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Paper title: Geographies of architecture: the multiple lives of buildings

Abstract

Arguably, cultural geography began with the study of architectural forms. The first half of this article traces the geographical study of buildings as a relatively small but significant sub-field of cultural geography. It summarises three approaches that characterise this work. First, the study of everyday, vernacular buildings, found especially (but not exclusively) in North American cultural geography. Second, radical critiques of the political-economic imperatives, organisation and consequences of particular architectural forms such as the skyscraper and the related interpretation of buildings as signs, symbols or referents for dominant socio-cultural discourses or moralities. Third, most recently, what can broadly (but not unproblematically) be termed nonrepresentational or 'critical' methods that stress practice, materiality and affect.

The second, shorter, part of the article highlights outlines recent research on the geographies of architecture that has adopted elements of each approach to make a number of contributions to the study of cultural geography. Two key themes are considered: movement/stasis; the politics of architectural design and practice. Consideration of these themes anticipates a conclusion with some broad suggestions for future geographical research on architecture.

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68 **Introduction: why study buildings?**

69 One of the principal reasons for studying geography is that its disciplinary techniques
70 force us to engage with the world around us. Those techniques make us look, look again,
71 measure, listen, feel, even smell and taste in ways that we might not do in the course of our
72 everyday lives. A geographical sensibility – a constant attention to boundaries, relations,
73 networks, flows, distributions – can render the most familiar places unfamiliar. Nowhere is
74 this observation truer than in the geographical study of architecture. Almost regardless of
75 where we live, many of us spend many hours of each day in buildings – in pieces of
76 architecture. Whether our home, our workplace, our school or university, most of us have
77 cause to visit, use, move through/around or take shelter within a building every day of our
78 lives. Yet we do not necessarily spend much time pondering the significance of those
79 buildings.

80 Immediately, this observation raises a number of critical questions. The first concerns
81 the *definition* of architecture as a professional or social practice. Whilst the definition of
82 ‘architecture’ is highly contested (Ballantyne 2002), this article takes a rather more pragmatic
83 approach. It takes the practice of architecture as, more-or-less, the creation of *individual*
84 buildings by both professionally-trained, named ‘architects’ and untrained builders. Examples
85 will include skyscrapers, airports, schools and hospitals. For reasons of coherency, the related
86 practices of urban design, town planning and landscape architecture are not explicitly
87 included here. This is not to say that this article – or indeed the geographical study of
88 architecture – has been singularly concerned with the local-scale production of individual
89 buildings at particular street addresses. Nor have geographers ignored the question of what
90 exactly architecture *is* and *does* (see especially Jacobs 2006), a concern that we return to later
91 on. Rather, geographers have, since the 1920s, attempted to place individual buildings into
92 wider contexts – whether in terms of the global circulation of architectural styles, national

ideological imperatives, or the immediate material, political and economic environs surrounding a building. Yet – in accordance with many extant geographies of architecture – this article pays particular attention to the production, inhabitation and materiality of *individual* buildings (Domosh 1989; Lees 2001).

A second question centres around the precise *significance* of buildings within our everyday lives. For the most part, buildings recede into the background – ‘framing places’, as Dovey (1999), has it. Yet Dovey’s seemingly simple term conveys the complexity and contestability of architecture. As Lees (2001) shows, some buildings become the focus for intense public debate – take the much-maligned Millennium Dome in London, for instance. In other cases, buildings can – however temporarily – have profound effects on our daily lives. Perhaps this might be because, as Dovey (1999) argues, in combination with technologies and practices of surveillance, particular social groups are excluded from using them (Mike Davis’ [1990, 2006] dystopian depictions of impenetrable hotels, mega-structures and shopping malls in Los Angeles and Dubai would be seminal examples). Or perhaps this might be because certain buildings evoke powerful emotional reactions, proffering something a little different from the ‘ordinary’ buildings that are folded into our daily routines (Kraftl 2009).

Buildings are also significant because of the vast amounts of energy, materials, money and technical/organisational/regulatory detail that are invested in them and enable them to stay erect (Jacobs et al. 2007). Consider, for instance, a rather startling figure that is often repeated in texts on ‘sustainable’ architecture: globally, buildings are responsible for roughly 50% of all human-produced CO₂ emissions and virtually as much fossil fuel consumption (Wines 2000; Low et al. 2005). And, finally, on the simplest, most fundamental level, buildings are significant because they embody the literal act of place-making. It can be forcefully argued that, whilst not bounded containers for human action, buildings are a

fundamental geographical setting at and through which *spaces* are made, negotiated, experienced and contested. Expanding on these themes, this article shows how geographers of architecture have contributed to – and have the potential to extend – cutting-edge debates in cultural geography and beyond.

A third question relates to the cultural *assumptions* that it is all-too-easy to make about architecture. Immediately one makes generalisations such as that above – that we all, in some way, experience or inhabit buildings – one glosses to a certain extent the power relations and contingent spatial practices that articulate the meanings we attach to buildings. At its simplest level, physical access to a building (or part thereof) to call one's own is bound up in a series of predominantly Minority World assumptions about property ownership, domesticity (i.e. the nuclear family) and having a home (vis-à-vis being home-less), as many geographers have indicated (Cloke et al. 2003; Jacobs & Smith 2008). As iconic images of shanty towns remind us, the possibilities of permanent shelter are tenuous at best in many Majority World cities; meanwhile, the global economic downturn occurring at the time of writing this article, arguably stimulated in part by exuberant mortgage-lending in the United States and elsewhere, has thrown into sharp relief longstanding assumptions about the compunction to 'own one's home' in many Minority World countries. These significant issues do not necessarily centre around questions of architecture and building *per se*. Yet they indicate how buildings can be a point of articulation for complex contestations over the meaning of and access to certain places. This observation is perhaps most poignantly realised where the most rudimentary architectural forms serve as moral, political and religious barriers in space-times of conflict – exemplified in the past by the Berlin Wall, and more recently by the construction of the West Bank Wall between Israel and Palestine (Piquard 2007). Some of these political points of articulation are considered later on.

This article, then, reviews two kinds of architectural geographies. First, it considers how geographers have attempted to study buildings *as* spaces. In this light, the next section of the paper presents a history and perfunctory classification of three geographical methodologies for studying buildings. It begins with early attempts to map *everyday*, vernacular buildings and to relate these to the cultural groups that produced them. Second, it outlines radical/Marxist critiques of the *political-economic* imperatives inherent to the production of architectural forms, before explaining how buildings can be *interpreted* as signs, symbols or referents for dominant socio-cultural discourses or moralities. Finally, it discusses recent, so-called *nonrepresentational* or ‘critical’ methods that stress inhabitation, materiality and affect.

The second section of the paper outlines (relatively briefly) two recent themes in the geographical study of architecture: one – movement/stasis – is an emergent aspect of this study; the second – politics of architectural design and practice – constitutes a renewed interest in the politics of architectural spaces that begins to flesh out some of the critical implications of a recent interest in ‘nonrepresentational’ thinking. Finally, in conclusion, the paper critically evaluates the value of architectural geographies as points of articulation for the kinds of wider conceptual debates that have characterised disciplinary geography in the last decade, in anticipation of possible future directions for study.

Three geographies of architecture: from the Berkeley School to nonrepresentational theories

The Berkeley School: mapping architectural styles

The story of the sub-discipline of ‘cultural geography’ begins, for many commentators, with the so-called ‘Berkeley School’, in the United States, in the 1920s. Its principal protagonist, Carl Sauer (1925), instituted a long-standing concern with landscapes

and those material features that made particular landscapes unique. Although the heritage of landscape studies (and indeed cultural geography) is more complex than this (Wylie 2007), Sauer's methodology for studying landscapes has obtained enduring significance. Using methods of observation, field-note-taking and mapping – which Sauer pithily asserted were the indispensable skills of the professional geographer's repertoire – Sauer and his colleagues observed the expression of cultural traits within landscapes.

Within this work, buildings held a special significance. Indeed, architectural styles – from houses to barns – exemplified the approach that Sauer promoted. For the Berkeley School, a building's form, construction and style was a clear expression of a 'way of life' – of the "level of technological development and the values of a culture" (Goss 1988, p. 393). Once viewed in this way, the seemingly simple premise of the Berkeley School's work was to map how different architectural styles were distributed across the American landscape. The Berkeley School's approach reminds us, then, of the significance – if not centrality – of architectural forms to the early years of cultural geography, and of the significance of 'everyday' built forms in the midst of a later preference for more 'spectacular' kinds of case study (Kraftl 2009; Merriman forthcoming).

Political-economy, symbolism and iconography: architecture as a referent

The Berkeley School's approach to cultural geography, landscape, and by extension architecture, has received fierce criticism. In particular, later (especially British) cultural geographers argued that the Berkeley School approach tended to describe rather than explain the patterns of distribution that they mapped. Critics argued that buildings were produced within broader and more contested fields of social, political and economic relations, whilst they were also the product of individual human agency – and especially those of architects and powerful clients (Mitchell 2000; Lees 2001). It was also suggested that the Berkeley

School downplayed the role of systems of representation that are an important part of what buildings mean – systems including the symbolism of buildings themselves and representations of buildings in photographs, news media and paintings (Goss 1988; Crang 1998).

This set of critiques led to deeply-felt debates about the direction of cultural geography during the 1980s. A little more productively, it was a stimulus for a range of cultural geographies that were informed by contemporary theorising and attempted to be more evaluative than earlier approaches. These ‘new’ cultural approaches to geography tended towards one of two camps: either studying structural (society-wide) processes, informed by marxian theories of political economy; or focussing on human agency, informed by phenomenological theories about individual experiences of and impacts upon places; on some occasions, geographers combined both structure and agency. The theoretical detail of these approaches is less significant here than their profound impact upon the study of architecture, which continues to be felt today (although readers interested in original sources may wish to consult, for instance, Tuan 1974; Cosgrove & Jackson 1987; Barnes & Duncan 1992; Cosgrove & Daniels 1993; W.J.T. Mitchell 2002).

We can distil one key argument from ‘new’ cultural geographies of landscape in general, and of the many individual buildings that formed case studies for this work. That is, that architecture be taken as a *referent*. In other words, buildings refer to – or symbolise – diverse systems, intentions, histories, meanings and cultural assumptions. Buildings are not simply coherent, individual edifices that stand rather blankly, waiting to be used. Rather, they are afforded both meaning and value by processes happening external to them – from the political machinations of city planning to the influences of historical architectural styles (Gruffudd 2003).

216 This is an important observation, and one which continues to inform some excellent
217 work by architectural geographers. Inspired by David Harvey's (1978) Marxist critique of
218 capitalism, Goss (1988, p. 396) suggested that a "crucial question [...] is how the look of the
219 city and the suburbs, the spatial variation in architectural form and style, is determined by
220 economic processes and by the conflict or cooperation of different political-economic
221 groups". In one sense, this means re-interpreting a building as commodity: an object that has
222 (and refers to) a fiscal value, is marketable, and which is entrained in one or more systems of
223 buying, selling, letting and exchange. The simple locational association between particular
224 building types (such as skyscrapers) with specific areas of the city (the central business
225 district of the world's biggest cities) is one well-known outcome of such systems (McNeill,
226 2005).

227 Yet, as Goss (1988) goes on to suggest, neither built forms, nor contemporary neo-
228 liberalism, can be reduced to 'pure' economic explanations – buildings, like other
229 commodities are far from simple objects and have complex, often contested histories (King
230 2004; Cook & Harrison, 2007). Rather, the appearance of buildings "is not reducible to a
231 price, for each building conveys a meaning as a sign, a function which confers upon it a sign
232 value – its value as a message of social difference or of status" (Goss 1988, p. 397). It is this
233 observation which highlights how economic systems surrounding buildings are nearly always
234 accompanied by something *more*, and how cultural processes are co-opted into those systems
235 in order to augment the value of a building. In the case of shopping malls, for instance,
236 architects use meticulously-planned design features (trees, architectural styles, street
237 furniture, shop frontages) in order to evoke senses of nostalgia, community, or other places
238 (Hopkins, 1990). Hence the contemporary shopping mall can appear to be a Victorian arcade,
239 a historical waterfront, or a Mexican hillside village (Goss, 1993). Like other contemporary
240 built forms, both the symbolism and the security of such buildings is tightly regulated in

order to facilitate consumption by those with the financial means to make purchases or pay the rent (Lees, 1997; Soja 2000).

Mona Domosh's (1989) study of the New York World Building – like Harvey's (1979) earlier work – explicitly outlines a geographical method and rationale for studying individual buildings. Her work places the World Building in the political-economic context of late nineteenth century New York, which had become the national economic centre of the United States (Domosh 1989). Simultaneously, she demonstrates how the city's economic elite used architectural size, form and symbolism to demonstrate their own commercial wealth *and* to display a sense of civic duty – for instance by including Renaissance arches at the World Building. Domosh's is one of many studies that stress not only how buildings are produced within particular political-economic contexts, but how, with a little care, we can 'read' their facades to understand the personal influences, intentions and cultural assumptions that architects and owners try to portray through their buildings (Lees 2001).

Despite a recent turn away from representation in cultural geography, such a concern with what Swenarton et al. (2007) term the 'politics of making' *has* – rightfully – endured both within the narrow confines of architectural geography and beyond, in the sub-discipline of architectural history (Bondi 1992; Borden & Rendell 2000; Cuthbert 2003). Indeed, earlier critiques of architectural symbolism demonstrated how architectural forms and facades were complicit in the production of highly uneven power relations in ways which the same authors can claim are relevant today (see, for instance, Harvey 2007). Perhaps the most important advance of this work has been to place individual buildings within the political, social, cultural and, indeed, personal contexts that are fundamental to their making. This impetus has inspired some of the best critical work in cultural geography as a whole (see, for instance, Ley 1993; Mitchell 2000) which has successfully exposed how buildings are complicit in the production of contested social relationships between and within different identity groups.

266

267 *'Nonrepresentational' architectural geographies: practice, materiality, affect*

268 Readers familiar with the output of (predominantly British) cultural geography over
269 the past ten years will no doubt have encountered nonrepresentational theory (see Thrift
270 2000; Nash 2000). The conceptual and now empirical diversity of work in this oeuvre – if
271 indeed it can be called such – is significant, and cannot be reviewed here (see, instead,
272 Lorimer 2008). Rather – and some of the authors included below may well rightfully disagree
273 with this move – nonrepresentational theory is a useful catch-all term for naming three recent
274 advances in the geographical study of architecture. These centre around two concerns of
275 Nigel Thrift's (2000) exposition of the term. First, that large swathes of human life are
276 irreducible either to cognitive thought or re-presentation (i.e. writing, drawing, speaking)
277 because they happen too fast for cognitive processes such as memory and intention. Second,
278 that, assuming the first concern holds, geographical research had hitherto ignored those
279 dimensions of life that were not reducible to words, numbers, or other forms of cognitive
280 evaluation and representation. Three of those dimensions concern us here: the kinds of bodily
281 practices whose complexity evades traditional forms of writing (McCormack 2008); non-
282 human 'agents' in social life – such as technologies, animals, plants and material objects –
283 whose uncertain status often complicates what it means to be 'human'; emotions and affects
284 whose impacts exceed representation (as we all know if we try to write about how we feel)
285 and which may be shared between individuals, not just felt *by* them (see Anderson 2006). It is
286 possible to briefly identify architectural geographies that typify each of these three
287 dimensions. Each takes as part of its inspiration a critique of 'architecture as referent', based
288 upon an acknowledgment that the multiple technologies and inhabitants that make up
289 buildings elude and exceed representational strategies.

First, we turn to bodily *practices*. A number of studies have sought to destabilise the idea that the meaning of built space can be simply read from its facades (Lerup 1977; Bondi 1992; Borden & Rendell 2000). Rather (indeed for many years), geographers have been interested in the meanings that inhabitants attach to places and especially buildings such as the home (Tuan 1974; Mugerauer 1994; Blunt & Dowling 2006). Such a view picks apart the idea that the production of architectural meaning ends when the plaque is unveiled on another shiny new building. It allows geographers to “explore the way that the built environment is shaped and given meaning through the active and embodied practices by which it is produced, appropriated and inhabited” (Lees 2001, p. 56; also Llewellyn 2003; Kraftl 2006a; Adey 2008). This is a call to focus not just upon what people *think* about buildings but what they *do* in them: how everyday practices such as sitting, walking-through, playing, interacting with others give life to a building – however temporarily – and, commonsensically, how they exceed concepts such as ‘symbolic meaning’ or ‘value’. Lees (2001), for instance, uses notebooks and ‘vignettes’ to capture moments of action at a public library in Vancouver, successfully dislocating the public life of the building from involved debates about the symbolism of its façade.

Second, geographers have sought to understand how starting with the *materiality* of buildings can instigate new architectural geographies. Jane Jacobs’ (2006) work challenges geographers of architecture – indeed cultural geographers more widely – to consider the component technologies, practices and ideas that allow built forms to cohere. If this sounds like a rather uncomfortable phrase, this belies the elegant simplicity of her approach. Drawing on King’s (2004) seminal work on the varied, hybrid forms of the humble bungalow in different global localities, she is concerned with “the ways in which certain architectural forms come to be in certain places [...providing] critical accounts of a wider field of ‘construction’ (sometimes material, professional and technical, but also discursive), and

315 model suggestive trajectories for how we might reconceive the making and movement of
316 built forms in space and time” (Jacobs 2006, p. 3). Hence Jacobs’ question: what *makes* the
317 objects we come to call ‘architecture’, in a particular time and space (also Gieryn 2002)?
318 Jenkins (earlier, 2002) answer is to go beyond the traditional, assumed ‘boundaries’ that
319 designate a building as a coherent object. Both Jenkins and Jacobs employ ‘Actor-Network
320 Theory’, which proposes a far more active role for non-human materials and technologies in
321 social spaces (again see Thrift 2000 for more). Rather than view objects (like buildings) as
322 fixed, one can interrogate the conjoined technologies (pipes, bricks, cabling), practices
323 (construction, inhabitation, even demolition) and regulations (laws, building codes, health
324 and safety legislations) that ensure they stand up over time. The relations between those
325 many, diverse technologies, practices and regulations change over time – buildings are
326 renovated, bricks weather, occupancy changes, and so on. So, as Jenkins (2002, p. 230) has it:
327 “instead of traditional accounts in which technology and society are separated falsely as
328 different realms, there is a heterogeneous mixing of human and nonhuman elements between
329 which, in everyday life, there is a constant negotiation”. In architectural terms, when this
330 negotiation works out in particular ways, the outcome is a particular (type of) building, such
331 as that we commonly call ‘the high-rise’ (Jacobs 2006).

332 A third strand of work has stressed how architectural spaces provoke particular
333 emotions or *affects*. Following Thrift’s (2004) claim that urban landscapes are increasingly
334 being engineered to foster or channel particular kinds of affective states (such as hope, fear or
335 passivity), geographers have sought to understand how buildings may be designed to act in
336 similar ways upon their users (Kraftl & Adey 2008; Adey 2008). This is far from an
337 environmental determinism that sees use follow form in a strict causal way; in fact this kind
338 of explanation has far more in common with Jacobs’ and Jenkins’ insistence upon the ever-
339 changing mixture of human and nonhuman elements that make up a building. Some

buildings, for instance, instil in us a pervasive feeling of homely comfort, even if they are not actually ‘homes’ (Kraftl 2006b). Herein, affective states *may* be created by architects through the use of specific materials, colours and shapes; yet the point is that the precise effects of these rather generic design frames upon inhabitants’ feelings – and upon a sense of a ‘homely atmosphere’ in a building – are the unpredictable, ongoing result of how people are using, moving through, maintaining, refurbishing, adorning and interpreting architectural spaces. The crux here, then, is to follow the kinds of affective states evoked by buildings in an ongoing sense. Indeed, as Shove (2003) has shown, the recursive everyday practices and technologies that inhabit a ‘house’ are constantly working together to engender the arguably affective experience of what it means to dwell – to make home.

Recent themes in architectural geography: mobility/stasis; the politics of architecture

Whilst the approaches in the previous section provide a set of relatively clear methodologies for the geographical study of buildings, the substantive outputs of such work present a more muddled picture. In reality, geographers’ work tends to combine two or more of these approaches; more significantly, nonrepresentational thinking has far from displaced earlier conceptual models. Indeed, some of this work demonstrates how it is difficult to separate the architecture of individual buildings from other kinds of built spaces – from landscape architectures, urban design and town planning, for instance. Some brief examples of recent research illuminate this point, where two of many key themes stand out.

Mobility/stasis

Echoing interest in the study of mobility (Cresswell 2006), geographers have shown how architectural spaces may enable, channel or constrain particular kinds of movements – both by humans and nonhumans. Merriman’s (forthcoming) work on Lawrence Halprin (a

twentieth century architect and environmental planner) demonstrates how architecture can be viewed as a kind of ‘choreographing’ endeavour, combining the design *and* use of built spaces. Halprin attempted to ‘sculpt’ freeways in order to facilitate kinds of movement through city landscapes (whether walking or driving) that would produce particular kinds of flows, vistas and emotions (also Merriman 2006, 2007; Borden 2007). Whilst others have stressed the creativity and almost utopian euphoria associated with the movement of bodies through architectural spaces (Saville 2008), Merriman’s key contribution is to insist on the attachment of movement to radical politics that would democratise planning and foster a more inclusive experience of built (city) spaces. Adey (2008) similarly calls for the emotions that impinge upon travellers’ experience of airport spaces to be thoroughly connected to the seemingly more powerful forces at play there. Hence, he argues (2008, p. 439) that “feelings, motions and emotions are predicated by a form of airport control; bodies, both physically and emotionally, are opened up to power” – from biometric technologies to the corridors and walls that channel passenger flow (also Adey 2004a, 2004b). Conversley, van Hoven and Sibley (2008) ably demonstrate how the experience of institutional *confinement* – through inmates’ understanding of prison spaces – is structured and negotiated via different regimes of surveillance. Like Adey (and also Lees 1997), their work enables geographers to understand the disciplinary and exclusionary techniques of the powerful, often complemented by the assumptions of professional architectural practice (also Imrie 2003). However, it also serves “to establish the role of vision in the *day-to-day coping strategies* of inmates, considering the prison as a site of resistance [...] and one for forming social relations” (van Hoven & Sibley 2008, p. 1015, emphasis added).

The politics of architecture

The politics (and ethics) of im/mobility suggested by the work above indicates a second strand of recent research that has refreshed what is really a longer-standing interest in the ways in which buildings refer to or produce broader politics of cultures and economies. Here, geographers have combined political-economic ‘readings’ of building with one or more of the ‘nonrepresentational’ approaches outlined above. For instance, Kraftl (2006b) shows how the affective regimes of a Steiner School produce idea(l)s of childhood that both complement and resist notions of childhood in more ‘mainstream’ contexts. Llewellyn’s (2003, 2004) ‘critical historical geographies’ of architecture combine archival work and life-history interviews to consider how the gendered assumptions of architects were negotiated by women living in inter-war social housing. Set in the same period, Gruffudd (2001) demonstrates how a symbolic reading of modernist health centres in 1930s London *also* requires an attention to the kinds of bodies and practices that ‘modern’ design would produce. As Gruffudd shows, such centres were at the vanguard of attempts to rejuvenate the ‘slums’ of London and to create forward-looking, hygienic British citizens (also Gold 1997; Worpole 2000). The implicit utopianism evident in Gruffudd’s reading is formalised elsewhere as part of a recent turn to geographies of utopia – for instance in Pinder’s (2005) scholarly analysis of radical utopian architecture and Kraftl’s (2007) mixing of the utopian effects/affects of architectural ruin (also Grosz 2001; Jenkins 2006). Elsewhere, Hagen and Ostergren (2006) combine an analysis of architecture-as-symbol with one of architecture-as-stage for human performance. They highlight how the arguably utopian imperatives of Hitler’s National Socialist party were, in the city of Nuremberg, channelled into “a carefully calculated use of space and architecture [to create] a world of ritual ceremony and rhetoric capable of generating an almost phantasmal sense of mass fascination and awe among participants and observers” (Hagen & Ostergren 2006, p. 158). Without saying as much, their approach also evokes how architectures of movement and affect are mobilised to explicit political ends.

Conclusions

The remainder of this article briefly assesses the contribution of architectural geographies to the wider cultural geographical endeavour, forwarding some critical points about the direction of the former. The first set of criticisms is broadly methodological; the second, broadly political.

Perhaps the major contribution of architectural geographies – since the Berkeley School, in fact – has been to foster critical debate about which elements of the landscape geographers are interested in, why, how those elements refer to broader political/economic/cultural process, and, indeed, what makes them what (we think, in our daily lives) they are. Whilst not a huge sub-field of cultural geography, architectural geographers have inaugurated, refined and deployed some of the key methodologies for studying landscapes, exemplified by geographers as diverse as Sauer, Harvey, Goss, Lees and Jacobs. They have also (perhaps implicitly) demonstrated that the methodological complexity attendant to studying buildings makes them such fascinating and provocative objects for study: it is precisely because architecture is constituted by such diverse fields of politics, practice and passion that buildings become the locus for ardent contestation (Jacobs et al. 2007) and sometimes extraordinary levels of popular fascination (Kraftl 2009).

Yet, despite these accomplishments, the potential of architectural geographies to challenge and extend (rather than deploy) wider nonrepresentational approaches in geography has remained largely unrealised. Taking embodied practices of inhabitation as an example, it could be argued that there exist *more* critical and *more* performance-based geographies of architecture which are, for better or worse, not explicitly *about* architecture *per se*. Here, one can cite Laurier and Philo's (2006) involving exposition of daily practices and interactions in cafes using video stills, or McCormack's (2004, 2005) evocative diagramming of eurythmic

dance movements within the spaces of a corridor, or Paterson's (2006) insistence on acknowledging haptic registers of touch might move 'nonrepresentational' approaches firmly beyond a latent reliance on the visual (also Merriman forthcoming). Cross-fertilisation between these approaches and the geographies of architecture is clearly beginningⁱ, yet, arguably, architectural geographers could have a greater role to play in instituting methodological innovation by cultural geographers.

More controversially, and despite the above comments, a second critique (or provocation) is that many contemporary architectural geographers remain disproportionately concerned with the methodological import of their work. This is certainly *not* to say that their work has no further, substantive contribution, nor, as indicated above, that the political imperatives of the 'new' cultural geography have been lost – for, those imperatives still inform some of the most groundbreaking work in this area (Lees 2001; Jacobs 2006). Indeed, arguably, some of the examples in the previous section provide a sturdy riposte to the charge that nonrepresentational geographies require a sharpened critical edge (see Lorimer 2008). Yet – and I include my own work here – an emphasis upon methodology dilutes the broader political-economic, cultural, social (and even environmental) messages that architectural geographers might offer to both academics and their wider publics.

The previous point might provoke three ways in which to sharpen the 'critical' edge that architectural geographers have been seeking for the past decade. Firstly, there is an implicit but real danger of demonising architectural practitioners with constant criticism about the insidious ways in which they frame spaces to exclude disadvantaged social groups, or ignore the diverse exigencies of daily inhabitation. If Swenarton et al.'s (2007) collection is anything to go by, architects themselves are beginning to consider (indeed some have considered for many years) the complex ethical and/or political decisions they make when working in contested cultural contexts (Alread 2007; Harisson 2007; also Lerup 1977;

Hughes & Sadler 2000; Thomas 2005). Meanwhile, recent research has acknowledged that architects and local authority practitioners *are* personally, politically driven to foster the participation of users in design but often lack the expertise, time and finance to do so (den Besten et al. 2008). Amidst recent calls to open the ‘black box’ of architectural practice, it could be acknowledged that architects themselves engage in their own processes of self-reflection, and that further collaborative work with architectural practitioners might inform this process.

Secondly, in terms of the relevance of architectural geographies to wider publics, academics might more *clearly articulate* how they might inform and/or evaluate activism around contested architectural spaces (Jacobs et al. 2007), or instigate critical policy readings of *existing* – as well as historical – architectural programmes such as current, nationwide hospital, school and ‘sustainable community’ projects in the UK (Gesler et al. 2004; den Besten et al. forthcoming). Such an articulation might well be informed by the radical politics of the ‘new’ cultural approach to architecture; yet it might well also be achieved by cross-fertilising recent, nonrepresentational, architectural geographies with recent attempts by other geographers to engage with their wider publics in more diverse ways (Ward 2007). It is of course likely that at least some architectural geographers already do engage diverse publics; however, the methods, benefits and challenges of doing so have not yet been discussed in an academic context.

Thirdly, it could be quite accurately argued that two omissions characterise geographical research on architecture. On the one hand, architectural geographers have predominantly focussed upon case studies found in the Minority Global North, although the globally-inflected nature of King’s (2004) work and a handful of case studies from South and South-East Asia (Olds 1997; Bunnell 1999) run against this trend. In particular, architectural geographies might inform temporal and spatial analyses of housing, ‘slum’ clearance and

architectural process (O'Hare et al. 1998; O'Hare & Barke 2002) in far more diverse contexts than they do at present. On the other hand, critical geographies of sustainability and Low-Impact Development recognise work on the geographies of architecture, yet – in line with the above critiques – make the charge that “much of it avoids making the clear political claims that are so needed in this age of ecological modernisation” (Pickerill & Maxey 2009 p. 3). Interestingly, this charge can equally be aimed at sustainable architects and critics themselves – only recently have they begun to move away from a concern with technology and aesthetics to consider broader questions about the assumptions, beliefs and political goals that underpin sustainable architecture (Guy 2002; Ole-Jensen 2002; Bennetts et al. 2002; Kraftl forthcoming). There is a diverse but gathering emphasis upon environmentally-sound design in architecture; equally, there has been a groundswell of interest in radical political ecologies and social-environmental transitions within human geography (Swyngedouw & Heynen 2003; Loftus 2009) that might offer complementary conceptual support. Julie Cidell's (2009, forthcoming) recent work on the political ecologies and professional practices of 'green' building in the United States offer some examples of how this work might proceed. Hence, the intersection of these practical and conceptual trajectories would appear to be just one potential starting-point for substantive future research on the geographies of architecture.

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ⁱ One example of such advances emerged in a diverse and engaging session organised by Peter Merriman and Jane Jacobs at the *Association of American Geographers* conference, Boston, 2008. Their session, 'Practiced Architectures', included papers that involved the use of diagramming, mapping and video.