and that one could arguably show that it has its roots in pre-Socratic, ancient Greek experience and thought (something that cannot be pursued at present).

Familiar places and foreign spaces

One is now in a position to return to De Certeau’s “practice of everyday life”, armed with the insights gained earlier, to find there another way of articulating the alternating rhythm or vacillation between two extremes, neither of which seems to be able to eradicate the other once and for all, as demonstrated above. What I want to argue is that, under the heading, “Childhood and Metaphors of Places”, De Certeau opens the possibility of understanding the tension between the organized spaces of discipline and of control, on the one hand, and the spaces of nomadic subversion, on the other (alternatively, the tension between striated and smooth spaces, or between the “police” and democracy/equality), as one that has its quasi-transcendental (or historico-transcendental) roots in originary human experiences. He writes (1984: 108):

The memorable is that which can be dreamed about a place. In this place that is a palimpsest, subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it “be there”, Dasein. But ... this being-there acts only in spatial practices, that is, in ways of moving into something different ... it must ultimately be seen as the repetition, in diverse metaphors, of a decisive and originary experience, that of the child’s differentiation from the mother’s body. It is through that experience that the possibility of space and of a localisation (a “not everything”) of the subject is inaugurated.

What De Certeau is talking about is the transition from what Freud called the “oceanic self” (and Lacan dubbed “l’hommelette” – the human omelette; Silverman 1983: 152-153) – that sense of self when the infant is still so intimately conjoined with the mother’s body that she or he does not experience themselves as separate beings – to the state when one finally does experience oneself as different, or “other” from the mother’s body. (For Kristeva the separation process from the *chora* of the mother’s body, where space is still undifferentiated, is one of “abjection” [Kristeva 1997: 35-37; 153-154]; for Lacan that of entering the imaginary via the “mirror phase” [Lacan 1977: 1-7].) This enables one to grasp that, even much later in life, leaving one’s familiar spatial surroundings to go to exotic places or cities is still modelled on that originary (meaning: giving rise to, like a matrix) experience first described by Freud, and later by his successors in psychoanalysis, which include De Certeau. In fact, he takes one back to that famous passage in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2006: 140), where Freud the grandfather describes the so-called “Fort/Da” game played by his grandson in the absence of his mother, Freud’s daughter. In Freud’s interpretation, the game is played as a psychic mechanism to cope with the mother’s unexpected absence, and makes it bearable to the boy through the metaphoric substitution of a cotton reel for the mother – by throwing the reel into his cot and pulling it back into view again, the child reassures himself of his mother’s return through repetition (what Freud called the “repetition compulsion” as manifestation of the “death drive”).

According to De Certeau, the manipulation of the cotton reel by the little boy is an “original spatial structure” (1984: 109), given the reciprocity of self and other in the process of throwing the spool out of sight into the cot (while uttering “Fort!”/“Away!”), and then pulling it into visibility again (accompanied by the delighted “Da!”/“There!”). It is a founding, originary act that first establishes the spatial difference between “self” and “other”, “here” and “there”, and which repeats itself throughout life in the spatial practices of traversing a world of spatial variation and diversification. Were it not for such founding experiences in childhood, it would not be possible to look upon the continual expansion of an individual’s spatial universe in terms of a kind of metaphorical “grafting” of “new” experiences on to older ones, or of experiencing the exploration of novel, foreign spaces as somehow presupposing the familiarity of the places of the everyday world. Is it not possible to perceive in this dialectic of spatial experience(s) an alternation between the “Fort/Da” processes that generate “smooth” and “striated” spaces, and result in the intermittent preponderance of now the one, now the other? On the one hand, the “anti-discipline” and “counter-control” structure of walking in the city would be the nomadic incursion of the “smooth space of self” into the “striated space(s) of otherness” which may, from a distance, appear indomitable, but is easily subverted by the “tactics” of pedestrians, as I hope to have shown above. On the other hand, however, it is imaginable that certain kinds of traversing space on foot would be the counterpart of striated space, such as a military march through the city’s streets, and that its homogeneous fulfilment would be prevented by unruly children ducking and diving among and around the legs of the marching soldiers, or by nomadic pedestrians who “take back the streets” as soon as the steps placed with military precision, carving the boulevards into a space of layered power-relations, have moved on.

This potential of introducing qualitatively different, “smooth”, spatial appropriations into what are ostensibly well-established “striated” spaces through variable urban peregrinations, would explain the excitement, the sense of adventure, that accompanies a trip into the as-yet unknown spaces of other lands. Like Freud’s grandson, who exulted in the reappearance of his plaything after its initial disappearance, travellers to foreign places can delight in transmuting their foreignness (the “Fort”) into the newly discovered (the “Da”), which is destined to become familiar in the process of exploring it — but, to be phenomenologically accurate, a kind of familiarity that differs in quality from the “knownness” of the place where you live. This is why, after first visiting cities like Prague, Florence, Rome, Istanbul, Shanghai, Seoul or Osaka, and savouring the exotic sights, tastes, and above all, the singularly configured urban spaces and architectural places that comprise these cities, one longs to return there, to savour once again, this time with a sense of recognition, what first imprinted itself on one’s memory like a spatial signature. “Signature” here represents what is always already the transformation of the city’s geometrically striated space by one’s own nomadic spatial peregrinations. It therefore comes as no surprise that, on the eve of one’s departure for an as yet unexplored “foreign” city or country, an involuntary, anticipatory projection occurs, its specific quality imparted to it by the memory-image one has of the place in question. This image is relatively more, or less, vague (or clear), depending on whether it is informed by stories you have heard or read, or – in the age of the internet – websites you have visited. This, together with what one knows of foreign cities and countries through a mixture of related experiences and prior information, induces the heady anticipation of a kind of “virtual” mixture of self/familiarity and otherness/exoticism.

Conclusion: the city and the practice of space

Returning to De Certeau’s text enables one to put such spatial peregrinations in clearer perspective (1984: 109):

To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful ... experience of childhood; it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other ... the childhood experience that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, floods private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces, and creates within the planned city a “metaphorical” or mobile city, like the one Kandinsky dreamed of: “a great city built according to all the rules of architecture and then suddenly shaken by a force that defies all calculation”.

His words conjure up, once again, the seemingly inescapable interwovenness of being and becoming, discipline/control and freedom, striated and smooth space. To imagine one’s visits to faraway cities and spaces in these terms is to realise that there is far more to it than the mere “rubbernecking” of tourists. It helps one understand that there is a subtle dialectic between past experiences, going all the way back to childhood, and new experiences; one which, moreover, never coincides with the formal pattern laid out in advance by city planners. The way different, actively space-traversing individuals appropriate unexplored spaces (by walking from one side of a city to the other along unpredictable trajectories) is indeed “a force that defies all calculation” – a force, moreover, that resonates with the deterritorializing effects of the “war machine” associated with Deleuze and Guattari’s “smooth space”, which transmogrifies the “striated spaces” of grid-like city-blocks into nomadic spaces of unpredictable, indeterminate peregrinations.

At the same time it adumbrates the irruption of “equality” within the interstices of exclusive hierarchical social structurings of the “police”, unmistakably announcing the fleeting “in-vention” (“in-coming”) of democracy. “Walking in the city” and everything with which it is metonymically connected (smooth space, equality, democracy, the immanent plane of creativity, the “postmodern” moment that is the “modern” in its incipient state), can therefore function as a model for the “dissensus” that must of necessity be inserted, repeatedly, into the consensual fabric of a social and urban space that bears the striated imprint of the “police”. And the city is the arena where this has to happen, or rather, is always already happening.

Works cited

- Bachelard, G. 1969. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Jolas, M. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Castells, M. 2010. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Second edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. (Kindle-edition.)
- De Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by S. Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1992. Postscript on the societies of control In: *October* (59): 3-7.
- Deleuze and Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and schizophrenia 1*, translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H.R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze and Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Vol. 2). Trans. Massumi, B. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. 1995. *Discipline and Punish. The birth of the prison*. Trans. Sheridan, A. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. 1990. Politics and reason, in Kritzman, L.D. (Ed.) *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*: 57-85. New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. 1972. The discourse on language, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The discourse on Language*, translated by A.M.S. Smith. New York: Pantheon Books: 215-237.

- Freud, S. 2006. Beyond the pleasure principle, in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, selected by A. Phillips, London: Penguin Books: 132-194.
- Kristeva, J. 1997. *The Portable Kristeva*, edited by K. Oliver, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lacan, J. 1977. The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience, in *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by A. Sheridan, New York: W.W. Norton & Co: 1-17.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*, translated by D. Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lyotard, J-F. 1984. Answering the question: What is postmodernism?, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by R. Durand, Manchester: Manchester University Press: 71-82.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action, volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* translated by T. McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. 1985. Modernity – An incomplete project, in H. Foster, (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Port Townsend: Bay Press: 3-15.
- Olivier, B. 2010. Foucault and individual autonomy, *South African Journal of Psychology* 40 (3): 292-307.
- Olivier, B. 2009. Popular art, the image, the subject and subverting autonomy, in *Philosophy and Communication: Collected Essays*. London and Frankfurt: Peter Lang Academic Publishers: 81-111.
- Rancière, J. 2010. *Dissensus. On politics and Aesthetics*, translated by S. Corcoran, New York: Continuum.
- Silverman, K. 1983. *The Subject of Semiotics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tanke, J.J. 2011. *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum.
- Virilio, P. 2005. *The Information Bomb*, translated by C. Turner, London: Verso.

As an undergraduate student, Bert Olivier discovered Philosophy more or less by accident, but has never regretted it. Because Bert knew very little, Philosophy turned out to be right up his alley, as it were, because of Socrates's teaching, that the only thing we know with certainty, is how little we know. Armed with this 'docta ignorantia', Bert set out to teach students the value of questioning, and even found out that one could write cogently about it, which he did during the 1980s and '90s in opposition to apartheid. Since then, he has been teaching and writing on Philosophy and his other great loves, namely, the arts, architecture and literature. In the face of the many irrational actions on the part of people, and wanting to understand these, later on he branched out into Psychoanalysis and Social Theory as well, and because Philosophy cultivates in one a strong sense of justice, he has more recently been harnessing what little knowledge he has in intellectual opposition to the injustices brought about by the dominant economic system today, to wit, neoliberal capitalism. In 2012 the South African university where he teaches (NMMU) conferred a Distinguished Professorship on him. His motto is taken from Immanuel Kant's work: 'Sapere aude!' ('Dare to think for yourself!').