

**Part III**

**THE WORLD CITY  
IN THE WORLD**

## GROUNDING THE GLOBAL

Local places all around the world these days claim to be global. It is the aim of city governments on every continent. It is, however, a claim that, if taken seriously, hints at a problem with some of the dominant imaginaries of local and global. It also, potentially, points towards a very different politics.

So often, and in spite of the fact of ritual denunciations of such practices, 'local' and 'global' in discourses both intellectual and political are counterposed. In one version of this counterposition, the local is the seat of authenticity – real, grounded, the sphere of everyday life – with the global functioning in contrast as an abstract dimension of space. In other versions the local is the produced outcome, the global the sphere of the forces that produce. So, on this reading, the local is a product of the global and, in counterposition, the global is figured as always emanating from elsewhere. We saw, in Part I, some London examples of this – the global imagined as always arriving from beyond even at the same time (in the same paragraph) as global citydom was

being proclaimed. This is a manoeuvre that obscures the real geographies at issue: 'neoliberal globalization conjures up the image of an undifferentiated process without clearly demarcated geopolitical agents or target populations; it conceals the highly concentrated sources of power from which it emanates and fragments the majorities which it impacts' (Coronil, 2000, p. 369).<sup>1</sup>

This is a geographical imaginary which can be, and is, mobilised by both the political right and the political left. At its crudest it can function as support for the rejection of any arrivals from 'outside', be that in-migrants from the global South, perhaps, in the case of the political right, or multinational corporations in the case of the political left. At its most general it can buttress a political cosmology in which the very terminology of 'localness' carries with it an implication of goodness and warmth. Further, the understanding of the local place as *product* (at the receiving end) of global forces can slide very easily into an imaginary of the local as *victim* of the global. And this in turn can lend itself to a politics in which the aim is to *defend* the local against the global. This is a geographical imaginary with a host of roots and resonances. It draws upon a widely understood distinction between space as a modern, scientific and universal dimension and place as the locus of tradition and specificity. It is heavily interwoven with a differentiation between agencies, and even genders. As Escobar writes, 'the global is associated with space, capital, history and agency while the local, conversely, is linked to place, labor and tradition – as well as with women, minorities, the poor and, one might add, local cultures' (2001, pp. 155–6). It works, too, from a background assumption of space as always already territorialised.

There is a host of ways in which such an imaginary is open to criticism. First of all there is the in-principle argument that it tends to harbour a spatial fetishism in which

particular geographical forms or scales are understood to carry a given political content – for some: local good, global bad; for others: the other way around. It is not spatial form in itself, but the particularities of the social construction of that form in any specific instance, that should be the focus of political evaluation. This will be evident in what follows. Second, in empirical practice, the new geographies of globalisation give the lie to all that (even if older imperial geographies could not). This is pre-eminently the case in a place like London. In such a place it is not only that the local is not simply a product of the global, but that the global itself is produced in local places. This is an argument that has been made forcefully by Sassen (1991, 1998, 2000). The 'global' forces that have their effects in London by no means always have their origins elsewhere. Manifestly, this local place is not purely a 'victim' of the global. Here, too, it is clear that the frequent equation between the local and the everyday simply cannot hold, and this is the case in a thousand – though varying – ways of most groups within this place. It is evident, too, in the trading and the transactions, in the flows of products and of cultures, that the global is as material, and practised, and grounded, as the local is usually singled out to be. In a place like London it is plain that a serious politics cannot restrict itself to a defence of the local against the global.

Such a politics needs to address the global positioning of places. If space is conceptualised relationally, as the product of practices and flows, engagements, connections and disconnections, as the constantly being produced outcome of mobile social relations, then local places are specific nodes, articulations, within this wider power-geometry. It is this relational constitution that renders so patently inadequate that rhetoric of regions and countries as autonomous entities, able to be held up for approbation or disapproval for

'their' success or failure. Moreover, different places are formed of *distinct* nodes of relations, distinct positionings, within the wider global spaces. Each place is a different articulation of relations and connections, in some of which it will be in a position of relative control, influence and power, and in others of which it will be comparatively powerless and subordinated. The degrees of 'victimhood' to forces emanating from elsewhere will, in consequence, vary. In some places there may well be some purchase, at the local level, on so-called global forces – some possibility for active intervention.

That spatial imaginary in which the local must always be defended from the incursions of the global has, on the left at least, developed largely in situations which are on the receiving end of forces that seem to arrive unwanted from elsewhere and to bring havoc in their wake. Such places may be in the global South (see Escobar, 2001) or in shattered manufacturing communities in the countries of nineteenth-century industrialisation. Yet even in such places important work has been under way to counter that 'victimhood' relation between local and global. Thus, as Gibson-Graham writes, 'Globalization discourse situates the local (and thus all of us) in a place of subordination, as "the other within" of the global order. At worst, it makes victims of localities and robs them of economic agency and self-determination' (2003, p. 50), and she urges us to 'imagine what it would mean, and how unsettling it would be to all that is now in place, if the locality were to become the active subject of its economic experience' (ibid.). In an attempt to actualise this imagination she develops what she calls 'an ethics of the local' (the title of her article). Here it is the inevitable impossibility and incompleteness of any single global order ('the local cannot be fully interior to the global'; ibid.) that provides the necessary room for manoeuvre: 'Such an ethics is grounded in the necessary failure of a global order, which is

the negative condition of an affirmation of locality' (ibid.). The approach adopted builds on Foucault's notion of self-formation as an 'ethical subject' (Foucault, 1985, p. 28) and of 'modes of subjectivation' through which such a subject is supported. This is a research project thoroughly embedded in political engagement, in the Latrobe Valley in south-eastern Australia and in the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts in the USA.<sup>2</sup> 'In both these regions, globalization sets the economic agenda – we are all being asked to become better subjects of capitalist development (though the path to such a becoming does not readily present itself) and to subsume ourselves more thoroughly to the global economy' (Gibson-Graham, 2003, p. 56). As Gibson-Graham summarises:

In the discourse of globalization, the economy is something that does things to us and dictates our contours of possibility. It is not the product of our performance and creativity. Globalization discourse represents localities as economically dependent, not so much actors as acted upon, receiving the effects of economic forces as though they were inevitable. In the face of this representation, the urgent ethical and political project involves radically repositioning the local subject with respect to the economy. (Ibid., p. 54)

In this case, the radical repositioning concerns the assertion of the significance of other social relations of production as against the presumed total dominance of capitalism. Moreover, these local places are globally positioned in a nexus of relations that sets them as more (if not, as Gibson-Graham so cogently argues, entirely) on the receiving end than as leading protagonists in the global capitalist economy. But what of other places? The contrast with the global positioning of London, and of all those other places claiming and/or aiming to be 'world cities' too, is clear.

The irony is that in the United Kingdom the dominant discourses work precisely in the other direction. A good number of UK cities – Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Liverpool – and regions have in their time been local places dominant within global imperial relations. Currently, however, they are set within, and are internally constituted largely through, power-geometries that position them in comparatively subordinate ways within the wider economy. Compared with London and the South-East they have more claim on that refrain of ‘local place as victim of the global’; they have relatively little relational power. Some parts of those regions and nations more resemble the Latrobe and Pioneer valleys of which Gibson-Graham writes. And yet, as was seen in Part II, it is these regions that are being urged to stand on their own feet and compete. With so little room for manoeuvre and potential leverage, it is they that are being instructed to bootstrap themselves into renewed growth. In contrast, London and the South-East are just accepted as having to grow, as being unable to resist the global forces that heap upon them ever increasing wealth (for some) and economic activity (of a particular kind).

London, evidently, is precisely one of those places that are in a position of relative power within the global economy. It is one of those places in which the current form of the global has been imagined and through which it is constituted. The relational constitution is crucial. My concern here is to stress the political importance of recognising this. In places like London it is more important even than elsewhere to move beyond an imaginary in which the local is victim of the global. It is also important for reasons that are different from those in other places. For the assertion of local agency in a global context, here, arises not only from the need to reinvigorate and reinvent the economy *within*, but also from the need to recognise this place’s implication in the production

of the global itself, and what that means for other places (such, indeed, as the Latrobe and Pioneer valleys). The fundamental point here is that there is a need to escape from that spatial imaginary which forever leads, within the context of the production of neoliberal globalisation, to the exoneration of the local place. Rather what is needed is a politics that is prepared not just to defend but also to *challenge* the nature of the local place, its role within the wider power-geometries. What is needed is a politics that recognises, rather than persistently deflects, the role of the local in the production and the maintenance of the global.

In the days after the bombings in July 2005, the defiant celebration of London’s identity focused on that aspect of London-global-city that is its housing of so much in the way of difference. As Gilroy has urged us more fully to recognise, there is in the cities of the UK, and especially in London, a lively and assertive ‘convivial culture’, a demotic cosmopolitanism, which thrives in the face of that other national narrative, of ‘post-imperial melancholia’. It is a street-level reinvention of identity. It was these ‘chaotic pleasures of the convivial postcolonial urban world’ (2004, p. 167) that were at the centre of the self-conception of London in the late summer of 2005 and which run as a strong current of identification in the city more generally. Gilroy, with a fine appreciation of the political significance of recognising and working with multiple trajectories and specificity, and with a refusal to convene such coexisting specificities into temporal sequence, writes in the final paragraph of his book:

The recent history of Britain shows that it does not lag behind the United States in racial politics but has embarked on an altogether different path toward the goal of multicultural democracy. . . . I hope it does not sound melodramatic

to say that the future of Europe depends upon what can now be made of that legacy. (Ibid., pp. 167–8)

Robins, not dissimilarly, and evoking London as ‘that great provocation to the clarity and coherence of British national culture’ (2001, p. 77), also argues that this aspect of its internal identity can/should have wider implications:

the point about London is precisely that it is *not* a nation – but a city, a metropolis. And, as such, it allows us to reflect on the cultural consequences of globalization from an other than national perspective . . . to . . . open up some alternative cultural and political possibilities . . . I would argue that now, in the context of the new order of cultural complexity being brought about by the processes of globalization, London provides a crucial intellectual framework for British people to re-think and re-describe their relation to culture and identity. (Ibid., pp. 86–7)

All of this resonates too with Ken Livingstone’s and others’ reflections on London after the bombing: ‘This city typifies . . . a future where we grow together and we share and we learn from each other’ (GLA, 2005b). It is an argument that, while crucial to any analysis of London-world-city, is by no means unique to it. Writing of cities in general, Bender asks: ‘Might the city – in its metropolitan form, acknowledging its embeddedness in structures larger than itself – again be the place and means for thinking oneself into politics and acting politically in the circumstances of our time?’ (1999, pp. 37–8). What this points to more generally is an aspect of the wider political potential of the negotiation of place.

All of these understandings figure local place as open to the wider world, as articulations of a multitude of trajectories. They are understandings of place as generous and hospitable.

They are definitively not about any closure of the local to the global, nor about a figuring of ‘local’ as cosy and good against a global as out there and threatening. Can such an understanding of a wider global positioning be extended to that other incarnation of London as global city – as inventor and protagonist of deregulation and privatisation for instance? And can the relations which connect to that wider world be traced back to their ‘other ends’ elsewhere?

In that ‘elsewhere’ both inequality and absolute poverty are increasing. In 2005, the annual *Human development report* produced by the United Nations documented, alongside some small achievements, ‘an unprecedented reversal’: eighteen countries, with a combined population of 460 million, registered lower scores on the human development index than in 1990 (Elliott, 2005). ‘This year’, said the report, ‘marks a crossroads.’ Replicating the expansion of the small group of very rich in London, at the world level the richest 500 people own more wealth than the poorest 416 million. Even some of the poorest countries are seeing the emergence of a stratum of super-rich (Kundnani, 2006). Such inequality, and absolute poverty, are intimately connected to the tensions within London that were analysed in Part I, and to the inequalities there as well. This is not a claim for simple, singular causes – the forces behind the situation described by the UN are multiple and complex. However, a recognition of that complexity should not be used to deny the connections altogether. ‘London’, through the terms of its recent reinvention, is implicated in this.

London ‘has reinvented itself’ with and as an integral part of the neoliberal model in its stark Anglo-Saxon variant. It is not the case that this ‘neoliberalism’ is some undifferentiated force that has swept all before it, nor that all city governments everywhere have interiorised neoliberalism into city policy and used their urban bases as laboratories for

neoliberal experiments, as some would have it. But London's role in this global model is undeniable. Its acceptance of the pressure to compete with other places for global-city status is in itself a reinforcement of neoliberal ways (Peck and Tickell, 2002) and has as one of its outcomes the need to attract and provide for an already more than comfortable elite. As the Introduction noted, the question should at least be asked as to how much of London's current 'success' is a product of the selfsame forces that result in such poverty elsewhere.

This is not a question asked, for instance, by the current *London plan* (GLA, 2004b). Having established a general context in which London is in the grip of wider forces over which it appears to have no say, the global dominance of the City as a financial centre is presented as a simple achievement. There is little questioning of what is actually *done* here, or of what this city as a financial centre actually represents, in terms of a shift in economic doctrines and the establishment of a new class hegemony. There is no following of relations around the world to ask what they are responsible for. There is no questioning of any possible connection between this financial power and inequalities and poverty elsewhere. Indeed, on this issue its analysis of 'relations with elsewhere' is pervaded rather by anxiety about *competition* with other places.

There is a host of policies emanating from this elite, and upon which London's growth now seems so firmly predicated, that would merit interrogation in this way. Among the causes of the consequences, in poverty and inequality around the world, for which neoliberalism has been most held responsible, the deregulation and 'the financialisation of everything' stand out as being the most critically debated (Harvey, 2005; Held, 2005). It is precisely these which have been central to London's revival. Yet there is no wide public

political debate about the global implications of this aspect of its world citydom. There is also a host of more subtle and particular ramifications. For instance, as was seen in Part I, the effect through the housing market of the presence of the very rich, and indeed of the growth of professional strata more generally, has been to contribute to the difficulty of London's reproducing itself. Public-sector workers and lower-paid private-sector workers are hard to recruit. One result of this is that London is seriously dependent for its normal functioning on labour from elsewhere (see chapter 2). Some of these workers come from other parts of the country – some of the implications of this have been explored in Part II. But many others come from Eastern Europe and the global South. London, just to keep itself going, is dependent, for instance, on nurses from Asia and Africa. These countries can ill-afford to lose such workers, and they have paid for their training. So India, Sri Lanka, Ghana, South Africa are subsidising the reproduction of London. It is a perverse subsidy, flowing from poor to rich. It is, moreover, a flow that is both fuelled and more difficult to address as a result – precisely – of the increasing commercialisation/privatisation of health services at both ends (Mensah, Mackintosh and Henry, 2005). This raises fraught and complex political questions (see chapter 10), yet it is not even at present a live political debate among Londoners. Even as Londoners, rightly, celebrate the arrival of such workers as part of the great ethnic mix, they (we) do not pause to follow those lines of connection out around the rest of the world to enquire about the effects they are having elsewhere.

Gilroy applauds the vitality of the emerging convivial culture as a challenge to the heretofore nationally pervasive mood of 'post-imperial melancholia', and this is absolutely right. But the financial City and the constellation of interests and social forces that surrounds it are by no means

melancholic. Those who are at the heart of (this aspect of) London's claim to global citydom are triumphant and celebratory, as they pick up and build upon the threads of an older imperial order. By trading on long-established inherited links and connections, and through that discomfiting complicity whereby even the old materialities, of wood-panelling and dress, can be reworked as heritage-based reassurance, a new imperial order has taken hold. And London (a part of London) is once again at the centre of it.

London (and the same could be said of many cities) is no place in which 'the local' can be simply defended against the global. Rather, in consideration of the facts of the global, it is more appropriate to *challenge* the nature of (some aspects of) this local place. Likewise, in all those places where contests are at present under way against proposals to reinvent them as global cities, the challenge could be made not only on the grounds of what that will do to the local place itself (the policy focus on new elites, the promise of trickle-down, the destruction of older 'non-conforming' areas), but also on the grounds of questioning the nature of the role/identity/effects of such global citydom, were it to be achieved, on the rest of the planet. This is a reimagination that demands thinking beyond the normal territorialisation of electoral politics, so inadequate in a world of flows. It requires a more outward-looking politics that seeks to address that wider geography of place and to ponder what might be thought of as the global responsibilities of (some) local places.

## 9

IDENTITY, PLACE,  
RESPONSIBILITY

It is nowadays increasingly accepted, certainly on the left broadly defined, that there is a need to be severely critical of the old British imperial order. Indeed the dawning realisation of some of the horrors that it had entailed has been, Gilroy argues, one of the elements contributing to the post-imperial melancholia. There have been some 'apologies' for past actions, there are ongoing arguments over restitution, and there is a variety of concrete (and often contested) attempts at recognition of complicity, acceptance of implication. At a civic, urban, level the Liverpool Museum addressing that city's past involvement in the slave trade is just one example.

One of the notions that arises here is that of extended responsibility – that is, a responsibility that is not restricted to the immediate or the local. In the case of the old imperial order, the crucial dimension of extension is temporal; the question concerns the nature of present responsibility for actions committed (by others) in the past. One way of addressing this question has been suggested by Gatens and

Lloyd in their thought-provoking book *Collective imaginings* (1999). Their concern is to think about the nature of collective responsibility, in present-day Australia, for white Australians' past actions towards Aboriginal society. The notion of responsibility they proffer has extension (in the sense outlined above) and is relational, in the sense that it derives from constitutive relations with others. They write, in relation to their own concern: 'In understanding how our past continues in our present we understand also the demands of responsibility for the past we carry with us, the past in which our identities are formed. We are responsible for the past not because of what we as individuals have done, but because of what we are' (1999, p. 81). This understanding of responsibility, in other words, poses it as deriving from those relations through which identity is constituted. A first question, then, is: can this extension of responsibility over the temporal dimension be paralleled in the spatial and in the present? For just as 'our past continues in our present' so also is the spatially distant implicated in our 'here'. Is it possible, then, to draw on this notion of responsibility in the context of a local place such as London in the *new* imperial order *now*?

Gatens and Lloyd's conception of responsibility depends upon an understanding of the relational construction of identity. The reworking of concepts of identity, away from the billiard-ball self-constitution of the isolated individual towards an open, processual and mutually constitutive understanding that has characterised social and cultural studies in recent years, has been paralleled in geography by a reconceptualisation of the identity of place. Such a reconceptualisation necessarily entails that the spatiality, as well as the temporality, of identities and subjectivities is something of consequence. Identities are, constitutively, elements within a wider, configurational, distributed, geography. And

that raises a second question based on Gatens and Lloyd's proposition: the question of the real geography of relations through which any particular identity is established and maintained. For it is from those relations that would spring a geography of responsibility.

Insofar as this spatiality of identity has received attention, the focus has been overwhelmingly on the internal structuring of identity. There has been much consideration of the internal multiplicities, the decenterings, the fragmentations of identity and so forth.<sup>1</sup> And such arguments have been important theoretically and politically in grappling with issues, for instance, of essentialism. Likewise, in relation to the identity of place, the emphasis has been on exposing and exploring the hybridities within, the global within the local, the issue of hospitality, the strangers within the gate (London's internal mixity). And that, too, is important, both intellectually and politically.

There is, however, another side to the geography of the relational construction of identity, of a global sense of place. For there are also the relations that run *outwards*, the wider geographies through which identities are constituted. The strangers that remain *without* the gates. To consider these would be to translate Gatens and Lloyd's concept of responsibility from extension in the temporal dimension to extension in the spatial. It raises the necessity for a wider, distantiated, politics of place.<sup>2</sup>

However, acknowledging responsibility for present wrongs, including those distant in space rather than in time, poses rather different challenges. Most evidently, it involves not just compensation for positions that are already unequal but at least some degree of address to the *production* of those positions. And this is in some senses a tougher claim. Yet temporal and spatial should not be counterposed. It is central to Gilroy's argument, for instance, that it is necessary

more fully to recognise the iniquities of history, and to use that recognition in order to go beyond them in the present (see also Hall, 2000). And he too, as in the case of arguments here specifically about London, is concerned with that shift from the old imperialism to the new:

Instead of reinflating imperial myths and instrumentalizing imperial history, I contend that frank exposure to the grim and brutal details of my country's colonial past should be made useful: first, in shaping the character of its emerging multicultural relations [that is, in the terms of the argument here, its internal identity], and second, beyond its borders, by being set to work as an explicit challenge to the revised conceptions of sovereignty that have been invented to accommodate the dreams of the new imperial order [that is, in the terms of the argument here, the 'external' relations constitutive of identity]. The revisionist ways of approaching nationality, power, law, and the history of imperial domination are, of course, fully compatible with the novel geopolitical rules elaborated after 9/11. They have also been designed to conform to the economic machinery of weightless capitalism [so-called] and work best when the substance of colonial history and the wounds of imperial domination have been mystified or, better still, forgotten. (Gilroy, 2004, p. 3)

It is precisely on a mixture of mystification and forgetting that the central plank of London's reinvention, and this aspect of its current claim to world citydom, has been built. Perhaps a greater recognition of that past could now form one way into an acknowledgement of our extended and relational responsibilities for the spatially distant present. Gilroy's call is for, precisely, a greater commitment to 'translocalism', a 'translocal solidarity'.

Yet London's identity, its ability to be and continually to become what it is, is built on far more than the 'finance and business services' and the neoliberal constellation at the centre of the new imperium. Indeed, even in simply economic terms its identity is above all 'diverse' (Part I). And the relations upon which it feeds go far beyond the economic, to take in all aspects of the cultural, social and political. In obvious material terms London's existence depends on daily supplies from around the planet and, at the other end of the process as it were – its production of waste, its emission of carbon – its footprint is also geographically extensive. 'Ordinary Londoners', as well as the significantly wealthy, share in the responsibilities imposed by this identity. The 2005 UN *Human development report*, as well as highlighting the extremes ('the richest 500 people', and so forth), also points out that Europeans spend more each year on perfume than the \$7 billion needed to provide 2.6 billion people with access to clean water.

Young has addressed this more ordinary implication in an article subtitled 'sweatshops and political responsibility' (2003; see also Young, 2004). Again the concern here is with responsibility at a distance, and in this case the dimension of extension is explicitly spatial – the immediate relevance for her is that geography which holds together consumers in the United States of America and workers in sweatshops in the global South. Young's concern is to move, as she puts it, 'from guilt to solidarity' (her main title). In the case of guilt, she argues, if some are culpable others are thereby absolved. However, in the case of political responsibility, this is not so; there is no isolatable perpetrator. Rather there is a chain of ordinary actions: 'many harms, wrongs, and injustices have no isolatable perpetrator: they result from the participation of millions of people and institutions' (2003, p. 41). Young does not tie responsibility to identity as do Gatens and

Lloyd. She specifies it, rather, in terms of participation in structural processes – those structural processes that lead from daily lives (in London or any other Western city, for example) to global inequality.

However, in this distinction between guilt and political responsibility, Young engages with the different implications of extension in space on the one hand and extension in time on the other. Guilt, she argues, is usually taken to refer to an action or event that has reached its end. For that reason it tends to be backward looking; it is about the past. 'Political responsibility looks forward rather than backward. Blame and praise are primarily backward looking judgments. They refer to an action or event assumed to have reached its end. The purpose of assigning responsibility as fault or liability [the guilt model] is usually to sanction, punish, or exact compensation. . . . Political responsibility doesn't reckon debts, but aims at results' (2003, p. 41). On this understanding, accepting responsibility for the old Empire would be very different, and separate, from acknowledging complicity in the new. However, past and present are intimately connected and in, at least, two ways. First, Gatens and Lloyd's approach to responsibility through identity avoids any possibility that the past can be dispensed with through sanction, punishment or compensation. On their formulation, the past (in their case the past treatment of Aborigines) cannot be rendered into a closed book, and this is so not because the maltreatment continues into the present. Rather, the issue is not closed and they/we are still implicated (responsible) because those past actions, by others, are part of what makes us what we are. In just the same way, the 'old Empire' of the past has provided a foundation for the reinvention of London as new global city. Second, as Gilroy argues, any present attempt to build on that convivial culture, and support the incipient demotic cosmopolitanism, which in London as perhaps

nowhere else exists in intimate relation with one hearth of the new empire, will be greatly strengthened by a 'frank exposure to the grim and brutal details of my country's colonial past' (2004, p. 3). Can that vibrant, ordinary, cosmopolitanism that now opposes the post-imperial melancholia, also oppose – through acknowledgement of its own position within it – the new imperialism?

There is, moreover, one final step in this argument about responsibility, and one which draws the street-level convivial culture itself into the structure of implication. Young argues that there is still a further distinction between responsibility over temporal distance and responsibility in the spatially distanced present.<sup>3</sup> This is that reparations for past events single out those events as having been 'abnormal'. 'In a blame or liability conception of responsibility, what counts as a wrong is generally conceived as a deviation from a baseline. Implicitly, we assume a normal background situation that is morally acceptable, if not ideal' (2003, p. 41). 'Political responsibility', on the other hand, 'questions "normal" conditions' (ibid.). 'A concept of political responsibility in relation to structural injustices, on the other hand, doesn't focus on harms that deviate from the normal and acceptable, but rather brings into question the "normal" background conditions' (ibid.). The identity of London is constructed and maintained through the same relations (the 'normal' workings of neoliberal globalisation) that produce the conditions described by the UN *Human development report*. It is 'normality' here that should also be put under question.

'Local place', then, can be one potential basis for political organisation around responsibilities of this sort. A critique of local place as simply defensible space, as exclusivist, bounded, romanticised, does not imply that place is not a potential basis for political organising. Indeed, as we shall see, place-based politics as suggested here in itself both

reinforces, and plays on, the notion of place as *unbounded* and potentially sparks new lines of (productive) internal debate. What is being suggested here is a networked, practised, internationalism. It does not necessarily stem from abstract and/or universalistic claims (for instance about 'humanity in general'). Yet it definitively goes beyond the local; and it challenges, by reworking, the notion of 'particularism' (Featherstone, 2005). It is a local internationalism that challenges the dominant geographical imaginary which understands the world in terms of scales and nested hierarchies. This relates, again, to bigger issues about politics and agency. The view of the world that understands its politics solely in terms of big binary divisions (solely us versus them) is more than likely, also, to harbour an implicit geographical imaginary of global versus local, and to associate 'us' and 'local'. It is a manoeuvre that both positions us/the local outside the dominant structures of power (the exoneration of the local), occluding the inevitable implication in these structures that is addressed by Gatens, Lloyd and Young, and closes down the space of political agency. A more complex geography of politics opens up both. The local place becomes one (though only one) potential arena for action to change the global. This is, moreover, a complete reformulation of the usual scalar notion of 'local politics' (often in Europe encapsulated in the term 'subsidiarity') in which the nation deals with big, national and international, issues, while local areas are told (patronisingly, for these issues are presumed not to be important – though they are) that they can get on with the positioning of bus stops.<sup>4</sup> Local internationalism ignores such hierarchical presumptions. It cuts right across the scalar geographical imagination that supports the discourse of subsidiarity. Local authorities should have their own 'foreign politics', in the sense of enquiring into and taking responsibility for the wider implications of

their places. And this is a matter not only for local states but for local places in a wider and more grass-roots sense. This could contribute to a more grounded (and alternative) globalisation that based itself firmly in the material juxtapositions of place while at the same time insisting on an acknowledgement of openness. Moreover *within* place the same point applies: the issue is not only (though it is most importantly) one of challenging the big battalions – in London, the financial City for instance. 'Ordinary Londoners' are implicated too.

Moreover, rather than taking the identity of place for granted, as a given, as do so many campaigns to defend the local, this kind of local politics is more about throwing up the challenge: what *is* this place? In that sense, as in Gibson-Graham's rather different settings, it is about an assertion of local relational agency, and the question of an ethics of place, in an actively inventive manner. Moreover the issue of place identity can both bring an immediately available focus and tie in what can seem very general claims to particular practised relations. It can be rooted in the realities of a recognisable interdependence. It can provide a *locus* for campaigns and one that, on the arguments above, can move away from the ground of individualised culpability towards the terrain of collective responsibility. And if cities are crucial to neoliberalism, as is so often argued, then battles precisely over this role must be potentially significant to any challenge to its hegemony (see also Mitchell, 2004). The politics and economies of cities, and social struggles over them, are of crucial importance in defining the kind of world that is currently under construction.

This does, however, raise the question of the relation between the identity of place and the identity of individuals living within that place. That is to say: what are our responsibilities 'as Londoners'? – a question that can and should be asked about one's relationship to any place. Globalisation

itself has made that question both more complicated and more urgent. Indeed the potential deracination that may be a product of mobility, especially where that mobility is differentiated socially, can both dramatically change the balance of forces in any negotiation of place and pose challenges to any notion of local democracy at all. The mobile gentrifiers are frequently accused of having no commitment to places which may figure as being no more than temporary bases in their globally peripatetic lives (and this in spite of the power which their very mobility – their ability to move on – can lend them). But the point is a general one. In this regard, I was startled, and interested, to be challenged at a recent conference. I had been presenting an argument like the one here, about the potential responsibilities of Londoners, and had identified myself as implicated in this responsibility. A thoughtful hand went up: 'But to me you're not a Londoner at all. You come from the North. *I've* lived in London all my life.'<sup>5</sup> Now, I harbour a real scepticism about some arguments for a strong relation between place and personal identity, especially where they depend upon longevity and rootedness rather than upon the more active notion of participation in the negotiation of place (see Massey, 2005). This in no way denies the feelings, and the political responses, of long-term residents caught up in the crossfire of globalisation (see chapter 2). However, as Livingstone said on that July day in 2005, people come here 'to call themselves Londoners', and indeed *most* 'Londoners' were either born elsewhere or retain some, often quite strong, threads of attachment to other places too. There is a weave of multiple allegiances that defies an either/or characterisation and which recalls that complex and intersecting notion of multiculturalism proposed by Saghal and Yuval-Davis (2006). Indeed this very dispersedness of attachment seems to be one of the characteristics contributing to the identity of the place itself. And, as we have seen (in

the Introduction), pollsters find that a goodly part of this heterogeneous population do indeed identify as 'Londoners'. This returns us to that '*internal* geography' of relational identities, which is always multiple and hybrid. Not only is London's identity heterogeneous in this way but so also are the place-related aspects of identity of those who live within it – there is some part of our identities that is as Londoners. For after all, and following the argument set out at the beginning of this chapter, some part of what enables us to be what we are comes from the fact that we live here.

Furthermore, the fact that I am also a Northerner, and that so many Londoners are also of somewhere else as well, begins to change that question, alluded to in the Introduction, of 'where does London end?' Or maybe it is to pose the question in a different way. The imagination should not be of boundaries drawn ever wider, of ever bigger containers, or indeed of a new geography of scales. Rather what is at issue is a more dispersed geography, of relations and practices, and maybe even of identities: a different geography of identities within, as part of, globalisation.

Moreover what is at issue here is not only the way that the geographies of identity may be changed within globalisation, but also the *implications* of identity within that context. In identifying myself as a Londoner in an argument such as this, identity is serving not as the *assertion of a claim*, but as the *acknowledgement of a responsibility*. And that is very different. Perhaps such a reworking of identity/place/responsibility could feed into the extension beyond the borders of Gilroy's convivial culture into his translocal solidarity, his 'cosmopolitan solidarity from below and afar' (2004, p. 89). Maybe also it could add another aspect to that 'resubjectivation' that Gibson-Graham sees as essential to developing an ethics of place, extending it now also into an ethics of place beyond place.

## 10

A POLITICS OF PLACE  
BEYOND PLACE

It is by no means impossible to envisage, in quite practical political terms, what such an outward-looking politics of place might look like. Indeed, in what follows there are examples of the implementation precisely of such a politics. They all defy the resignation that derives from that feeling of entrapment in bigger forces. They all take these forces on, each doing so in different ways, each of them presenting a challenge to the hegemonic imagination, whether that be of globalisation, or of local place, or indeed of simply what is possible. Each of them, in its own way, addresses that question: what does this place stand for?

In chapter 8 the question was raised of the dependence of London on, for instance, nurses from countries in the global South. This is a situation by no means specific to London, even within the United Kingdom. Indeed, the Medact project that was referred to in chapter 8 (Mensah, Mackintosh and Henry, 2005) was concerned with flows between *national* health systems (we shall return to this point). Such problems

of the social reproduction of place are, however, particularly acute in global cities. Thus, Smith, writing of New York, recounts four events that 'succinctly captured some of the central contours of the new neoliberal urbanism' (2002, p. 427). One of these concerned the social reproduction of the labour force:

in 1998, the New York City Department of Education announced that it faced a shortage of mathematics teachers and as a result was importing forty young teachers from Austria. Even more extraordinary, in a city with more than two million native Spanish speakers, a shortage of Spanish teachers was to be filled by importing teachers from Spain. Annual international recruitment of high school teachers is now routine. . . . Taken together, these events connote a deep crisis, not just in the city's education system but in the wider system of social reproduction. (Ibid., p. 428)

Such events, he argues, 'hint at much about the neoliberal urbanism that has been slouching towards birth since the 1980s' (ibid., p. 429). Once again, it is important to insist on national and local specificity. In part, this is indicated by the very geography to which Smith refers – New York is importing workers from Europe, from Austria and Spain. But also, the dependence of elements of urban reproduction on workers from elsewhere has characterised the UK since the arrival of the *Windrush*. It is by no means solely a 'neoliberal' phenomenon – indeed it has its roots in the older Empire. Nonetheless, and specifically in the case of London, it is a phenomenon exacerbated by the particular nature of the city's reinvention. Mackintosh et al. (2006) point to a recent sharp rise in health professional migration from low- and middle-income to higher-income countries – and particularly to the USA, the UK and increasingly Canada – and

argue that this is not a temporary hump in overseas labour recruitment, but part of a sharp increase in international integration of markets for skilled labour. The market integration is being driven by changing technology, international competition for skilled labour, and in health by rising commercialisation of health care and vast global disparities in wages, working conditions, retirement prospects and the sheer scope for health professionals to do a good job. It is, moreover, particularly acute in London (RCN, 2003, cited in Mackintosh et al., 2006, p. 762). The element of this that is rising commercialisation of health care should be particularly noted, for it links the issue back, once again, to the terms of London's reinvention and its role in the current form of globalisation. And one consequence of the migration that this form of globalisation has stimulated is the worsening of the inequality between poor and rich countries (Mackintosh et al., 2006).

The brilliance of today's London, and the wider south-eastern region, is, then, dependent for its ordinary, daily, social reproduction on an array of workers from the rest of the world. This in-migration is indeed part of what contributes to the multicultural characteristics of the city from which this book began. It is another reason (apart from, or as part of, that freedom to be themselves) that people come to this city. The migrants are an element, also, in Gilroy's convivial culture. Many of them, such as nurses, bring high levels of skill which have been generated by investment by their countries of origin, maybe in the global South. It is, as noted, a perverse subsidy. Countries, and spokespeople, from the global South – including such powerful voices as Nelson Mandela – have made public their concerns and in some cases have pleaded for the flows to be constrained or even to be stopped.

This leads into extremely difficult political territory, and the difficulties are, precisely, spatial. At a general level there

is the tension between on the one hand enabling individuals to realise their potential through movement and on the other hand the pressures of territorially based development strategies. For the political left, it can throw into apparent opposition two very different geographies of commitment. On the one hand, there is the commitment to an attitude of generosity and hospitality in relation to in-migration. On the other hand, there is the commitment at a global level to combatting inequalities between countries, and especially between 'the West' and the global South. Yet the first of these commitments works against the second. Unrestricted migration can result in increased inequality between countries. On the political right, and thereby posing another danger for the left, this is an issue that can all too easily be turned into one with an implicit, if not overt, racist inflection.<sup>1</sup>

One innovative way of cutting through these conflicting political spatialities is proposed by Mensah, Mackintosh and Henry (2005) (see also Mackintosh, 2007). This is completely to reimagine the relationship between flow and territory: to propose, in other words, another spatiality. Their specific concern is with the migration of health workers to the UK health system from Ghana, and their proposal is that the two health systems (Ghanaian and British) could be thought of as one system and that the United Kingdom could pay restitution to the Ghanaian element of that system for the perverse subsidy that currently flows in the opposite direction. Some of the issues that this raises will be returned to below. Before that, however, there are two other points to be noted.

First, the proposal for integrating the two national systems is not confined to the level of the state. This should, it is argued, be a grass-roots integration too, encouraging greater connections between trades unions and professional organisations in the two countries. This, then, were it to be

implemented, would be a politics of engagement of 'ordinary Londoners' – in particular here trades unionists – as well as elected bodies. In this sense it would in some measure contribute to building an alternative globalisation to counter that which is currently hegemonic. It is moreover about the process of *construction*, not the prior assumption, of a grounded solidarity. Indeed Mackintosh reports both that the issue is only on the national agenda in the UK at all because of its being raised by UK activists, health trades unions and the Department of International Development, and that even the process of making the case for this politics has been generating a sense of social citizenship and solidarity around the interconnections of UK health services with African health services.

Second, however, as presently constructed this is a national-level issue. It is not the kind of political question normally addressed at urban level. There are two aspects of a political response to this. First, that neither the 1980s GLC nor the current mayoralty have found this a major constraint in the past. London's voice has been raised over a range of issues that, while most certainly not 'normally' matters of urban policy, have in one way or another been of particular importance to the city. This is precisely part of the potential spatial reformulation of 'local politics' that was argued for in chapter 9. And this is the second point, that 'London's' voice is powerful. London can be an important player in national politics – indeed, as we have seen, through mobilisation of its 'global' status it already frequently is.

Let us return, however, to the proposal for the payment of restitution for the perverse inter-place subsidy currently flowing from Ghana to the UK, and to the wider proposal for an integration between the two health systems. From the point of view of the argument here the proposal is also interesting for the way in which it rearticulates geographies and

geographical imaginations. Firstly, the proposal takes the globalisers at their word in their proclamations of openness. It is, as Mackintosh et al. note, entirely in tune with a globalisation understood as the 'international integration of markets for capital, labour, services and goods' (2006, p. 757). This is a straightforward challenge to the geographical imaginary of globalisation and thereby a way into the central political argument. Secondly, it is a proposal that forces a reimagination of place. It necessitates a recognition of interdependence, and of the inequalities within that interdependence.<sup>2</sup> It is a (potential) politics of place that looks from the inside out. It recognises not just, as in the more usual formulation, the 'outside' that can be found within, but also – in a certain sense – the 'inside' that lies beyond. It poses the question of whether, in certain realms, we could imagine (aspects of) other places as in a sense part of our own place, and vice versa; or maybe live in the imagination of 'our own place' as constituted through a distributed system – a kind of multi-locational place. Thirdly, it poses in a different way the potential for a politics *between* places, a politics precisely of spatial (inter-place) relations that could be very different from – and thereby a challenge to – that neoliberalisation of inter-place relations highlighted by Peck and Tickell (1992). It is the type of strategy that could be an element in a politics that *linked* places in different positions within the wider power-geometries of neoliberal globalisation – a (powerful) form of inter-place solidarity.

Fourthly, this proposal is significant because it transforms what otherwise might be conceptualised as *aid*, with all the connotations of conditionality and charity and the power relations thereby implied, into a matter of the fulfilment of an *obligation* (Mackintosh, 2007). This again links into the politics of geographical imaginations. Mackintosh makes the important point that to generate a reverse flow as *aid* means

that it is imaginatively disembedded from economic relationships. Even while attempting to address inequality, it does not admit of any implication in the *causes* of that inequality, or to any political or ethical *responsibility* to reverse the existing perverse subsidy. Rather it is, astonishingly, perceived as an act of generosity. The notion of restitution, in contrast, precisely embeds the need for such a reverse flow in existing, unequal, spatial relations. (In fact it is, as Diprose, 2002, would argue, the countries of origin that have been being generous.) It is a response, indeed, that accords with the argument of previous chapters and that accepts responsibility for the aspect of those relations that is the inequality from which the richer place both benefits and, in part, takes its identity. In other words, embedded within this proposal is not only a challenging politics but also a radically different geographical imagination. Moreover, adopting such a strategy would be to globalise in some way the local claim to multiculturalism. It would be to begin to respond also to some of the responsibilities that arise in consequence of that aspect of the city's (global) identity.

The notion of this kind of outward-looking responsibility is in fact present in some elements of the current plethora of plans being produced in London. The *London plan* itself – the overarching document (GLA, 2004b) – does on occasions recognise that London is a *cause* of what happens in the wider world, that it does indeed have some agency in that regard (it is not simply a local victim of the global) and that it can and should take responsibility for its effects. This is particularly the case in relation to climate change and environmental issues more generally: here it is stated that not only must policy be directed to managing the impacts of climate change *on* London, but it must also work to reduce London's own contribution to the *production* of that problem. Thus, a 'key policy direction' is to 'Address issues of climate

change and ensure that the environmental impact of a growing London does not contribute to global warming' (2004b, p. 10), and similar statements are made about waste. There is a separate Waste Management Strategy, an Energy Strategy and a Green Procurement Code, all of which embody similar understandings.

The *Draft food strategy* (LDA, 2005) takes on directly the issue of responsibility. Having celebrated some aspects of food within the capital, it asserts: 'However, as many are slowly becoming aware, there are problems associated with this abundance; and London both contributes to and has responsibility for some of these problems' (2005, p. i). The overall 'Vision' has four components, with responsibility up front, and is worth setting out in full:

In 2016, London's residents, employees and visitors, together with public, private and voluntary sector organisations will:

- take *responsibility* for health, environmental, economic, social, cultural and security impacts resulting from the food choices that they make, and their role in ensuring that food and farming are an integrated part of modern life
- demonstrate *respect* for all the many elements involved in the provision of their food, and respect fairly the environment, the people, the welfare of animals, the businesses and others involved in providing their food
- be more conscious of the *resources* used in growing, processing, distributing, selling, preparing and disposing of their food, and be more engaged in minimising any negative impacts arising from this resource use
- benefit from the *results* of this effort, such that all Londoners have ready access to an adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable diet that meets their health, cultural, and

other needs, and better protects the environments in which we live and those which we visit. (Ibid. p. iii)

The strategy addresses the issues of the context in which it operates (such as the WTO, multinational corporations, the EU), the power of market forces and the preferences of consumers. These things cannot be simply escaped.

Equally, however, the effect of a Strategy that simply accepts such forces as 'given' is two fold. Firstly, it would not be able to avoid responsibility. Secondly, it would represent a failure to recognise market forces and consumer preferences as dynamic and changing phenomena. Furthermore, policy instruments, regulatory frameworks, information campaigns, targeted investment and political leadership can actively shape and encourage the direction of change.

*London has the means to do this; and must accept the responsibility to act. . . .* Equally, the responsibility for these changes is widely distributed. (Ibid., pp.1-2, emphasis added)

This is impressive stuff. The development of international supply-chains is mentioned, along with recognition both of some of the inequalities embedded within them and of the fact that London has in many respects benefited from these developments. Eight stages in a supply-chain are defined along with objectives for each. Thus, for example: 'Stage 2: Processing and Manufacturing: London's role will be to specify and expect high standards from processors based outside the capital that are supplying London, [and] to both expect and support such standards within London itself' (LDA, 2005, p. iii). Strong emphasis is placed on the range of agencies that will have to support the resultant policies, on the need for a lot of public campaigning within London, on a range of initiatives to close the 'consistent "gap" between

attitudes *in theory* and behaviour *in practice*' (ibid., p. 64) and on a range of procurement policies including some mention of fair trade.

It should be stressed that the document referred to here is a draft and, at the time of writing, out for consultation. It is not yet known, therefore, what will result in practice. But this is an interesting document for the framework it establishes for policy – one which is both outward-looking and prepared to recognise local responsibility for the global.

The crunch point for such policies usually comes, however, when different political aims come into conflict. It is at such moments that the real priorities become apparent. There is a rather nice one in the *Food strategy* itself, where the intent to reduce food miles runs up against the fact of London's cultural diversity: 'Demand in London for ethnically- and culturally-specific food . . . is both much higher than elsewhere in Britain . . . and growing. Ensuring that all London's diverse communities continue to have access to culturally-appropriate food means that there are limits to the extent to which "local" food can meet London's needs' (LDA, 2005, p. 13). The two geographies of political intent come into conflict. Here, it seems, the demands of diversity win out, and this is made explicit. At other points of conflict, however, the matter is sometimes simply passed over. Thus, in the *London plan's* consideration of transport strategy (intimately related to food miles) we find:

The Mayor supports the development of a sustainable and balanced London area airport system, and recognises that further runway capacity in the South East will be required to meet London's needs. . . .

. . . A sustained programme of development is needed if London and the UK are to compete effectively in the global and European economies. (GLA, 2004b, p. 110)

In other words, when it comes to the heart of the strategy for economic growth, and to competing with other places, the wider responsibilities are overridden.<sup>3</sup>

And yet there are things, sometimes small things, that are being done, or could be done, and not just by the local state alone. Most obviously and most crucially there could be a broader and more imaginative sectoral definition of London's claim to global-city status. The overwhelming prioritisation of finance and business services could be diluted. There could also be more explicit political recognition of the ways in which this current prioritisation actively poses problems for the rest of the city, including for other economic sectors (see chapter 2). It could, in particular, lay more stress on non-capitalist sectors, on 'restructuring for labour' and on the responsibilities as well as the demands of the capitalist sector (see GLC, 1985; Massey, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2003). There could also be promotion of alternative forms of globalisation. The 1980s GLC gave encouragement in a variety of forms to the building of trades-union internationalism, aiding contact between workers in different parts of the world. London could join that growing alliance of city and regional groups that are refusing to go along with the provisions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). There is a Fair Trade Town and City campaign that the city could join – such a move would build upon suggestions already contained in the *Food strategy* (see above) and might relate to public-sector procurement codes. But, again, it is not just that Londoners are major consumers. It is also that London is significant in the control of the production and trading of many of the commodities consumed. This is true, for instance, in the case of coffee. The GLC of the 1980s, recognising both this position and a point in the commodity chain at which it could effectively intervene, established Twin Trading, a wholesaling organisation, which

continues strongly to this day and has been a significant actor in the wider fair-trade movement. There must be opportunities for targeted intervention within other commodity chains. These policies, around fair trade and GATS, are explicitly place-based and both in small ways challenge the nature of the trade and financial arrangements through which the current form of globalisation operates.

In fact, just as I was putting this book to bed, there came an announcement of a political initiative that would do just that. Following the visit of Hugo Chávez in the spring of 2006 there had already been joint cultural festivals between London and Caracas, but in September a proposal was put forward for a deeper relationship between the two cities. The proposal (which is still being negotiated) is for a barter arrangement in which Venezuela would send cheap oil to London in return for advice and experience in the areas of transport planning, housing, crime, waste-disposal, air quality and adult education. London would also agree to use the deal to promote Venezuela's image within the city. The oil, moreover, would be directed towards reducing the cost of public transport (buses) specifically for poorer people in London. The aim, in other words, is to be redistributive within both cities.

This is a truly imaginative strategy. It would bypass entirely the market relations of current globalisation and thereby present a challenge to them. ('Why could there not be more of this?' is the question it implicitly provokes.) It is an 'exemplary strategy' pointing to the possibility of alternative forms of globalisation. In that sense it is a small challenge, especially in its attempt at egalitarian fair-trading, to existing power-geometries. (Chávez, of course, is an explicit opponent of the Washington Consensus.) It changes, thereby, one small element of those global relations through which the identity of London (and Caracas) is constituted

(and thus in a small way reworks London's identity too). It is, moreover, a direct challenge to the neoliberal mantra that cities (and places in general) must compete with each other; rather, they can cooperate. Like the proposal for restitution of perverse subsidies, through this inter-place solidarity, it links places in different positions within the wider power-geometries of today's globalisation.

There are also, and could be, grass-roots campaigns that target specific aspects of the world economy that are seen as being harmful and in which London plays a crucial role. The London Social Forum 'attempts to connect the local to the global in an alternative manner to the dominant neo-liberal model of which London as a major international centre of finance is a prime exemplar' (informal report to the Athens meeting of the European Social Forum, 2006). It would be good to see, for instance, a specific focus, in London-based campaigns, on making global links with struggles by fence-line communities in other parts of the world whose battles link back to companies in London. One obvious example could be the privatisation of utilities in the global South. Or, given London's huge financial role and participation in global offshore banking, there could be a strong representation in the city of the Tax Justice Movement. Oxfam GB (2000) argues that offshore financial centres are part of the global poverty problem: 'at a conservative estimate, tax havens have contributed to revenue losses for developing countries of at least US\$50 billion a year' (ibid., Executive Summary). Wealth 'equivalent in value to one-third of global gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to be held offshore, and a large share of globally mobile capital makes use of tax havens' (ibid., p. 1). 'Tax havens and OFCs [Offshore Financial Centres] are now considered to be central to the operation of global financial markets. International banking activities, including the offshore currency markets (such as

the Eurodollar market), are tightly inter-linked with the world of offshore finance' (ibid., p. 14) and 'many of the world's major havens are very much onshore. London and New York, for example, are both home to a substantial proportion of the world's offshore business' (ibid., p. 4). 'London, for example, has been the largest and most important centre of Eurocurrency operations since the 1950s. The favourable regulatory environment in London has ensured that international banks continue to carry out a large share of their international lending and deposit-gathering there, despite the rise of other financial centres. London is also the focal point of the Eurobond market' (ibid., p. 22, n. v). The aim of the Oxfam paper is to argue for a set of changes that will enable the 'hidden billions' syphoned off through this system to be released for poverty eradication around the world. As it argues: 'The UK is well placed to take a leading role' in this (and indeed it has made some moves). 'It also has a special responsibility on this issue as the UK is home to the City of London, a tax haven for some financial market instruments' (ibid., p. 17). More particularly, these activities have been at the heart of London's resurgence, and they constitute an integral part of its current identity. In one way or another (a point to which we shall return) the lives of Londoners are tied up in this.<sup>4</sup>

This, then, would be a campaign around particular aspects of the London economy, but with a focus on their global role, on the role that London plays in wider geographies. Another example is oil and gas. Together oil and gas account in one way or another for about a quarter of London's stock exchange; Shell and BP have major offices and headquarters in London; London is utterly dependent on oil. And a number of campaigns have focused on these facts and taken them as a starting point for wider arguments. London Rising Tide, a group campaigning around the root-causes of climate

**Table 10.1 PLATFORM: celebrating 21 years of innovation, inspiration and impact**

1. *Addenbrookes Blues* – solidarity work with striking hospital cleaners, through street theatre, backed by T.U.C. (1984–85)
2. Pioneering of safe spaces for difficult discussions, and the process of thinking as a vital part of activism: social sculpture (Free International University London, *Gog & Magog, Crude Operators*)
3. *Tree of Life, City of Life* – investigating London as an ‘organism’ over ten weeks in a mobile tent, with an exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall (1989)
4. *Still Waters* – imagining London as a city of rivers again, with its buried rivers restored to the surface (1992)
5. *Delta* – lighting a school with London’s first micro-hydro turbine, using River Wandle water power (1993–96)
6. *Homeland* – deconstructing the process of international trade through the journey of a lightbulb across a continent, with London International Festival of Theatre (1993)
7. Transformative power of art and performance (*killing us softly, Carbon Generations*)
8. *Ignite* – publishing thousands of commuter newspapers challenging Londoners about the impacts of this oil city on the rest of the world (1996 & 1997)
9. *Carbon Generations* – investigating personal responsibility for oil dependency through a lecture/performance connecting family history and carbon consumption. (1997–98)
10. *Agitpod* – pedal-propelled, solar-powered, zero emissions video projection vehicle (1998–)
11. *killing us softly* – day-long performance event involving research, poetry, music, video, discussion and a boat journey – investigating the hidden history of corporations and genocide (1999–2003)
12. *Internationalism & Solidarity work* – in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, against Pinochet, in former Yugoslavia, about Nigeria
13. *Gog & Magog* – detailed exploration of the complex web of organisations surrounding London’s oil giants Shell and BP, using personal stories, guided walks and music (2000–)
14. *Some Common Concerns* – a book presenting detailed analysis of the likely environmental and human rights impacts of the proposed Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey oil pipelines system (2002)

**Table 10.1 PLATFORM: celebrating 21 years of innovation, inspiration and impact (Continued)**

15. *Degrees of Capture* – a report exposing the capture of university research and teaching by oil corporations, and the detrimental impact of this on climate change (2003)
16. *SEA/RENUE* (1994–) PLATFORM was the founder of RENUE, which, united with SEA in 2003, implements sustainable energy schemes in London and beyond.
17. *Unravelling the Carbon Web* (2000–) working to prevent the environmental and human rights impacts of the oil industry – supporting those affected by oil in the former Soviet Union, exposing the moves to hand Iraq’s oil reserves to transnational corporations, educating the public and decision-makers.
18. *Museum of the Corporation* (2004–) a proposal for the world’s first museum dedicated to the nature and impacts of the transnational corporation.
19. *The Body Politic* (2004–) a pioneering interdisciplinary course for people committed to social and ecological justice, with Birkbeck, University of London.
20. *Remember Saro-Wiwa* (2004–) initiating and co-ordinating a campaign for a Living Memorial in London to the inspirational writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, executed for exposing the devastation of the Niger Delta by oil corporations.
21. *The Desk Killer* (2004–) currently evolving from seven years of research, a groundbreaking book that investigates the history and psychology of corporate and bureaucratic killing.

Source: PLATFORM.

change, runs an annual ‘Art not Oil’ exhibition highlighting both the activities of oil companies and the sponsorship by those companies of art galleries located in London.<sup>5</sup> The radical London collective PLATFORM, combining campaigning and research, has among its numerous interventions often targeted this aspect of the city.<sup>6</sup> The project ‘Unravelling the carbon web’ (no. 17 in figure 10.1) explores and campaigns around ‘the web of companies which constitute the international oil industry. The project focuses on

London, which has historically been the headquarters for two of the world's largest oil companies – BP and Shell – and is home to many companies servicing the oil industry' (Carbon Web Newsletter no, 2, p. 2).<sup>7</sup> Nigeria is central to the linked campaign 'Remember Saro-Wiwa: the living memorial'.<sup>8</sup> This was a public art initiative to mark the tenth anniversary of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight colleagues for campaigning around oil extraction in Ogoniland in the Niger Delta. It was launched in spring 2005 in London's City Hall, with an opening speech from the mayor. But, precisely in the spirit of the argument in chapter 9, it is not a memorial that looks backwards – or rather insofar as it looks backwards it is in order to look forwards – to the continuing struggles in Ogoniland, for instance, and to the links between old and new empires. *The next gulf* (Rowell, Marriott and Stockman, 2005), produced as part of this campaign, emphasises the historical legacies and continuities (the 'gulf' here is the Gulf of Guinea):

Four hundred years ago, the [Niger] Delta became a key element in the global economy, forming one of the three corners of the Atlantic Triangle. This triangle was built on the barter purchase of slaves in the Delta, their transportation to the plantations of the Americas, the production of sugar and tobacco on these plantations and the export of these tropical goods to the ports of Britain and Europe. London was pivotal in this triangle, profiting from the slave trade and coordinating the exports of guns and other items to the Delta as goods to facilitate barter. . . .

The current trade in oil and gas, with the majority of Nigeria's output again crossing the Atlantic, appears to be recreating this triangle. Once again resources pour out of the Delta and guns flow in – though this time London shares its role with Washington. The last triangle was

broken by resistance in the villages of the Delta, rebellions on the slave plantations and the anti-slavery movement which began in London. Is it possible that the current triangle will be radically altered in a similar way? (Carbon Web Newsletter #2, p. 4)

*The next gulf* presents a map, 'The Niger Delta in London', which shows 'some of the companies and institutions related to Shell's operations in Nigeria' in 2005. If all the sources and links in the oil commodity chain and its multifarious supports were mapped, the centre of London would be crowded with references. An overlay of such maps, around a host of issues, would trace many of the elements and intricate interconnections in the City-centred constellation and the remoulded elite that was described in chapter 1. *The next gulf* has a similar map for Washington for the oil industry in Nigeria. The point is that similar maps of global implication could be drawn up for any place and for a multitude of sectors and activities. The potential of such maps, were they to be distributed widely, and made popularly visible, is great. On the one hand, they might dislocate a little the complacent imagination, make one stop, perhaps, for a moment and think what is being done here. And on the other hand, they are a quite different way of imagining that now perhaps all too easily invoked trope of 'the other within'. Here, in such maps, is being evoked the presence within this place of impacts on others beyond. And yet, without those impacts, this place would not be quite as it is.

There are many campaigns like the ones described here, and they are small, but part of their aim is to look beyond the local place, to trace its implications around the world. Some explore the ordinary invisibility of the way this happens, those chains of quotidian connection that Young implicates in political responsibility – the connections between

panelled meeting-rooms, urbane gentlemanly discussions and decisions, and the havoc that may be wreaked elsewhere (see, for example, PLATFORM's 'killing us softly' and 'The Desk Killer', nos. 11 and 21 in figure 10.1). Some trace the global chains of particular commodities that are vital to the city. Some focus on consumption practices, some link up with ecological campaigns. Some link particular communities within London to other parts of the world – people from Nigerian groups linking to the Saro-Wiwa project, for example. A way, again, of thinking multiculturalism outwards. Importantly most of them involve support for and active engagement with struggles elsewhere. They are two-way relations. This is not 'responsibility' conceived of as the one-way generosity of the bountiful and powerful (nor, indeed, as Young so clearly argues, does it equate with 'guilt'). It is an engaged attempt to rearticulate relations. A way of encouraging a politics, and even more fundamentally a sensibility, that is outward-looking. A different kind of geographical imagination.

However, were such a politics to be built upon it would throw open again the question of the identity of London and Londoners. It would return the argument once again to the question of the *internal* geographies of place. What is this 'London' (or any other locality)?; who is this 'we' that may be hailed in reference to place? On the one hand, a renegotiation of identity is central to such forms of political organising. Featherstone refers to the reconfiguring of place-based identities and the generative effects of transnational political organising. These more rhizomorphic, routed and productive practices of solidarity generate forms of equivalences and 'alliances between unlike actors [and] refuse what Spivak has termed "a homogenous internationalism" (Spivak, 1985, p.350). Their activity is productive, continually formed and at times unsettles fixed identities' (2003, p. 406). Such

remoulding of identities can occur in numerous ways. If the Caracas–London deal were to go ahead it would shift London's identity (and indeed that of Caracas) both materially and symbolically. In the case of grass-roots alliances, identities could shift through more personal connection maybe, and through processes of political learning about each other's situation and political aims. On the other hand, identities will be renegotiated among Londoners themselves. Even if it is accepted, as it is here, that all members of this cosmopolitan heterogeneity are in some degree 'Londoners', they/we are not all so in the same way. Londoners, as would be the case in any place, are located in radically contrasting and unequal ways in the various processes, both benign and problematical, of today's globalisation. Places are meeting-places of multiple trajectories whose material co-presence has to be negotiated (chapter 3). Any campaigns and strategies, such as the ones above, designed to look outward from place, would add to the complexity of that negotiation. They might indeed underline the conflicting interests within the place; crucially they would highlight the structural connections between inequality at a global level and the inequality within the city. Moreover, regardless of structural position there will be political differences about such issues. The proposal for London–Caracas solidarity provoked immediate hostility from some other parties. (Even Chávez's visit had generated controversy.) 'The leader of London's Tories', reported Muir in *The Guardian* delightfully, 'dismissed the scheme as a "socialist propaganda fest".' The leader of the capital's Liberal Democrats seemed concerned precisely about losing rank within the power-geometries of globalisation: he was reported as saying 'the deal smacked of aid, not trade – "This reduces us to the status of a third-world barter economy"' (Muir, 2006). So there is political contest. Similarly, many of the campaigns just outlined have been initiated

at grass-roots level. And although it is enriching of local democracy that there should be such campaigns, it should not be assumed that all such 'bottom-up' organisation will be of the left. To imagine that it will be is a common form of spatial fetishism (see chapter 8) on the left (see also the debate in Held, 2005). However, that very fact of variability is part of the point – that there will be political contest here, within place, as part of the definition, the struggle over the identity, of place.

So there would be conflict. Any of the campaigns and proposals discussed above, and any like them, will be contested. Any 'we' that is constructed here will emerge from conflictual debate – open political debate rather than that sealing-over of conflicting interests orchestrated by the powerful that occurs, for instance, on the issue of 'the London deficit'. This, then, is different from those new localisms that appeal to place as the hearth of some unproblematical collectivity. On the contrary, 'place' here is not taken as given; it is an ongoing product of an agonistic democracy. This is also different from those new localisms of community politics that demand an immersion in local place. On the contrary, here what is required, in order to take responsibility for that place in its wider setting, is what Montesquieu first called for: that 'we must learn to practice a systematic form of disloyalty to our own local civilization if we seek either to understand it or to interact equitably with others formed elsewhere' (Gilroy, 2004, p. 79).

To be wary of certain forms of localism, and certain arguments for a place-based politics, is not to deny their potential *tout court*. Rather it is to require their reformulation. This is a localism turned inside out, and one that has to be struggled over internally. And as such 'place' would seem to have real and, maybe ironically in this age of globalisation, even increasing potential as a locus of political responsibility and

an arena for political engagement. It is one base, among many others, for collectivity. It is, for instance, a potential forum for going beyond the politics of the individual. Thus, in relation to the politics of consumption, Barnett argues that 'It is only by being joined into part of wider communities of action, by activists and organisations, that everyday habits of consuming can really be thought of as "ethical", or even political' (in Littler, 2005, p. 150). Moreover, campaigning around place is also different from, though quite possibly allied to, joining a group composed of the already like-minded. It sets up an immediate and relatively accessible *arena* for political contest. It is an arena that extends beyond the individual yet will always pose challenges to any proposed unanimity. For what are at issue are the responsibilities of place, and the configurational politics that the recognition of such responsibilities requires: an understanding of the wider geographies of the relational construction of the identity of place, the political consequences in terms of implication and – also – the hard work entailed in the fact that in each place this identity, these geographies, and these political consequences will be specific. Only with all of this can we address the question that was posed in the Introduction, and which could/should be asked of anywhere: what does this place stand for?

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The rise of global cities has been integral to the assertion and spread of neoliberalism. Within the United Kingdom, and more widely, it is a product of the new social settlement that has gained hegemonic status since the 1980s. The project of class restoration of which neoliberal theory has become the doctrinal armoury was born in cities, cities are the home-base of the new stratum of super-rich, it is from such cities that the Washington Consensus and its descendants are orchestrated. The cities themselves are drawn into competition with each other for position on the global stage. The apparent inevitability of all this merely confirms its intellectual hegemony.

Yet the story is also more complicated. For one thing, global cities are not crucial to this project only as the sites of economic and cultural organisation. They have also become crucial bargaining chips, vital components in the struggle to assert neoliberalism politically. Within urban policy discourse around the world a global-city rhetoric has emerged

'that is used by political and business groups to formulate and/or legitimize neoliberal development' (Olds and Yeung, 2004, p. 500). We have seen this here in the case of London. Within the city it is (a particular formulation of) world citydom that is assumed to offer the inevitable economic way forward and yet that sits uneasily with that other formulation – in terms of street-level conviviality – of its character. In fact, as we have also seen, not only is this city, as are many cities, above all diverse, but also the reason for its economic health over recent decades (if a city of such inequality can be characterised as healthy) is not by any means only its global nature but rather its promotion of and benefiting from the political project of financialisation, deregulation and marketisation. At inter-regional level too, within the country as a whole, it is this mobilisation of global citydom, buttressed by geographical imaginaries of golden geese and autonomous competing regions, that provides the legitimisation for a regional strategy that in fact enables the continued growth of London/the South-East above all else.

There are other apparent incoherences too. For instance, within each of the spatial realms investigated here (intra-urban, inter-regional, international) it is the very proponents of market forces who, while severely imposing them upon others, do not obey their own rules. Within London itself those at the lower-paid end of the labour market are subject to a competition intensified by inward migration, while those in the boardrooms evade market forces by their mutual awards of increments and pension packages. Within the UK the regions and nations of the North and West are sternly lectured on the need to stand on their own feet, and warned of the dismal long-term impact of relying on state help, while the constant crises of congestion in London/the South-East are attended to by special measures and state aid for new growth areas. Surely a true neoliberal would let the

place clog up and allow growth in consequence to be diverted elsewhere. Likewise in the international arena, while poorer countries struggle with the rules of structural adjustment, and are forced to open up their borders, some of the richest countries maintain protectionist barriers. The contradictions are endless: 'The two economic engines that have powered the world through the global recession that set in after 2001 have been the United States and China. The irony is that both have been behaving like Keynesian states in a world supposedly governed by neoliberal rules' (Harvey, 2005, p. 152). And there is of course also the rather different point that the application of neoliberal rules has not been notable for its economic success – the neoliberal period has not been one of high growth (Held, 2004).

The result has been, at all levels, increasing inequality (see, in particular, Duménil and Lévy, 2004), and one of the aims of the sections in this book has been to point to the structural interconnectedness between these inequalities: between those within London and those between the regions of the UK for example; between the difficulty of reproducing London and the constant reproduction, now in sharpened form, of the national North–South divide; between the poverty within London and that in countries and cities around the planet within which the privileged of London hold such a powerful position. Above all, the argument is that an understanding of these geographies of connection is important in the formulation of a political response.

The case of London is, of course, specific. Its particularity lies especially in its pre-eminence in the fields of finance and business services, broadly defined. In that sense it has been crucial to the wider project. As Harvey argues: 'It is worthwhile recalling that one of the conditions that broke up the whole Keynesian post-war Bretton Woods system was the formation of a eurodollar market as US dollars

escaped the discipline of its own monetary authorities' (2005, p. 141), and in that key movement London was central. And it has benefited massively since, picking up the threads of old Empire to build a new one through which financial tribute could once again be collected. It is this that is now asserted to be essential to the national economy: 'the main driver', 'the national engine of growth', the golden goose, and all the other persuasive terminologies of the new elite and those who have, in one way or another, been convinced by them. Yet even within the country the case is at the very least ambiguous. Some of the downsides of this model of growth have been explored here: the increase in inequality through the expansion of the stratum of the 'filthy rich' (Mandelson); the intensification of poverty within London; the problems of the social reproduction of the capital; the draining from other regions of professional workers; the wider contribution of the spatial concentration of this stratum and of the escalator effects of London/the South-East to the perpetuation of the national North-South divide; the potential for this aspect of London-world-city, with its attendant inequalities, to conflict with that other claim, to be a city of productive cultural mixity; and finally – but by no means least – its flaunting, as an attitude to be emulated, of outrageously conspicuous consumption and just plain greed. Other economies and societies flourish without such global cities. Scandinavian countries come to mind. Other places are continually deemed more liveable.

Yet if London is specific, as is every place, many of the lessons that can be drawn from its analysis are generalisable. One, which has run throughout this book, is the significance in all this of 'geography' and of the intricate spatialities of class and politics. Taking the analysis of this neoliberal project seriously calls for the reformulation of some classic spatial issues. There is the way, for instance, that neoliberalism,

in its specific, British, Blairite manifestation, has been carried through into spatial politics, for instance into the address to 'the regional problem', and how that itself was integral to New Labour's picking up of the baton from Thatcherism to establish at a more grass-roots level, and specifically over a wider geographical canvas, the new hegemonic common sense. This is not a serious regional policy. Unless the national geography of power and inequality, and the economic model on which it rests, is addressed head-on, the elite of London/the South-East will continue to soar away.

Geography is also important in the dynamics of inequality. The intersplicing of national and local inequality has been explored at length here. But it is also more than that. It is now well established, even if not all will listen, that inequality in itself matters; that addressing the problems of poverty means tackling the rich as well as the poor. What has been evident here is how the *geographies* of inequality modulate, and frequently exacerbate, those dynamics. Within place (here, within London) the juxtaposition of need and greed sets up reverberations throughout urban society; the spatial concentration of the elite only further increases their self-absorption and their distance from the rest. Between regions, the existence of uneven development can introduce distortions and rigidities into the national economy. The studied obliviousness to this is yet another way in which the generalised neo-Labour project has been carried through into the realm of the spatial.

Within all this, questions of identity have inevitably become more complex. There is a reciprocity of multiplicity between the identity of place and the identities of multiply placed people. But it is also more than this. It becomes necessary to ask, when speaking of global cities: *whose city* is at issue here? We have seen how some claims to place identity

cover over the inequalities within, in order to evade that responsibility (or even the posing of the question of responsibility) that lies within the place itself. It has been shown how the very characterisation of cities as 'global' is a strategy whereby the part stands in for the whole, where the city is defined by its elite and the rest are consigned to invisibility. In both these manoeuvres, cities of the many are effectively claimed by the few. It has been argued that the question of the identity of this place must take account not only of the outside within, the internal hybridity, but also, as it were, of the inside without; that the question 'where does London (or any city) end?' must at least address the issue of those recruited into the dynamics of the urban economy and society by the long lines of connections of all sorts that stretch out to the rest of the country and on around the planet. And this in turn raises questions of unequal interdependence, mutual constitution, and the possibility of thinking of placed identity not as a claim *to* a place but as the acknowledgement of the responsibilities that inhere in *being placed*.

A new social settlement may currently hold sway, but hegemonies are there to be contested, and another of the aims here has been to argue, and to exemplify, that an alternative politics is possible. In his consideration of the possibility of spreading outwards the implications of the demotic cosmopolitanism that exists within the city, Gilroy writes of 'the challenge of being in the same present' (2004, p. 74). This is precisely the challenge of space (Massey, 2005), the challenge of the full recognition of coeval others. One thing it inevitably entails is the acknowledgement of implication, through mutual constitution, in the ongoing production of difference and inequality around the world. This is the same reasoning that would argue against a politics only of aid (or only of 'hospitality' or of 'generosity') on the grounds, in part, that such a formulation occludes the unequal relations

in which we are all embedded and through which, again in part, the very need for aid has in the first place been produced. Rather, what are at issue are the responsibilities of place. These may concern the politics within the city, the question of the city within the country, or the question of the city in the wider world. But in any case, this is a 'local' politics that asserts and actively politicises both the fact of multiplicity within and the essential openness of place to the beyond.