

**Martina Löw**

University of Darmstadt  
loew@ifs.tu-darmstadt.de

If we are to answer the question posed by this symposium, “What is spatial in social segregation?” a number of presuppositions need to be explicated, namely the concepts space, structure, and logic.

The matter is complex not least because, while fundamental reflections in the field of space syntax are echoed by the work done at Darmstadt in the research area “The intrinsic logic of cities,” concepts are dealt with in a slightly different way. I think we will agree that space can be conceived only in relational terms, as a structure-forming, habitualized, and materialised arrangement of objects. In this sense, for example, I share Laura Vaughan’s view that space is an “intrinsic aspect of everything human beings do” (Vaughan 2007, 208). I understand structures to be complexes of rules and resources, which materialise themselves in all social entities of whatever dimensions. In the human body, for example, as gestures and habitus, in the city as morphology, in the state, for instance, as the social distribution of property. From this point of view, space is always social. This is important to understand because it gives the eternal confrontation between the spatial and social the twist that makes space a form of production in the social sphere (Löw 2008a/b). Spatial structures are the outcome of both action processes and ordering frameworks, just as my seated posture both results from social processes and structures interaction. Thus, segregation as spatial structure both develops from social action and is socially productive. And – as we are well aware (summary in Vaughan 2007) – segregation is specific to each city. The way in which neighbourhoods and quarters are structured differs from city to city. It is not unique to each but formations differ. However, we do not know which types of city have a propensity for certain structures. This is where the concept of the intrinsic logic of cities comes into play. The parallels to the social logic of space concept (Hillier/Hanson 1984) are obvious, but I take the view that for theoretical purposes it is sufficient to address the social aspect of space through a sociological concept of structure. The thesis I accordingly present for discussion is that cities develop and display an intrinsic logic that pre-structures development opportunities. I propose understanding the special formation of segregation as materialisation of the specific “character” of a city. Just as cities produce typical politicians, display typical advertising, and design typical public spaces, they also develop spatial arrangements typical of each of them.

In explicating this thesis, I discuss examples presented by a British study before going into the theoretical considerations underlying the thesis.

## **A Study of Manchester and Sheffield**

In 1996, the British research team Ian Taylor, Karen Evans and Penny Fraser published a comparative study of Manchester and Sheffield. The study looks at the different development paths of the two cities with regard to everyday practices. It is based, as the authors state, on the conviction they share with Doreen Massey, that “it is still sensible, even in these globalising times, to recognize local cultural differences between cities ... and to treat them as having a sociological significance and continuing cultural provenance and impact” (Taylor et al. 1996, XII)

A comparison of local practices, in this case in the two northern English industrial cities, reveals different approaches to coping with post-industrial decay. Manchester’s success in meeting the

challenge by adopting a “culture of change” and providing new prospects through the reorganisation of jobs and major projects like the Commonwealth Games, and Sheffield’s lingering nostalgia for past industrial glory are attributed by the authors to the historical canon of routinized and habitualized practices. Using the tool of the focus group, the team interviewed widely differing social groups.

The idea is that interaction between groups gives rise to a structure which offers cities certain options and denies them others. The authors seek to reconstruct the texture of everyday life in interviews with groups of younger, well-educated service-sector employees, of unemployed people, of children and adolescents, of old people, of members of ethnic minorities, and of gays and lesbians. The study concentrates on the organisation of public transport and shopping. In both cases it compares both urban planning aspects (accessibility, quantity, location) and the experience of the different social groups with these key areas of life. The premise of the study is the following: if we assume there is a structure running through the city like a backbone, we can expect to observe this structure in all social groups and to be able to analyse it in the organisation of public life.

And, indeed, the findings of the study are striking. The two cities have much in common. They both regard themselves as “northern” (“northernness”, Taylor et al 1996, 73) in the sense of a distinctive self-description. Both have experienced a slow decline in industrial manufacturing accompanied by a rapid loss of jobs. Both cities still have vivid memories of destruction by the German Luftwaffe during the Second World War and of the fear aroused by the bombing. This remembrance practice makes it impossible for personal history to be seen as a continuous path to prosperity and success. In the United Kingdom, living conditions among the northern English working class, their sufferings under industrial decline, and their attempts to gain a new hold on life have been the subject of innumerable television series and accordingly well-exercised narrative practice in both Manchester and Sheffield. Nevertheless, Manchester, which, owing to high crime rates, has at times been referred to as “Gunchester,” has successfully attracted growth industries in the fields of informatics, sport, and culture. In 2003 the European Union awarded the city the prize for the best structural change of a European city. Ian Taylor, Karen Evans, and Penny Fraser are interested less in how the differing success cultures are to be explained than how the differences are articulated. The surprising result is that the potency of a city is apparent in the details. After deregulation of public transport and in planning new shopping centres, both cities displayed deficient wheelchair and pram accessibility to buildings and public spaces, but focus groups praised barrier freedom and services in at least one large Manchester shopping centre, for example, the provision of wheelchairs in the parking building.

It makes all the difference whether people have their part in public space, whether people are excluded from shopping facilities, whether urban restructuring appears to be taking account of interests beyond those of the majority or not. In Manchester, for instance, begging and hence poverty are not hidden: poor and rich meet every day in the city centre. In Sheffield there is awareness of poverty but it is scarcely in evidence. Manchester, moreover, has become a Mecca for gays and lesbians. There is a “Gay Village,” in other words a specific area featuring bars and restaurants designed to attract the homosexual community. Many more examples could be cited.

In contrast to other studies that have sought to compare cities with reference to single fields, for example political networks, history, etc., the study by Taylor et al. confirms the assumption that cities function in accordance with intrinsic logical structures. That is to say, a city possesses certain essential characteristics that pervade all areas of life. They need not be unique. On the contrary: a number of cities are likely to have developed a structural logic similar to that of Sheffield or Manchester.

### **Intrinsic Logical Structures**

I now turn to these structures of a specific city. Assuming, in the tradition of Bourdieu or Giddens, that “spatial forms and habitual dispositions” are congruent (Berking 2008, 10), structures (in this case spatial structures) can be expected to be expressed and realised in the practice of corporeal

action. Helmuth Berking points out that not only are rules habitualized but structures specific to a city are to be conceptualised which are expressed in action. If acts are considered not in terms of the logic of volition but in terms of their practical logic, the spatial and temporal conditions of action come into view. If gestures, habits, actions, or judgments are understood as expressing practical meaning, the development and unfolding of precisely these gestures, habits, actions, and judgments depend on the societalization context of the city.

The conceptual framework, a specific schema for assessment, perception, and action in which processes of intrinsic urban societalization can be determined, can be set by the paired concepts “urban doxa” – the province of meaning structurally entrenched through rules and resources, whose logic is based on concentration and heterogenization – and “habitus” – the corporeal-practical meaning of the specific place. The habitus concept accordingly operationalizes the region of the doxa that relates to the perception of place qualities and which implants the qualities of a city in the flesh (the faster or slower walking pace in this or that city, different practices of personal exhibition during a Sunday afternoon promenade or early evening stroll, etc.). Doxa, in contrast, refers to the structures of an urban meaning context, articulated in local rules and resources and thus realised just as much in talk as in architecture, technologies, urban planning, associations, etc. The dichotomous concept doxa/habitus presupposes structured sociality and concentrate attention on the structures of the specific place.

The expression “intrinsic logic of cities” or “urban intrinsic logic” used to denote this complex is in the nature of a working concept. It does not mean that dynamic urban processes are governed by a logic in the sense of a rational law. Intrinsic logic refers praxeologically to the hidden structures of cities as locally habitualized, mostly tacit, pre-reflexive processes of meaning constitution (doxa) and their corporeal-cognitive embeddedness (habitus). Meaning constitution is not to be understood as the subjective perceptual capability and attitude of every individual but as a reality that cannot be attributed to individual acts, and which can therefore be said to function as an intrinsic logic. The concept “intrinsic logic,” furthermore alludes to that refraction that involves something general (logic) like urbanisation, concentration, and heterogenization developing specific combinations and compositions peculiar to a place. Intrinsic logic is hence to be understood as the logic of place (or place logic). It is neither an individual and therefore non-generalizable perceptual quality nor the mere result of capitalist structures. On the contrary, routinized and habitualized practices (understood as structured and structuring acts) occur in a manner and form peculiar to the given place, drawing on historical events, material substance, technological products, cultural practices, as economic and political figurations (and their interaction).

The intrinsic logic of a city, as non-questioned certainty about this city, finds expression in many different forms and can therefore be reconstructed in various fields, for example in the speech of visitors and residents, in pictorial depictions of the city, in written sources dealing with it (from novel to travelogue), in segregation and urban planning, in events such as city festivals and parades, in objects of the material culture of the city. The underlying assumption is that the intrinsic logic of a city weaves itself into the constitutive objects of life practice, into the human body (habitus), into the materiality of dwellings, streets, centre formation, into cultural practice, into the way of speech, into the emotional engagement of a city, into political practice, into economic potency, into market strategies, and so on and so forth. The intrinsic logic of the city describes an ensemble of interconnected stocks of knowledge and forms of expression by means of which cities condense into specific provinces of meaning. It is continuously updated through rule-driven, routinized action stabilized by resources. To reduce intrinsic logic to a single characteristic would be undue simplification. For many cities, internal coherence may also be contradictory (the structuredness of action through division, as in the case of Berlin, or through complex, conflicting agrarian and urban meaning constitution as in Accra).

“Why is one city in a better position than another to address a problem better, earlier, or more comprehensively? What community more frequently offers possibilities for direct democratic participation by the citizens and why? More far-reaching than the question of different approaches to identical problems is that of why, in some cities, certain problems are not perceived as such at all but are ignored or reinterpreted as routine tasks. Such questions are particularly interesting

where conditions are similar, where, for instance the institutional setting and financial possibilities are alike” (cf. Zimmermann 2008, 2). Thus legislation on the professionalisation of prostitution is differently interpreted differently in Duisburg and Munich. Not only is carnival celebrated differently in Cologne than in Berlin; the gay and lesbian “Christopher Street Day” parade imported from America takes two different and separate forms in Berlin in a manner typical of the city (on the Kurfürstendamm it is a consumer rally, in Kreuzberg a political demonstration), in Frankfurt am Main mourning for AIDS victims sets the tone, and in Cologne it is a second carnival. The intrinsic logic of cities is accordingly a category that concentrates attention both on the intractable development of a city and the resulting creative force for structuring practice (e.g., in the form of segregation). Intrinsic logic is the mechanism that gives events a locally specific shape. It is one schema among others (logic of the nation-state, logic of global forms, etc.) beyond the conscious control of the individual, which implants itself in the practices of individuals and enables action in specific ways. Intrinsic urban logic can hence not be described as a cognitive act. It establishes itself on the basis of practical knowledge in routines of assignment, in the well rehearsed practice of feeling at home here and feeling a stranger there (through which segregation becomes bodily registered), in the specific design of spaces, in the varying use of technologies, etc.

Now it can be objected that urban experience is differentiated in terms of milieu, that there can be no one feeling, one perception, one interpretation. Without seeking to call this into question, I nonetheless venture the hypothesis that the diverging development of cities under structurally comparable conditions can be interpreted only if we assume that an urban structure also influences milieu-specific (or gender-specific) forms of practice. To give an example: taxi drivers as a social milieu differ from university teachers, but it seems evident that taxi drivers in Berlin develop behaviour patterns different from those of taxi drivers in Stuttgart. Among university teachers the influence may be weakened by frequent travel, but analysis of urban cultures would nonetheless be informative. My assumption, supported by the work of Ian Taylor, Karen Evans und Penny Fraser (1996), is that, across their milieus, the taxi drivers, university teachers, dancers, priests, etc. of a city develop common forms of practice. Positing “city” as a reconstructable unit of interpretation does not mean that opposing or sub-cultural logics and practices are excluded. It must rather be assumed that the intrinsic logic of a city is firstly so dominant that it has an impact itself on subcultures (the student movement in Berlin differed significantly from that in Frankfurt am Main or Freiburg, cf. Schiffauer 1997, 120; Kraushaar 1998; Hager 1967), and, secondly, the manner of practical relation to the intrinsic urban logic can differ with respect to milieu, gender, age, and ethnic membership.

The intrinsic logic of cities cannot, like an image campaign, be reduced to individual acts. Neither mayor, advertising man, nor bank manager alone can determine the experiential space of a city. In routinized and institutionalized practice, concentration and boundary-drawing – in more general terms, the construction of particularity and unity – can be treated as locality-specific and thus differential meaning production, to which a large number of very different societal groups contribute (from professionals in city marketing and architecture and planning to tourists and local experts like taxi drivers and policemen). In acting, each group is both co-producer of the intrinsic logic of the city and product of city-specific meaning.

## Outlook

Louis Wirth once defined “urbanism as a characteristic mode of life” in terms of three perspectives: first as “physical structure,” second as a specific “system of social organization,” and third as a “set of attitudes and ideas” (1974, orig. 1938, 58). From the point of view of the intrinsic logic of cities, this can be reformulated as follows: “physical structure” can be reinterpreted for the purposes of spatial theory as spatial structures (built, planned, placed, grown) not of the city but of this city. Proceeding on the assumption that structures are reproduced recursively in the course of action, patterns of placing can be derived from spatial structures or initially identified as such. The “system of social organization” can therefore be understood as a web of spatio-temporal actions directed towards social cooperation and in this sense “routinized” or “institutionalised.” Structures and action are systemically linked via routinized paths and routes, the habitus of the body, and the routines of perception. A “set of attitudes and ideas,” finally, points to the symbolisation and

thematization forms of everyday life that determine the representation side of urbanism. This includes the many stories that are told about a city, the images that are formed of a city and which circulate, as well as the interpretation patterns that help groups in the city to differentiate, etc.

I believe that the future of a sociology of cities lies with the question of transformation possibilities, in examining the routines of everyday life from the point of view of the comparative structuration of their intrinsic logics. My aim is to develop successive hypotheses on the texture of cities, which in the medium term would enable propositions about similarities between cities and, finally, the construction of different types of city (on the basis of the logic of practice).

## References

- Berking, Helmuth. 2008. Städte lassen sich an ihrem Gang erkennen wie Menschen: Skizzen zur Erforschung der Stadt und der Städte. In *Eigenlogik der Städte*, ed. Helmuth Berking and Martina Löw, 15-31. Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus.
- Hager, Jens. 1967. *Die Rebellen von Berlin. Studentenpolitik an der Freien Universität*. Köln and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.
- Hillier, Bill and Hanson, Julienne. 1984. *The Social Logic of Space*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kraushaar, Wolfgang (Ed). 1998. *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Eine Chronik 1945 bis 1995*. Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard.
- Löw, Martina. 2008a. The Constitution of Space: The Structuration of Spaces through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11: 25-49.
- Löw, Martina. 2008b. *Soziologie der Städte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Schiffauer, Werner. 1997. Zur Logik von kulturellen Strömungen in Großstädten. In *Fremde in der Stadt: Zehn Essays über Kultur und Differenz*, ed. Werner Schiffauer 92-127. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Taylor, J., Evans, K., Fraser, P. 1996. *Tale of Two Cities: Global Change, Local Feeling, and Everyday Life in the North of England: A Study in Manchester and Sheffield*. London: Routledge.
- Vaughan, Laura. 2007. The spatial syntax of urban segregation. *Progress in Planning*, 67: 205-294.
- Wirth, Louis. 1974 (orig. 1938). Urbanität als Lebensform. In *Stadt- und Sozialstruktur: Arbeiten zur sozialen Segregation, Ghattobildung und Stadtplanung*, ed. Ulfert Herlyn, 42-67. München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung.
- Zimmermann, Karsten. 2008. Eigenlogik der Städte: Eine politikwissenschaftliche Sicht. In *Eigenlogik der Städte*, ed. Helmuth Berking and Martina Löw, 207-230. Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus.