World Cities, City Worlds

For most people, seeing the world still means first and foremost seeing our own city. Taken together, today's global cities make a world of their own. A century ago, only two out of every ten people worldwide were city dwellers. Now the global majority is urban. This mass migration has created the new global megacities – Sao Paolo, Delhi, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, Beijing, Bombay, Tokyo – that have outgrown the imperial and modern cities like London and New York. The new megacities are better understood as city regions, or metropolitan areas. It's hard to tell where they begin and end, harder still to determine accurately how many people live there. Shanghai has an official population of 23 million and an estimated 3 million migrants. The Chinese government has said it intends that there will be 30 million there by 2030, even though local unofficial estimates put the total population today at 40 million. There are currently 600 such global city regions, where an estimated 1.5 billion people live. They generate no less than $30 trillion (£19 trillion) annually, amounting to half of global GDP. The World Health Organization projects that by 2050, seven out of ten people will be city residents. Almost all that growth will come in developing countries.[1]

China, which became a majority-urban nation in 2011, plans to move another 250 million people to its cities. (Not to be outdone, India proposed adding 500 million new urban citizens a year later.) If that is accomplished, one billion Chinese people, likely to be one in eight of the world's population, will live in the new cities that are being created on a seemingly daily basis. It is often said that Rome was not built in a day. That is not true of the new global cities, especially in China. Chengdu had about 3 million inhabitants in 1990. By 2012, there were 14 million in the city, with a further 6 million in the surrounding areas. The city had an official growth rate of 13 percent that year and its exports were increasing at a rate of over 30 percent.[2]

The new global city extends beyond the older concept of city limits: it is a region in itself. Guateng region in South Africa extends across the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria to townships like Soweto. You cannot understand Hong Kong without knowing its place in the Pearl River Delta and its relation to China's special economic areas in Guandong province. From day to day, the global city might experience low-intensity warfare that can escalate to full-scale insurgency or even civil war. These cities are intensely polluted, even toxic, especially, but not exclusively, for the poor. Global cities may present themselves as transparent hubs of frictionless commerce, but their residents often experience them as conflicted, dangerous and even haunted. These are the places from which we have to see the world today and where we learn how to see.

For if the classic city of the imperial period was highly distinctive – think of the way that Paris, London and Madrid have very different styles and atmospheres – the rapidly emerging global cities perhaps have more in common, based on the global computer network that moves money and information between them. There are the ubiquitous housing blocks and informal housing (unplanned buildings without legal access to services) on the periphery, surrounding the inevitable glass towers of the banks and the halogen-lit branches of global 'brand' shops downtown. Traffic is terrible, and the milky-white haze of smog is omnipresent. Because these spaces are key to understanding today's global visual culture, this chapter will concentrate on the ways in which cities now and in the past have shaped the way we see the world.

Rather than stressing the specificities of individual cities, I will look at how three city forms have shaped the world over the past two centuries. First was the imperial city (1800–1945), whose spectacular form nonetheless relied on keeping certain people and places out of sight. The imperial city was the place to see and be seen for those who constituted the public. That public was not everyone. It was mostly men, mostly white. In imperial capitals such as Paris, London and New York, the dandy and the street photographer observed and recorded without being seen. The Cold War city (1945–90) made being divided into its central, highly visible feature. Of course, such divides, epitomized by the Berlin Wall, made the two sides invisible to each other. Today's global city (post-1990) has inherited the centre-periphery layout of the imperial city and retains the divides of the Cold War at key global intersections like Jerusalem, Baghdad and Kabul. But it is literally erasing its own past

and creating its own way of seeing. Seeing in the global city requires active self-censorship from its residents as part of a highly controlled environment, encapsulated by the now-notorious slogan of the New York Police Department: 'If you see something, say something.' Whatever there is to see must be reported and the citizen is now the stand-in for the police.

At the same time, whenever the police call on us, we must move on and accept that there is nothing to see here. All of this highly effective control is nonetheless haunted by a set of anxieties. How can the real be distinguished from the fake? Are cities still home or just another place? And in a world where everyone can know their GPS co-ordinates, do we still know where we are?

The imperial city

Let's begin in Paris, one of the most visited cities in the world today. According to the French tourist ministry, just under 30 million people a year made it their destination in 2012, dwarfing the resident population of 2.2 million within the twenty central *arrondissements*, or urban districts.[3] The city is carefully prepared to welcome them. The Eiffel Tower, built for the International Exhibition in 1889, is lit up at night. Once neglected nineteenth-century statues have been gilded. The coal smoke that once made the city buildings black has been scrubbed off. As the German writer Walter Benjamin beautifully put it: Paris was once 'the capital of the nineteenth century' (Benjamin 1999). It is now the largest museum in the world, the museum of the nineteenth

century. As Woody Allen's hit film *Midnight in Paris* (2010) captured very well, many tourists come in search of a city that has long gone, whether it's the Surrealist era of the 1920s, or the Impressionist heyday in the 1870s.

Nineteenth-century Paris was a city world in which the urban observer claimed a certain cultural power by seeing without being seen. There were distinct limits to this power. Not many tourists today probably realize that the broad avenues they stroll down were widened by the city prefect Baron Haussmann in the 1860s in order to provide a clear line of fire against potential revolutionaries. Paris the museum bears little relation to its own history. It is so popular because it presents a nostalgic view of a city life that has long departed.

But then again, it was always this way. In 1855, the novelist Honoré de Balzac announced to his readers: 'Alas! The old Paris is disappearing shockingly fast.'[4] And the poet Baudelaire added a few years later: 'Old Paris is no more.'[5] The pioneering photographer Charles Marville became famous in the 1850s for his pictures of the old streets taken just before they were demolished to make way for the new avenues.

There are no people in those photographs. It was the buildings that provoked the nostalgia, not their impoverished inhabitants. Haussmann tore down the old Paris on purpose to protect Emperor Napoleon III from street revolution. The old revolutionary neighbourhoods were demolished and the workers sent to live outside the city centre in what became known as 'the red belt' (meaning radical) in the twentieth century. Many of today's global cities have
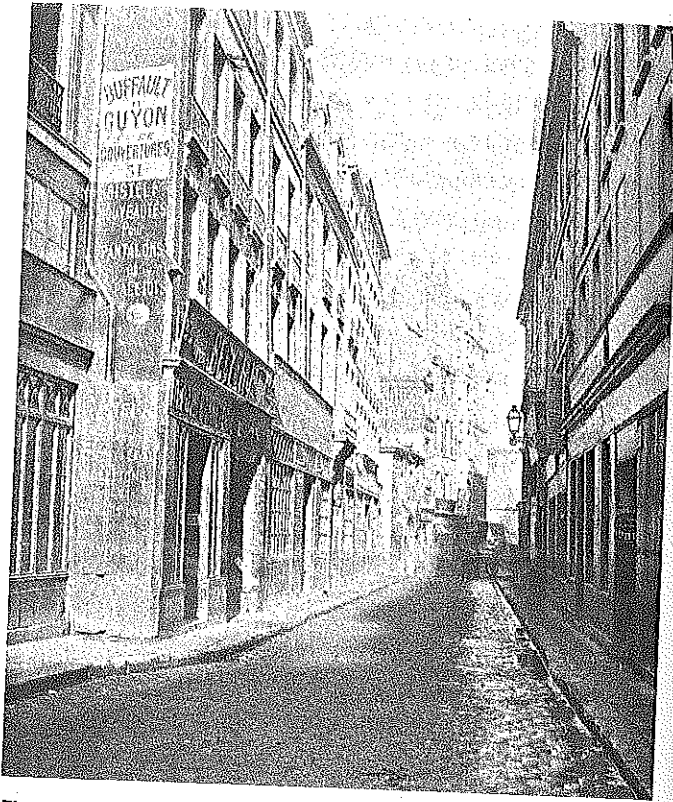
Figure 48 — Marville photograph, *Old Paris*

come to have the same layout: a wealthy core with good services, surrounded by people living precariously in informal housing. The centre is highly visible, actively put on display for consumption by tourists, while the periphery is invisible, kept out of sight to all but its residents.

Paris became known as the 'city of light', a reputation that began in the eighteenth century with the first installation of mirrored street lamps. In the early nineteenth

century, gaslight made it possible to stroll and shop in the city at night. To facilitate this new pastime, the city created its Arcades, rows of shops covered over with a glass roof and provided with heat in winter. Shops began to display a new sign: 'Free entry.' Previously it had been expected that anyone entering would make a purchase; but here was the beginning of the modern practices of browsing and window shopping.

As Benjamin pointed out, it was as if all the centre of the city became an interior in which various modern types came into being. There was the woman of fashion, her changes in style and adornment carefully noted by the newspapers of the time. Meanwhile, men in business or government began to dress in black, abandoning the colourful male clothing of the eighteenth century for the frock coat. In response, the counterculture began. Those not wishing to be taken for businessmen were visibly not at work, such as the poet Gérard de Nerval who famously took his pet lobster for a walk on a leash.

Watching and observing all of this were the *flâneurs*, a word that is hard to translate. The word 'dandy' is close, so is 'gawker', so too 'idle stroller'. The *flâneur* was all of these. The modern city had opened a space for the *flâneur* by demolishing the narrow streets of the old city, driving out the poor, and creating a network of boulevards and arcades suitable for walking while observing. For Baudelaire, the *flâneur* was 'a prince, everywhere in possession of his incognito':[6] a man who gained a certain power by seeing without being seen – a very urban accomplishment. Becoming what Edgar Allan Poe called 'the man in the crowd' was the new way of

seeing in the imperial city. The *flâneur* embodied male looking, the practice that would later be called the male gaze in cinema (Chapter 1).

As photography improved, the 'man in the crowd' way of looking came to be incarnated in the street photograph, taken without the awareness of those being photographed. This secrecy, and the realism of the resulting photograph are absolutely central to the success of these photographs. In recent years, we have seen repeated scandals as what seemed to be classic pieces of observation turned out to have been posed. The French photographer Robert Doisneau took a famous photograph of a passionate kiss in the streets of Paris in 1950, known as *The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville*. The two lovers clinch, with the young man's arm around an elegantly dressed young women, who has seemingly been taken by surprise as her arms rest limply by her side. In the foreground, a man sits visibly watching them from the seats of a café. Indeed, it was standard practice for café seats to be arranged so that patrons could watch passers-by. The figures stand out against the hazy background, as if in a film noir. The scene is steeped in romance. Years later, when the photograph had become a poster classic and there was money at stake, two people sued, claiming to be the young couple. Doisneau was forced to admit that the picture was staged and the characters were young actors. He had taken shots in three different locations before deciding on the one ultimately used at the city's town hall. Why does this matter? If we know it's been staged, it's not really urban observation but street theatre. Now we might think that her arms stay down not because she's been taken by surprise but

because she's not really kissing him. And another illusion is shattered – the illusion that street photography is like being there without being seen.

And what of the *flâneuse*, the woman dandy/gawker/stroller? There were women who wore men's clothing to gain this freedom, like the novelist George Sand. Such women formed a social type known as the Amazon, after the legendary female warriors of antiquity. The *Amazon* in Figure 49 was painted by Edouard Manet in about 1882. She's dressed for riding in the all-black uniform of the masculine bourgeoisie, including top hat and kid gloves. Her hair is in a tomboyish pageboy and there is none of the adornment we might expect. Perhaps it's just the cinched in waist that provides the anxious (male) viewer with a secure key to her gender. She presents us, as intended, with little to look at so that she can claim the right to look herself. There were numerous women artists who painted and drew their lives in the modern city, such as the Impressionist painters Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. At the same time, one of the subjects that most fascinated the male gawker was the Parisian woman, something that has not gone out of style to this day. Recent art history has claimed that the paintings of women on their own in modern Paris would have implied to their contemporaries that these were sex workers. The term 'public woman', we are reminded, was a euphemism for prostitute. Yet there is still ambiguity.

I think of Edgar Degas' painting *L'Absinthe*, showing a woman drinking an absinthe by herself in a café (1876). There was certainly a scandal about the work at the time, allegations of degeneracy and alcoholism being thrown

Figure 49 — Manet, *Amazone*   **Figure 50** — Degas, *L'Absinthe*

around by the usual suspects. The woman depicted was Ellen André, a well-known popular actress, who also appears in paintings by Renoir. Absinthe was a powerful drink, alleged to induce hallucinations and much favoured by the bohemian set. André has a full glass in front of her. We cannot know if she will drink it or not, whether it is even her first ever, or one of many that day. She's very fashionably dressed in white, with an elaborate hat. These are not street-walking clothes. She is notably by herself. There's no interaction with the man seated next to her. Her thoughts are not available and her expression is blank. You could say we are free to look and imagine what we will. You can also say that she is not knowable and has a precise degree of independence. She is not at home, the Victorian angel-by-the-hearth, nor is she demonstrably a sex worker.

What makes the period still seem contemporary is

precisely its fascination with such leisure and consumption, the primary activities at the centre of so many global cities today. The imperial city made spaces for these activities and pushed those who had nothing to do but work to its margins. Impressionist paintings showed men and women picnicking, boating, flirting, at the opera, at the café, at a concert, at the ballet, and so on. Work was elsewhere – except for the sex workers, performers and restaurant staff that made this all possible. The paintings seem now to embody the very idea of a city of light, with their bright colours and flickering brushstrokes.

One well-known piece of art history trivia is that the Impressionists were unpopular in their own time. It is less well remembered why. The name Impressionist was not a compliment. In traditional oil painting, the artist made an 'impression' of the scene they were going to render, a quick sketch that would serve as a guide in composing the finished work. So for viewers of the time, the Impressionists were presenting unfinished sketches as proper painting. Just as some people today look at abstract painting or conceptual art and think that it's not really art, so too did nineteenth-century critics see the now-loved paintings as being half-done at best. The Impressionist style has come to seem to depict the urban observation of the *flâneur*, catching a glimpse of what was going on out of the corner of his eye as the crowds and traffic hurry by.

The artists were well aware of what they were doing and claimed to be depicting colour in accord with the discoveries of nineteenth-century science. The implication was the traditional ways of painting no longer depicted the modern

city effectively. The bright modern colours stem from another technical change. Traditionally, an artist would cover the entire canvas with a coloured ground, whether red, grey or brown. It was designed precisely to mute the force of the colour in the actual painted scene. The Impressionists painted on white ground and so their work 'pops' off the wall, recognizable from a distance. While an art critic of the day would have seen the colour as being out of control, the work of degenerate bodies, we now see these paintings as the highpoint of modern beauty. What appeared hectic and world-changing in the nineteenth century is soothing and calming today.

By the same token, the Arcades were the precursor to the ubiquitous malls that you can now see in global cities, from Johannesburg to Shanghai. The mall is a covered area for the purposes of consumption; it is more likely to be artificially than naturally lit. Some malls, like the one inside Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, go to great lengths to create a 'natural' lighting effect that tricks the brain into thinking we are outside. Crowds flock to the 'outside' seating within the mall to watch the 'sunset' every two hours, while the 'inside' seats are all deserted. Outdoor spaces like Times Square in New York and Causeway Bay in Hong Kong are now illuminated with these 'natural' lights, giving the uncanny feeling of being in daylight at night. The city of light is now the global retail blueprint. A certain degree of luminosity seems to encourage and enable us to spend on things that we don't really need.

If the once legendary cafés of Paris, each with its own character, have become the globally uniform pastiche

Starbucks, the nineteenth-century dandy would nonetheless recognize them and the malls of which they are a part. The major addition has been the merger of the cinema with the mall, where multi-screen cinemas are one of the anchor businesses (Friedberg 1994). The work of watching the world, once the specialist task of the dandy/gawker/stroller, is now made available for us for £10 in luxury seating with a holder for a vast sweetened drink. Unseen observation is just another commodity in the global city.

What was less visible in the city of light was that Paris was not just the capital of the nineteenth century. It was the capital of the French empire, from Africa to East Asia and the Caribbean. From the capital 'N' that marks many buildings and bridges (N for Napoleon, the first Emperor, also used by his nephew Napoleon III), to the Louvre, filled, then as now, with booty from imperial wars, for example Egyptian sarcophagi and Greek sculptures, and the ubiquitous sugared coffee grown in the colonies – Paris could not be understood except in the context of empire. And the Parisians knew it. In 1832, after the failed revolution of that year, later celebrated by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*, a French journalist observed:

> Every factory owner lives in his factory like a colonial planter in the middle of his slaves, one against a hundred; the uprising is to be compared with the insurrection at Saint-Domingue [Haiti].[7]

The nervous writer visualized what he called 'the possessing class' as colonizing those without resources, and feared that a successful revolution, like that of the former slave colony

Saint-Domingue, which became Haiti, could only be a matter of time. Indeed, in March 1871, the Paris Commune took over the entire city and created what they called a 'free, autonomous and sovereign' space. French troops swept back in a few weeks later, killed an estimated 25,000 people and restored central government. That regime lasted as the Third Republic, right up until Hitler's invasion in 1940. The pacified imperial city became the backdrop to the Impressionist paintings and other nostalgic trappings of today's museum Paris.

Outside the inner core of today's Paris is another city, four times as large. Once the home of the white working class, it is now where the descendants of France's empire mostly live. Known as the *banlieux* – the suburbs – here are the homes of the immigrant populations from North and West Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Unemployment is high. Consequently, so is crime and drug use. Policing, which is typically discreet in central Paris, is visible everywhere. Transport is difficult, since the metro ends at the 'gates' of Paris. From there you must take a bus or an additional light rail to the *cités*, or 'cities', as the huge public-housing blocks are known. There is none of the charm of inner Paris here, no little squares and cafés, just block after block of towers and very little to see or do. Paris's layout was designed to keep this separation as intact as possible. A separation by ethnicity has replaced the old separation by class.

Divided cities

During the Cold War, certain cities became separated and divided in ways that could not be ignored. So if Paris was the paradigm of nineteenth-century imperial cities, Berlin was the classic city of the military-industrial complex (1947–90). Governed by the victorious war powers, it was divided by the monumental Berlin Wall from 1961 to 1989. The city was visually split in dramatic fashion, equivalent to the clarity of the U2 photograph of Cuba (Chapter 3). In Berlin, no visual work was required. You simply lost the ability to see the partitioned space. Although the Cold War is long over, divided cities are recurring and reviving in critical areas of global counterinsurgency, from Baghdad to Jerusalem and Kabul.

At the end of the Second World War, in 1945, Berlin was divided into four sectors, one controlled by each of the Allied powers, namely Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. On 13 August 1961, astonished Berliners awoke to find the former GDR (East Germany) building a wall between its sector of Berlin and the Western sector. For nearly thirty years, the wall served as both a symbol and the reality of Cold War separation. It was 140 kilometres long, 3.5 metres high and surrounded with mines, dogs, lights and other security devices. It cut through neighbourhoods, separated friends and families and provided the ultimate visible symbol of the Cold War. Although East Germans were able to learn about the West from television and radio broadcasts, their personal movement was directly limited by the Wall. Subway lines eerily missed stations on 'the other side'.

Before the construction of the Wall, as many as 3.5 million East Germans are estimated to have defected to the West. The Wall made that almost impossible, although some 600 people died in the attempt to cross it.

The official position of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) in the GDR was that 'there exists no objective political or social basis for opposition to the prevailing societal and political order'. In other words, no sane person could oppose what the SED named its 'comprehensive form of democracy'. Any opposition was therefore wrong and carefully monitored by the Stasi (Ministry for State Security). You can now visit their vast headquarters in East Berlin, which has been preserved as a museum. The Stasi had no expectation that their monitoring of the people would lead to better behaviour, they simply wanted to control them. So they regulated and determined the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and held their fellow citizens accountable for any breaches of those boundaries. In the displays of Stasi equipment at the museum, you can see a 10-megabyte hard drive that was used to store information. As it is of late 1980s origin, the disk is twelve inches across and six high. It is surrounded with a display of the five-inch floppy disks that were also used, as well as the mounds of paper generated by the constant surveillance. The display hints at a future that was yet to come – in 1989 – but is now all around us. Indeed, the GDR made immense efforts through its Robotron company to keep pace with the digital revolution in the 1980s, which contributed to its financial collapse.

The material fact of the Wall created a social fact of segregation. This new fact had to be learned and was

Figure 51 — Checkpoint Charlie

constantly emphasized by signs. Above is the famous sign at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, seen in so many Cold War-era movies like *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965). It marked the boundary of the American sector of the city with East Berlin. It was one of only two crossing points for foreigners to enter the GDR in Berlin and the only one that members of the armed forces could use. It became mythologized as the location of spy exchanges and other intrigue. There were no such signs on the GDR side because citizens were forbidden to approach the Wall.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy spoke at the Wall and famously said: 'Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is *"Ich bin ein Berliner!"*. . . All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words *"Ich bin ein Berliner!"*' (I am

a Berliner). His meaning was clear: that Berlin was a symbol of the freedom claimed by the United States in the Cold War and it was willing to defend the city as if it were its own sovereign territory.

There was an obvious contradiction that Kennedy's Soviet opponents did not fail to point out. Almost all American cities south of the Mason–Dixon line, which separated former slave-owning states from free states, were still divided in 1963. Signs in the street indicated who could go where and who could do what. Only these were citizens of the same country, divided by the colour line (Abel 2010). Across the South, you could see signs indicating that one rest-room, water fountain or entrance was for 'whites' and another for 'coloured'. Such signs, and the law they indicated, divided these towns and cities as precisely as any wall. Crossing the line was often dangerous. The Civil Rights Movement challenged segregation by undertaking highly visible actions in which the unity of the nation was posed against the divided reality of segregation. In the small town of Greensboro, North Carolina, students trained in non-violent civil disobedience sat in at a lunch counter in Woolworth's department store on 2 February 1960.

The students concerned were Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Billy Smith and Clarence Henderson. On the first day, they sat for an hour at the end of the day without being served. On the next day, when this now famous picture was taken for the local newspaper, they sat for an hour and a half. The students were well dressed and conservatively groomed so that no objection could be raised about their personal appearance. During the sit-in, they sat quietly and
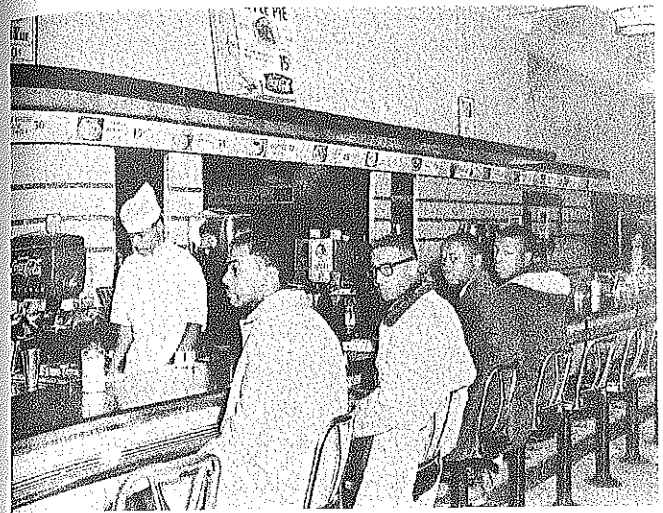

Figure 52 — Moebis, *Woolworth's sit-in*, Greensboro, NC

often studied (Berger 2010). In the photograph, you can see an African-American waiter or bus boy studiously ignoring his peers, as did all Woolworth's staff. The hope was that the sit-ins would simply go away. Instead, they spread across the South.

The sit-in was a targeted tactic. The activists were asking only to be allowed to spend their money. By making it clear that the segregated South preferred prejudice to business, the action made the colour line indefensible at this particular place. By making the refusal to accept money apparent, the sit-ins created a new link between what was sayable and what was visible. Segregated businesses were not discussed, they were simply a 'fact', part of the common sense of race. The apparently simple act of sitting at a counter to ask for service was unthinkable. Once this was challenged, the

lunch counters were integrated within weeks, though many arrests were made as well.

The relatively simple gesture of the sit-in again raised the stakes of the issue to another level. The provocative slogan 'States' Rights' that claimed segregation to be a matter for local decision making (by the white minority) was now countered with Martin Luther King's repeated reminder that the Declaration of Independence held it to be self-evident that all people are created equal. For John Lewis, then an activist with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (founded in 1960), and now a member of the House of Representatives, the experience of the sit-ins was one in which 'democracy was lived as a reality'.[8] Others spoke of having their soul cleansed. So successful was the countervisualizing of segregation that it has now been absorbed into the national narrative of the United States. In the 1960s, civil rights activists were described by the FBI as Communists, terrorists and worse. Now, the Civil Rights Movement is seen as a symbol of the American capacity to overcome hardship and create a more perfect union, as set out in the Constitution.

If we compare the history of South Africa, where an even more rigid system of segregation, known as apartheid, or separate living, was enforced, the contrast is striking. It was not enough to simply make social and commercial segregation visible. Apartheid reached into every corner of South African life with extraordinary determination. Racial distinction was hypervisible and violently enforced.

The sign below, now preserved in the District Six Museum in Cape Town, indicates the level of separation that

Figure 53 — Sign in District Six Museum, Cape Town

apartheid tried to maintain: here a rest-room is designated not just for 'whites', as in the United States, but specifically for 'white artisans'. Based on the ownership of land, and the resulting agriculture and mining, apartheid was central to the country as a whole in a way that Southern segregation in the United States no longer was by the 1960s. Apartheid was in fact made more rigid by the creation of the whites-only National Party in 1958 and the creation of a Republic in 1960, ending all formal ties with Britain.

On 21 March 1960, the police opened fire on marchers in Sharpeville, protesting the Pass Law by which all Africans (as the indigenous populations were known under apartheid) had to carry a passbook detailing their identity, residence, tax status and more. When the shooting was over, 69 people were dead and 180 injured, reproduced in newspapers around the world. In most places, a massacre of this kind would have produced noticeable change. The terrible Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing in 1963 killed four

young girls and is widely thought to have been a contributor to the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Sharpeville changed nothing at the time. It convinced many black South Africans of the need for armed resistance as the only way forward. South Africa at that time was based on legalized white supremacy and until that came to an end, no single event was likely to change it. The visible distinction of 'race' overwrote all other issues and priorities in defence of the social hierarchy.

The apartheid regime nonetheless did everything it could to spare its white residents from being confronted with alternatives. After Nelson Mandela was arrested in 1962, only two photographs of him were released during the twenty-seven years of his imprisonment. The non-white population lived in separate locations that were hard to reach. Yet there were all kinds of professional and personal relationships between the supposedly separate ethnic groups. The white minority supervised an African labour force and had Africans doing domestic work and child care. If we compare the work of (white South African) photographer David Goldblatt (b. 1930) and his (black South African) counterpart Ernest Cole (1940–90), these contradictions were interestingly visualized. Both photographers seem to adhere clearly to the modernist aesthetic of 'show not tell'. Their work is observational, not prescriptive. Both were nonetheless considered shocking, to different degrees.

Goldblatt's book *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (1966) caused considerable controversy in the country at the time. Afrikaans-language media (the language spoken by Dutch-descended Afrikaners in South Africa) were incensed: 'blood
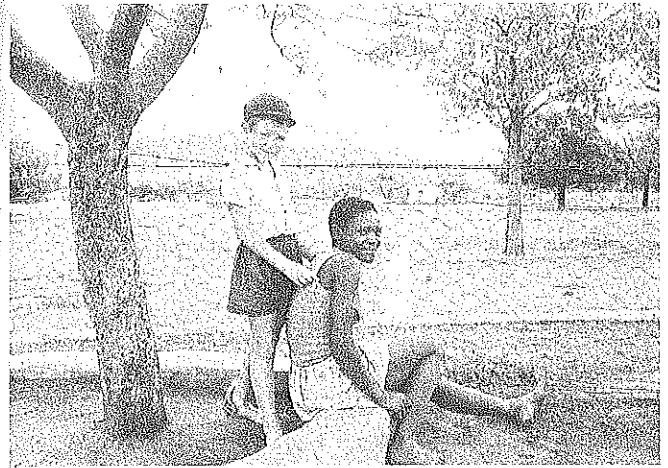

Figure 54 — Goldblatt, *A Farmer's Son With His Nursemaid*

will boil' was one typical headline. The scandal is, however, all in the implications.

In this photograph, taken shortly after Nelson Mandela had been sentenced, we see a moment of everyday life that both epitomized apartheid and shows why its proponents wanted to keep it invisible. The picture is about land and power. The two figures are divided by race, gender and access to power. The child is identified as the farmer's son, presumably the heir to all the land we can see. He stands confidently, directly addressing the camera in a classic *contrapposto* stance. The woman is identified as his nursemaid and it is possible that she did literally nurse him. She turns her body away from the camera and her expression is hard to read – a mixture of deference, recognition and curiosity. The boy seems to dominate the adult. He places a hand on her shoulder, while she reaches behind her to touch only the

back of his ankle. The furtive touch offered by the carer to the farmer's son takes place against the symbolic backdrop of a barbed-wire fence. The fence marks the limit for people without authority and animals alike. The nursemaid is seated so that her head is below the fence, while the young farmer stands above the (colour) line.

If Goldblatt explored everyday apartheid at 'home' on its farms, Cole went into the divided cities, where it was contested and enforced every day. He learned his skills on the now-legendary intercultural Johannesburg magazine *Drum*, where he started as a teenager in 1958. Cole was able to get classified as 'coloured' rather than 'black' despite his dark skin because he spoke Afrikaans. This classification allowed him sufficient freedom of movement to pursue his photographic project, documenting the newly onerous apartheid regime, taking photographs of street life until 1966 when he smuggled them out of the country. His book *House of Bondage* was published in the United States in 1967. It was immediately banned in South Africa, where his photographs were not exhibited until 2010, some twenty years after his death. If Cole was indeed the 'man in the crowd', he worked in a context where all people were not equal.

This photograph from the book shows how the enforcement of the Pass Laws in the streets of Johannesburg centred around the exchange of looking. An African policeman detains a young African man, as many people watch. By today's standards, the policeman is using minimal force because he expects to be obeyed. Passers-by, some African, one white woman, two apparently 'coloured', all regard the encounter with different degrees of engagement. The

Figure 55 – 'Pass Laws', from Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage*

white woman seems not to be troubled, while the African woman closest to the scene looks directly at the arrest with apparent concern. To the right stands a white man with a moustache, apparently supervising the arrest. It is not clear whether he has actual authority over the policeman, as his superior officer, or just symbolic authority as a white man in the apartheid regime, but it is clear that he feels in charge. He stands directly in front of a newspaper sign from the Johannesburg *Star*, which reads: 'Police Swoop Again.' Even the poster on the pole at the right seems to be looking at the encounter. Indeed, taking this picture led to Cole's own arrest. When apartheid finally collapsed, there was shock and dismay among many whites when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made visible what had been unseen by them for so long but had always been there – the violence of racial classification and separation. Like the

woman in Cole's photographs, white South Africans had simply passed it by.

Today there are black Presidents in both the United States and South Africa. Clearly, much has changed. South Africa's artists are as much part of the global art world as Johannesburg is part of global capitalism. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange is worth more than all the rest of Africa's stock exchanges put together. All Africa's top 100 companies are in South Africa. Certainly that speaks to the economic weaknesses of Africa, but it also shows that the transfer to majority rule did not, as was so often predicted, lead to economic collapse in South Africa. Much has been done to extend electricity, water and mains sewerage to the majority population. But immense wealth gaps between rich and poor and black and white persist. Despite some notable exceptions, the rich are still mostly white and the poor mostly black. The net worth of the average white household is just under a million rand (£58,000). Their black African counterparts are worth some 73,000 rand (£4,200).[9]

One of South Africa's best-known new artists is Zwelethu Mthethwa, who works in the townships, mines and farms, depicting those places where black Africans still largely live and labour. Mthethwa came to international attention with photographs like the one in Figure 56 (2000), showing the interior of a township house. Many visitors see the outside of townships, at least on their way to and from the airport. Few are invited inside. Mthethwa's work shows how the township residents take pride in their homes and do their best to decorate them, using coloured pages from magazines and newspapers. James Agee's photographs of impoverished white

Figure 56 — Mthethwa, *Interior*

households in the American South during the Depression show a similar wallpapering with newspaper. The layer of paper also serves as insulation. In the Mthethwa image, the necessity and labour of fetching water predominates. The small space is filled with buckets and other water-holding devices. The shelf on the wall is not level. The floor is made of brick, so the dwelling is not intended to be temporary. The seated woman is no longer formally contexualized by racial difference. She is alone in her space. Clean and well presented, visually she refuses to be a victim.

It is also the case that the expectations she might have had when freedom came in 1994 have not been met. Ending the formal classifications of apartheid has not erased the colour line. There are now some white South Africans living in informal housing like this, but very few. As a result,

South Africa has developed a major problem with crime, leading to a highly policed and segregated urban space. Personal wealth is now indexed by the number of keys a person carries (Vladislavic 2009). The few strands of barbed wire in the Goldblatt photograph have been replaced with high walls and rolls of razor wire. Surveillance cameras, dogs and armed guards are everywhere in white neighbourhoods, while townships are brightly illuminated by very tall street lights, set high to prevent theft of the fixtures. In an extraordinary development, Mthethwa himself has been accused of murdering Nokuphila Kumalo, a black South African woman, said to be a sex worker, in Woodstock, a township near Cape Town. The case is set to come to trial in 2015. Kumalo was exactly the kind of person that Mthethwa photographed. Whoever killed her, her death shows the limits of 'freedom' in the global city for the global majority.

By the same token, although the Cold War is over, wall building is back in fashion worldwide, from gated communities to national borders. States have reverted to walls of exclusion. Most notably, Israel is now divided from its Occupied Territories in the West Bank by a separation wall that is 8 metres (26 feet) high. The wall was first announced in stark terms in 1994 by then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: 'We want to reach a separation between us and them.' Construction began eight years later in 2002 and the wall is currently over 700 kilometres (430 miles) long. It roughly follows the 'green line' that divided Israel from what are now the Occupied Territories in 1948. However, it extends from 200 metres to 20 kilometres into that space in order to 'protect' Israeli settlements and other interests. The wall is

Figure 57 -- *The Separation Wall*, Israel–Palestine

redrawing the international map on the ground and its path is often confusing.

It has gradually been covered with graffiti and posters and is becoming an uncanny reminder of the Berlin Wall. In the photograph above, someone has written Kennedy's famous quote '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' on the separation wall. Today, 'Berlin' is in the West Bank, the tagger suggests.

However, the Berlin Wall marked a clear dividing line, known to all. Today, in addition to the physical barrier created by the wall, separation takes place on many levels, as part of what the Israeli architect Eyal Weizman has dubbed the 'politics of verticality' (2007). In this politics, separation is more crucial than ever, but it extends from underground to the sky, dividing domains such as water supply, air traffic

control and mineral rights. Even the access to roads is divided according to whether you live in Israel or Palestine.

In the graphic in Figure 58, created by the Beirut-based collective Visualizing Palestine, we can see that many roads are accessible only to those with orange Israeli licence plates, even in the Occupied Territories. Such licence holders also have access to bridges and tunnels that connect Israeli settlements to the east of the separation wall. By contrast, road blocks, checkpoints and even trenches prevent or restrict travel between the different Palestinian enclaves for those with Palestinian green and white plates. The checkpoints are mobile and can appear at any place and at any time. Israelis and Palestinians have become invisible to each other. Divided cities are always a tiny minority of all cities, but they express the key tensions of their time by means of the highly visible physical barriers that make some places invisible to others.

The global city

The global city is a space of simultaneous erasure, division and expansion that is hard to see and harder to apprehend. Old divides are erased, only for new ones to be built. Familiar spaces disappear, to be replaced with endless new space that is hard to differentiate. Seeing becomes a complicated matter, closer to the visualizing of a battlefield. We have to remember what was there before, try and take in what has been put in its place and keep up with the pace of change. While there are fewer formal barriers, these cities are clearly not equal for all.
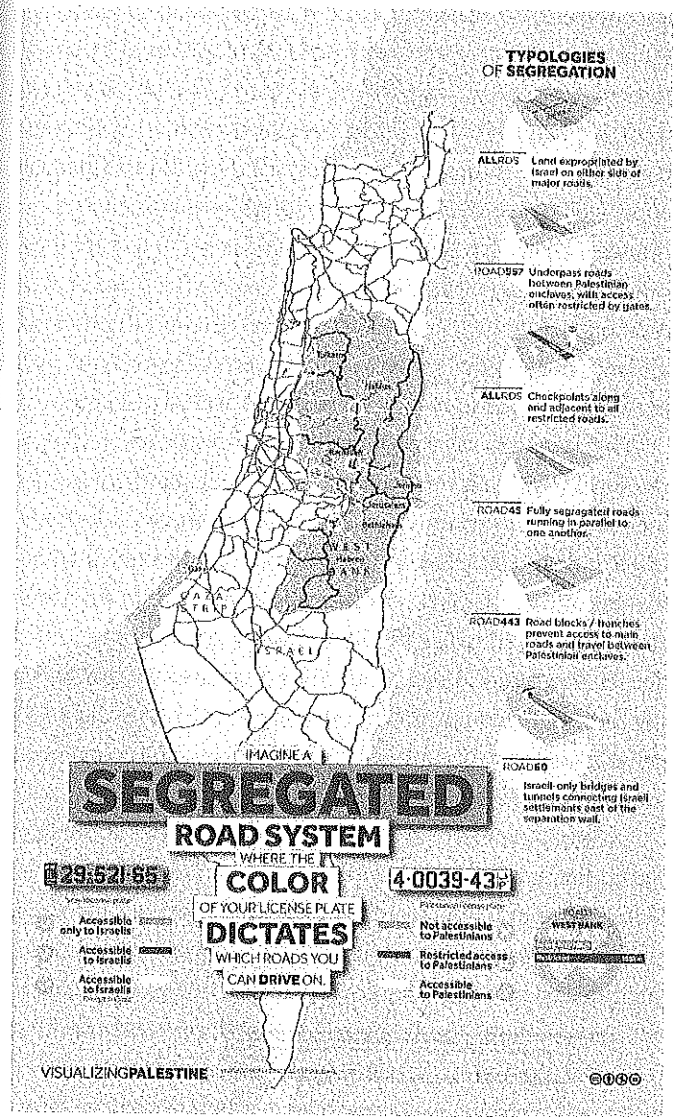
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Figure 58 — Visualizing Palestine, *Segregated Road System*

Recent thinking on memory and place has made much use of French historian Pierre Nora's concept of 'places of memory' (*lieux de mémoire*),[10] suggesting that particular physical locations are a key element in the mental construction of place in general and memory in particular (2006). While this may apply well to relatively stable and long-lived nations, such as France – where it originated – it does not seem as useful for rapidly changing cities like Berlin, let alone the global cities. Memory comes to seem like yet another first-world privilege, odd as it may seem. For while the disasters of Europe are well remembered, those of Africa are far less well attested to.

That is not to say that memory remains the same. Today, the Berlin Wall has been almost entirely dismantled, its former course marked only by a line of cobblestones. Like many other global cities, Berlin is in the process of radical transformation. If you have not been back to the city for some time, you might exit a familiar U-Bahn station only to feel a radical sense of disorientation as an unknown new building or structure appears – am I in the right place, did I forget what it looks like, or has it changed beyond recognition? Memory is being changed.

In 2006, I saw the Palace of the Republic in the former East Berlin being dismantled as part of the active erasure of the Communist era. Built in 1976 to celebrate the Socialist state, the Palace was the location of Party congresses and other such occasions. Now, a reconstruction of the eighteenth-century castle of the former Hohenzollern monarchs that preceded the Palace in the same space is underway. It will be an odd building. It copies the old palace exactly on three sides but there will be a contemporary glass wall on the

fourth. In theatre, the 'fourth wall' is the name given to the illusion created when we look at actors on stage, as if they are simply carrying on their lives behind a transparent wall. Now the global city incorporates zones of fake space. While these zones provoke controversy at first, they inevitably become accepted and blend into the cityscape. For the fake is emblematic of globalization, and today, it is often difficult to distinguish from the so-called 'real'. For example, 'fake' Chinese watches use the same Swiss watch movement as the brands they are imitating (Abbas 2012). Such a fake watch is materially the same as the real one but lacks the cultural prestige of the 'real' brand. The fake castle links the history of kings and queens to the architecture of the global shopping mall. It is almost history, but not quite.

At Tianducheng, a gated community near Hangzhou, China, there is a 107-metre (350-foot) high replica of the Eiffel Tower among 30 square kilometres (12 square miles) of Parisian-style architecture. If British is more your style, Thames Town (Figure 59), close to Shanghai, offers cobbled streets and Tudor houses around market squares. If this is clearly a fake in one sense, you can nonetheless live in these houses in comfort. As the photograph suggests, the wealthy clients who buy these homes are rarely actually in residence. The same has happened to upscale districts of all global cities. In London, for example, wealthy neighbourhoods like Belgravia and Knightsbridge are increasingly empty on a daily basis because the owners of the prime real estate are elsewhere, in another global city. Those the economist Joseph Stiglitz called the one percent (2011) now live globally in a fake world of nineteenth-century European and
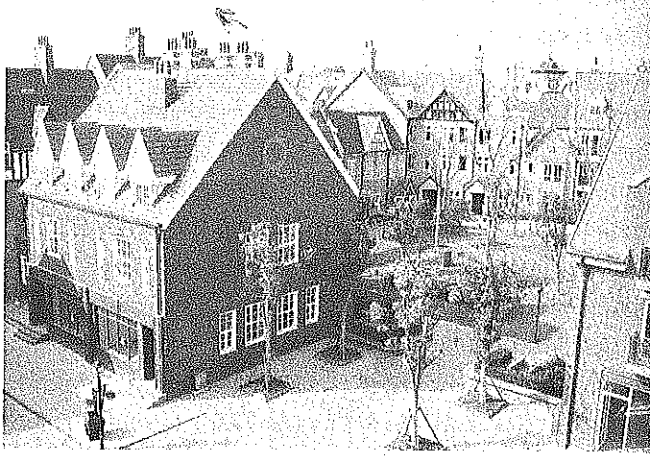
Figure 59 — Thames Town, China

mid-twentieth-century American urban living that no longer actually exists. At the same time, many of those aspiring to be among of the one percent (one poll showed 42 percent of Americans believe that they are or will be in the one percent) are carrying fake Louis Vuitton bags and wearing fake Rolex watches. This peculiar and unequal mirroring of fakery epitomizes the way of seeing in the global city.

When trying to see the new 'fake' but all-too-real global city, it helps to use methodologies from science fiction. In his novel *The City and the City*, China Miéville described two cities that exist in the same footprint (2009). One street might be completely in Ul Qoma, the next in Beszel, another might be partly in both cities. In order for a citizen to negotiate this space, in Miéville's world, it was necessary to learn how to 'unsee' spaces from the other city. Non-residents, especially children, find this hard to impossible, and the

unseeing was carefully policed by a mysterious force called Breach. In the novel, to see what should be unseen results in a 'breach' that would be punished by disappearance. The global city is there and not there, requiring that we notice and ignore it at once.

In China, a massive new urbanization is transforming the built environment in ways that make the rebuilding of Berlin seem low key. It has two registers: showpiece districts, built to impress international visitors and local officials, contrast with the endless places of work and residence for the local population only. In China, they call the new residential towers 'handshake blocks' because they are placed so close together, it's as if people could reach across from one tower to the next and shake hands. More formally, the German photographer Michael Wolf calls the phenomenon 'the architecture of density'.
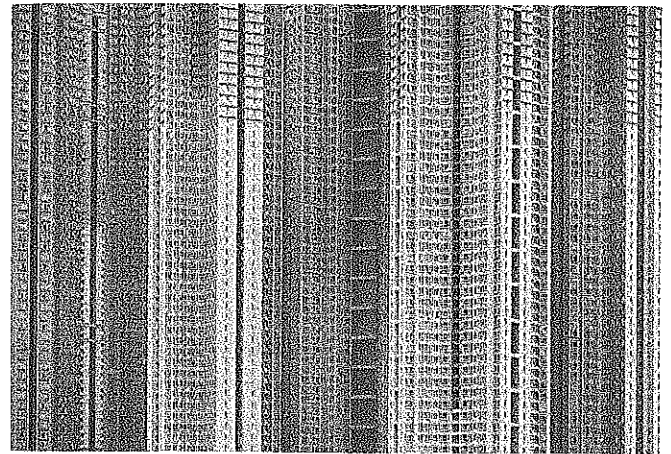

Figure 60 — Michael Wolf photograph from *The Architecture of Density*, Hong Kong

By taking photographs of these new buildings in Hong Kong without including any way of judging where they begin or end in the frame, Wolf has found a new modernist aesthetic at work in what appear to be simply utilitarian spaces. Such blocks create an implied visual clash with the reflecting glass towers of global capitalism. Usually the residential spaces are safely out of sight of the commercial areas. The glass towers are built to illustrate the presumed transparency of global capitalism. As we discovered during the financial crisis of 2007, and afterwards, they conceal more than they reveal. In fact, the glass only allows those within to see out. These one-way-mirror buildings are the built environment of a world order that 'unsees' its supposed citizens. Meanwhile, the residents of the handshake blocks can barely see anything out of the small windows of their apartments, looking out on a forest of other such blocks.

The artist Sze Tsung Leong has set about documenting the rebuilding of China's popular neighbourhoods. Picturesque low-rise buildings repeatedly give way to massive modern developments, uniform in style and appearance, set against the permanent air pollution of industrial China. His photographs at first were intended as a parallel to European precursors like Marville, who had documented the transformations of nineteenth-century Paris (see Figure 48).

Like Marville, Sze's photographs rarely show people, concentrating instead on the buildings. Before long, Sze felt that his work was very different from European nostalgia. His photographs show instead 'the absence of histories in the form of construction sites, built upon an erasure of the past so complete that one would never know a past had existed.
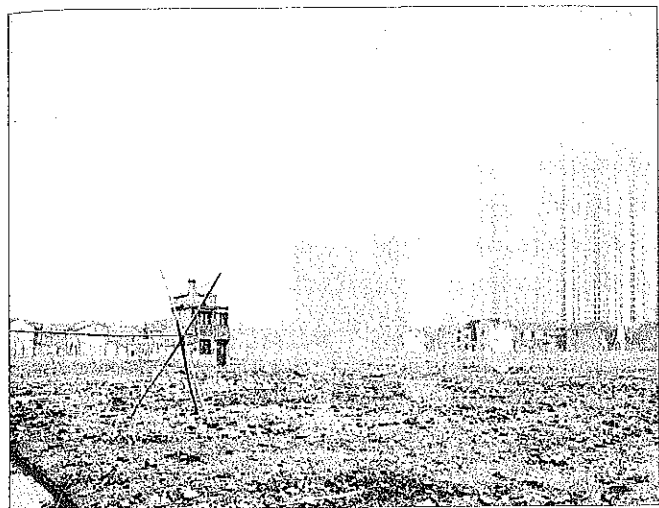

Figure 61 — Sze Tsung Leong, from *History Images*

And they are of the anticipation of future histories yet to unfold, in the form of newly built cities.'[11] There is certainly unseeing of the past but it is not yet complete. In Tash Aw's 2013 novel *Five Star Billionaire*, set in Shanghai, the characters are all trying to come to terms with the intense pace of change in China. 'Every village, every city, everything is changing,' a young woman says. 'It's as if we are possessed by a spirit – like in a strange horror film.'[12] As we shall see later, this is precisely how change in the global city is visualized in horror films, when the past itself becomes the haunting spirit that 'breaches' the seamless present.

In Shanghai, there is a visible clash of empires – the old colonial empire and financial globalization. Taken together they visualize the cross-hatching of what political scientist Martin Jacques has called the 'contradictory modernity'

revealed by the rise of China (2011). Until recently, there was a consensus among all those involved that there was only one way for a nation to become modern – the Western way. To be modern meant having a representative democracy, free markets and a civil society with freedom of expression, and so on. China's ascent has shown there are at least two ways to be modern. China has combined a very strong state which tightly limits personal freedoms with managed economic liberalization. According to Jacques, what is central for China is its distinct culture and long history of civilization rather than a set of 'self-evident' principles. And so now we are working out this contradictory modernity. Either one side is right and the other wrong, or there are multiple ways to be modern.

On one side of the Yangzi River in Shanghai, there is Pudong, the new commercial and financial district of the city. A forest of spectacularly designed skyscrapers confronts the viewer as a wall. Pudong classifies Shanghai as a
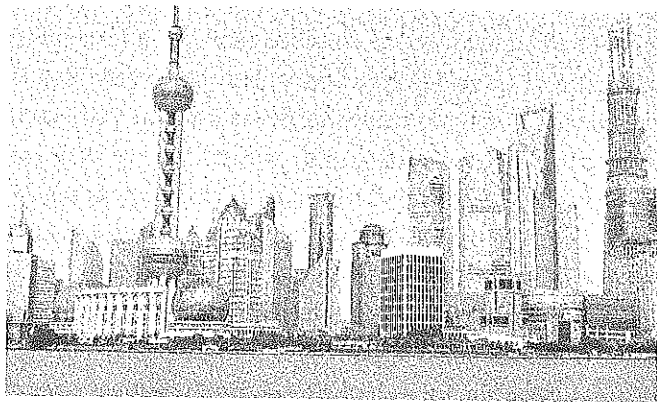

Figure 62 — Pudong, Shanghai

global city and separates those who work there, and above all those who own land or buildings there, from other, lesser beings. It is the city in the city.

It demands respect for its sheer scale, newness and spectacle. Who knows what actually goes on in these endlessly photographed buildings? On the other side, the old colonial waterfront, known as the Bund, survives in external form. Shanghai was opened to the West following the Opium War of 1839–42, in which Britain fought the Chinese empire for its right to trade opium to the vast Chinese market. Fortunes were made. The Edwardian headquarters of the former opium dealers Jardine Matheson (long since become respectable) still stares out at Pudong, although no sign indicates its past history.

The building has become a fashion boutique, oddly entitled the House of Roosevelt, selling fake luxury goods. Every night, neon displays on the Pudong buildings put on a show for the watching crowds lined up along the colonial
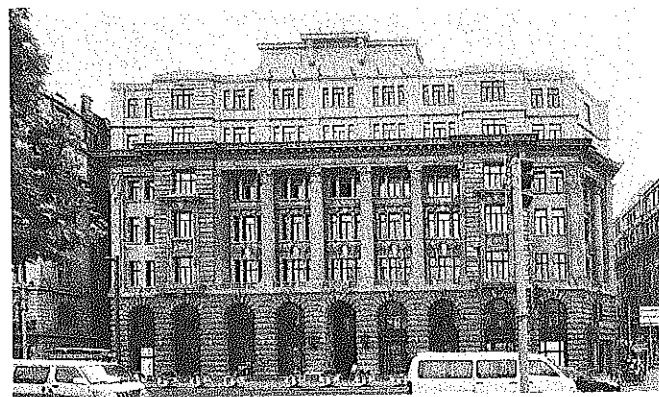

Figure 63 — Jardine Matheson mansion, Shanghai

Bund. The message, here and elsewhere in China, is very clear: our way is winning.

The built environment of the city feels less real than its electronic network. Ghosts and spirits are perceived in electronic and digital media as a means for people to explore their anxieties about the seemingly endless transformations of their everyday lives. In film, old powers retain their force. New media can be controlled and manipulated from within. The classic of the genre remains *The Matrix* (1999) and its Platonic cautionary tale about computers and a digitally simulated city. The Wachowski brothers, who wrote and directed the film, wanted us all to remember Plato's ancient rubric about the deceiving nature of appearances. In the film, computer code creates a fake world that manipulates us into believing that we are free, while our bodies are in fact serving as batteries for the Matrix.

Learning how to see the simulated machine world of the Matrix is the key to resisting it. In perhaps the best sequence
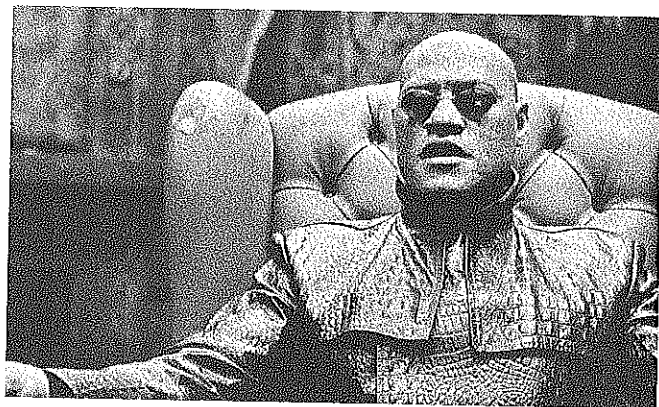

Figure 64 – Still from *The Matrix*

in the film, Morpheus (Lawrence Fishburne) offers Neo (Keanu Reeves) a choice. He can take the red pill and see the world for what it is or take the blue one, forget what he has heard and go back to everyday life. But Morpheus insists, 'You have to see it for yourself'.

In the Hong Kong horror movie *Tales from the Dark* (2013), modern media like a mobile phone or a CD all turn out to be haunted. The scariest character in the film is the ruthless city of Hong Kong, haunted in advance as it is by the knowledge that it will return to full control by China in 2046. At present, Hong Kong is in China but not of it. When you enter the region, your passport is not stamped. It's as if the city is in no man's land. In *Tales from the Dark*, the voice-over expresses this view clearly: 'Humans. Ghosts. Everyone is searching for the way home'.

In the world made by global cities, it is becoming harder to find a home. In the wake of the Spanish economic crisis, the popular slogan 'I'll never have a fucking house' can be seen on walls across the country. Many Californians have complained that due to escalating rent and home prices, San Francisco has expelled everyone who is not wealthy to remote hinterlands and created a theme park of technology. London is not only driving its less wealthy citizens out by dint of astronomical rents and house prices, it is observing them. Britain now has over 4 million closed circuit TV cameras, nearly all owned by private companies. Local councils in London claim to have just 7,000 cameras but note with pride that this is far more than the 326 in Paris. Today 95 percent of all Metropolitan Police murder cases in London make use of CCTV footage.[13] While some cities are

reshaping themselves under close surveillance, others like Detroit are collapsing. Detroit is lacking over 40,000 street lights. Whole districts of the city are going dark. Within the 360-square-kilometre (140-square-mile) city boundaries of Detroit – a city expanded by the automobile which made it famous – the area of now-vacant land is the size of San Francisco. These patterns are linked. In Detroit, San Francisco is 'unseen' (or perhaps unseeable), and vice versa.

In Paris, the two spaces are concentrically wrapped around each other, yet the wealthy, mostly white centre 'unsees' its poor, mostly black and brown suburbs. The pasts of the global cities have been erased, invisible and yet still remembered, at least for now. When French writer Michel de Certeau wanted to imagine how to see everyday life in the 1970s, he went to the top of New York's World Trade Center and looked down at the city around him (1984). You cannot go there any more, literally or metaphorically.

Map world

Seeing the cross-hatched, divided, disappearing, expanding global city is not so simple any more. But to see where we are, we turn back to our screens. An odd legacy of the Cold War has been a new way to map. After the Sputnik satellite created a sense of panic in Cold War America, part of the response was to create a set of satellites that would allow for precise positioning on any part of the earth's surface, known as the Global Positioning System, or GPS. Launched over a twenty-year period for the correct targeting of nuclear weapons, the GPS system was fully realized only after the end of

the Cold War in 1994. Owned by the United States government, it comprises 24 satellites, whose use was gradually extended from military to civilian. A GPS receiver calculates its position by timing the reception of the user's signal from four of the orbiting satellites. Millions of people now carry such devices in phones and other personal data organizers. For the first time in history, those who do have access to GPS can precisely locate themselves without requiring technical skills. Devices designed solely to access GPS are not reliant on phone service and so it's possible never to be lost. Or at least to know where you are, even if you're not sure where that is.

To close that gap, a variety of mapping services have appeared, from navigation systems for vehicles, to free services like Google Earth and Google Maps. Google Earth is a massive database that is rendered as if it were a seamless visual representation. Google Maps (and other such applications) is designed to be of practical use, offering directions, detailed indications of what each building at a given location does, and even the ability to 'see' a specific street via the Street View service. And if even this is too complicated, the software will give verbal directions. Google sends vehicles equipped with automatic roof-mounted cameras to photograph every street they can access. Using this function allows a viewer to see what their destination will look like before arriving, which can be useful in unfamiliar locations. You can also simply browse for pleasure to see what certain places look like. Some worry that thieves use Street View to target desirable properties.

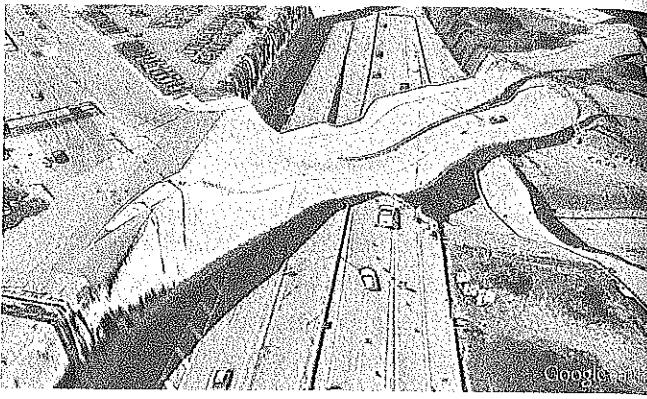Google Earth and Street View use a process called

Figure 65 — Valla, *Postcard from Google Earth*

'stitching' to link enormous numbers of individual images into what appears to be a continuous depiction. At certain points, the illusion in these softwares breaks down because of a glitch in the system. The artist Clement Valla has made locating such errors into an art form, which he calls *Postcards from Google Earth*. These failures to render create images that are nonetheless oddly familiar because they look like the CGI-created disasters that litter today's multiplex cinemas.

As Valla puts it on his website, Google Earth is

a new model of representation: not through indexical photographs but through automated data collection from a myriad of different sources constantly updated and endlessly combined to create a seamless illusion.[14]

For Valla, we are already in the Matrix. Google Earth does not look like Earth but resembles other digital materials.

Because we spend so much of our lives looking at these materials, it becomes real.

The photographer Doug Rickard similarly uses the image-stream created by Google Street View as the source for his sometimes controversial work. He bases his search for compelling images on the aesthetic of the Farm Security Administration photographs of the 1930s. Many of these photographs, like Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* have become classics of American photography. To find such images, Lange, Walker Evans, Gordon Parks and others had to first go to impoverished places, then identify and capture expressive moments. Rickard did his work browsing on a computer, often deliberately visiting places that he knew FSA photographers had previously depicted. What is seen is familiar, a variant on documentary or street photography. Only the 'photographer' was never on that street and did not even take the picture.

Perhaps unintentionally, Valla and Rickard show that the two issues the society of control cannot control can be found in its online avatars as well: disaster, natural or otherwise, and inequality. Valla's images of distortions in Google Earth remind us of devastation caused by hurricanes, earthquakes and the collapse of poorly built or maintained infrastructure, which we now associate with climate-change related events. Rickard finds the lonely and disadvantaged in the supposedly 'level playing field' of the Internet. These alternative means of seeing the world – the changing natural world and social change – will be the subject of the final chapters.