

The Culture of Modernity: London and Paris around 1900^{*}

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Students of social and cultural sciences attribute four characteristic features to the phenomenon known as the culture of modernity – or modernism. They see it as the free play of fleeting impressions, as possessing a highly-developed subjectivism, as the ability to communicate at international levels, and lastly as being orientated towards a market economy. More concretely, this comprises the pictorial arts with their fluid transitions to commercial graphics and design since the era of impressionism, commercial music (partly distributed via sound-carriers), a culture of pleasure and leisure (tourism, sport, entertainment etc) and finally, accompanying all these phenomena, avant-garde protest attitudes, life styles and emotional sensibilities.¹

The breakthrough of this culture around the turn of the twentieth century is generally interpreted as a concomitant result of urbanisation impulses in the preceding decades. However, most people are reluctant to discuss the exact nature of the mediating factor between major cities and the culture of modernity. And when looked at a little closer, doubts arise as to whether such a factor existed. On the one hand, small and medium-sized princely towns (like Darmstadt und Dresden) or seaside and tourist locations (like Nice and Deauville) are described as ‘cultural metropolises’ because modern artists lived and worked there for a while.² But on

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- 1 Cf. Matei Calinescu, ‘Modernity, Modernism, Modernization: Variations on Modern Themes’, in Christian Berg et al. (eds), *The Turn of the Century. Modernism and Modernity in Literature and the Arts* (Berlin/New York, 1995), pp. 34-41; Nigel Blake/Francis Francina, ‘Modern Practices of Art and Modernity’, in Francis Francina et al. (eds), *Modernity and Modernism. French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New Haven, 1993), p. 53.
- 2 Cf. Volker Wahl, *Jena als Kunststadt. Begegnungen mit der modernen Kunst in der thüringischen Universitätsstadt zwischen 1900 und 1933* (Leipzig, 1988); Gerhard Bott, *Jugendstil. Vom Beitrag Darmstadts zur internationalen Kunstbewegung um 1900* (Darmstadt, 1965); Hans Heinrich Blotevogel, ‘Kulturelle

the other hand it is impossible to regard every major city as a cultural centre in the sense described above. It is striking that influential authors in particular draw their examples more or less exclusively from Paris, the 'capital of the nineteenth century' as Walter Benjamin defined it.³ Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna also come into the spotlight, as is clear from the many monographs and coffee-table picture books on the 'belle époque' in these cities.⁴ This is not the case, however, for the British metropolis London, which was still the largest city in the world in 1900. Authors cannot even agree on whether to assign these phenomena to the Victorian or the Edwardian age, which shows that they are unable to give the cultural developments around 1900 any caesura-like character.⁵ Some even bluntly declare that London was already past its prime in 1900, just as the best was still to come with New York.⁶ In fact, the majority of modern art styles around 1900, from impressionism via cubism, futurism, and surrealism to the various abstract directions, failed to gain a foothold in London either before or after the First World War. Indeed, after Crystal Palace, originally erected in Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition of

Stadtfunktionen und Urbanisierung: Interdependente Beziehungen der Entwicklung des deutschen Städtesystems im Industriezeitalter', in Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg (ed.), *Urbanisierung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1983), pp. 143-86.

3 Johannes Willms *Paris, Hauptstadt Europas 1789-1914* (Munich, 1988).

4 Cf. *Berlin um 1900. Ausstellung der Berlinischen Galerie in Verbindung mit der Akademie der Künste zu den Berliner Festwochen 1984* (Berlin, 1984); *Der Traum von einer neuen Welt. Berlin 1910-1933. Katalog zu einer Ausstellung in Ingelheim am Rhein, 23. April bis 4. Juni 1989* (Mainz, 1989); Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); Carl E. Schorske, *Wien. Geist und Gesellschaft im Fin-de-siècle* (Frankfurt, 1987); Jürgen Nautz/Richard Vahrenkamp (eds), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende. Einflüsse - Umwelt - Wirkungen* (2nd edn, Vienna 1996); Karl Schlögel, *Jenseits des Großen Oktober. Das Laboratorium der Moderne. Petersburg 1909-1921* (Berlin, 1988); Katerina Clark, *Petersburg. Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

5 A good example is Richard Dennis, 'Modern London', in Martin Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 95-132, esp. p. 98: 'The period between 1870 and 1918 may be considered transitional ...'; p. 99: '... the period 1840-1950 constitutes the core of what many cultural historians regard as "modern"'. See also Felix Barker, *London in Old Photographs 1897-1914* (Boston, n.d.)

6 Cf. Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution', *New Left Review* No. 144 (1984), p. 102; Malcolm Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', in Malcolm Bradbury/James McFarlane (eds), *Modernism 1890-1930* (London, 1991 [1976]), pp. 96-104, esp. p. 102.

1851, was moved south the river Thames to Sydenham two years later, the city produced no spectacular buildings which embodied the spirit of modernity. Its landmarks, the Houses of Parliament and Tower Bridge, refer back to the pre-industrial era.⁷ True, there were music halls and modern sports. In 1908 the IVth Olympic Games even took place in London, but proved a disaster because they failed to attract the crowd. Instead of giving evidence of their outward-looking international attitudes – an essentially modern characteristic – Londoners preferred to worship at the altar of cricket, a sport with its roots in the countryside, the rules of which were a mystery to the vast majority of people outside England.⁸

If a mega-city like London with around seven million inhabitants was able to display its lack of cultural modernity so blatantly around 1900, the question arises as to whether, as is generally claimed, there was indeed a connection between large cities and the culture of modernity. Might this be no more than an intellectual fantasy of urban researchers and cultural and social science scholars?

I should like to deal with the question in the following manner. First I shall examine some of the generally accepted, conventional interpretations which permeate the literature on social and cultural history. Second, I shall analyse the literature on Paris with regard to the framework of events around 1900 which helped to give the city its image as a cultural metropolis. I shall then, as a third step, compare and contrast these results with London, which is assumed to present the contrary, negative, instance. The aim of this chapter is to formulate the connection between major cities and the culture of modernity around 1900 more precisely than has been done to date.

I should like to begin with the theoretical approaches, especially with the arguments formulated in a particularly poignant manner by two contemporary observers who have since attained classical status in the world of social sciences: Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

7 Cf. Malcolm Warner, 'The City of the Present', in Malcolm Warner (ed.), *The Image of London. Views by Travellers and Emigrés 1550-1920* (London: Barbican Art Centre, 1987), pp. 11-26. Incidentally, there was no building in London which provided an overview of the whole city. On the relevance of such perspectives cf. R. Richard Wohl/Anselm L. Strauss, 'Symbolic Representation and the Urban Milieu', *American Sociological Review*, 63 (1957/58), pp. 523-32.

8 Cf. Brian Dobbs, *Edwardians at Play. Sport 1890-1914* (London, 1973), pp. 157-60.

The first German Sociologists' Conference took place in Frankfurt in 1910. In one of the discussions Max Weber laid out the spectrum of themes being tackled by the new discipline of sociology. One of the things he maintained was that

certain formal values in our modern artistic culture... have sprung into existence solely through the existence of the modern city, the modern city with its tramways, underground railways, electric lighting and other lanterns, shop-windows, concert halls and restaurants, cafés, chimneys, massive concentration of buildings, and all the uncontrolled dancing impressions of sound and colour which stimulate sexual fantasies [...]!

According to Weber, this urban – even urbane – potential for stimulation was such as to evoke protest movements and flights to refuge as well as apologies in defence of 'the fantastic, intoxicating rhythms'.⁹ He viewed the city, therefore, as the express cause of the creation of modern culture. Its mediation occurred in the psyche.

Weber's colleague Georg Simmel viewed the connections in a somewhat different way. His essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903) which can be placed within the context of his magnum opus *The Philosophy of Money* is still worth reading today. In it he described the city, not as the place of origin of modern culture, but as its 'showplace'. Major cities were enabled to become this, because the money economy first became a general factor here. For Simmel, the psychic and social effects of the money economy comprised the essence of modernism, and these effects – including the phenomenon of blasé attitudes much discussed by contemporaries – could best develop in the context of major cities.¹⁰

9 Max Weber, 'Rede auf dem ersten Deutschen Soziologentage in Frankfurt 1910', in Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen, 1982), pp. 431-56, quotation p. 453 [translation CE].

10 Georg Simmel, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', *Jahrbuch der Gehestiftung*, 9 (1903), reprint in Georg Simmel, *Das Individuum und die Freiheit* (Berlin, 1987), quotations pp. 196, 203; for an English translation see: 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York, 1950), pp. 400-24. See also Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (Frankfurt, 1989) (first published 1900), pp. 334 ff. (on the rise of blasé attitudes). This interpretation is supported by Lothar Müller, 'Die Großstadt als Ort der Moderne. Über Georg Simmel', in Klaus P. Scherpe (ed.), *Die Unwirklichkeit der Städte. Großstadtdarstellungen zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Reinbek,

Since that time, both these approaches have run through the literature of urban and cultural history in ever new variations. As plausible as they may seem at first sight, they are, however, unsatisfactory. Not only because they were clearly influenced by the contemporary discourse on so-called 'nervousness',¹¹ but because they are not complex enough. Weber's explanation is based on a simple mirroring of categories of everyday life. Viewed from a methodological point of view this is not only inelegant but unproductive. True urban sociologists and ethnologists have continued to use the category of 'city culture' as an object of thick descriptions.¹² But such a category is empty of any potential for analysis. Above all, it is of not much use when structuring comparative historical studies, which was one of Weber's favourite methods. Using his approach it is impossible to explain why some major cities like New York and Los Angeles developed a greater potential for stimulating modernism at the end of the twentieth century than others such as Kuala Lumpur, for example. It is equally impossible to explain why London had less cultural charisma than Paris around 1900.

Weber also fails to take account of the effects of modernism on the cities. In this respect Simmel's approach is more productive, because he brings dynamic factors into play with the money economy and the commercialisation of social relationships. But the question still remains for historians why the culture of modernity, as described above, did not occur far earlier in the highly developed urban cultures of renaissance Florence or Antwerp in the seventeenth century, both of which came into being as a result of a phase of commercialisation.¹³ With Simmel it is also impossible to explain why both contemporaries and later scholars regarded Lon-

1988), p. 17, as well as by Mike Savage/Alan Warde, *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity* (London, 1993), pp. 111f.

- 11 Cf. Joachim Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität. Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich, 1998), pp. 310ff.; Lothar Müller, 'Impressionistische Kultur. Zur Ästhetik von Modernität und Großstadt um 1900', in Thomas Steinfeld/Heidrun Suhr (eds), *In der Großen Stadt. Die Metropole als kulturtheoretische Kategorie* (Frankfurt, 1990), p. 51.
- 12 Cf. Louis Wirth, 'Urbanism as a Way of Life', *American Sociological Review*, 44 (1938), pp. 1-24; Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, 1938); Robert E. Park/Ernest W. Burgess/Roderick D. McKenzie (eds), *The City* (Chicago, 1967), and the survey by Rolf Lindner, 'Perspektiven der Stadtethnologie', *Historische Anthropologie*, 5 (1997), pp. 319-28.
- 13 This question is suggested by Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), pp. 83-128. See also Marc Girouard, *Die Stadt: Menschen, Häuser, Plätze. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Frankfurt, 1987), ch. 6.

don, which enjoyed a highly developed level of commercial activities around 1900, as having no cultural qualities worth mentioning. The reason is that Simmel regards the city as such merely as a passive factor and not as a factor in its own right with the potential to generate culture. This is possibly connected with the fact that his sociology of mutual exchange relationships, which he so brilliantly analysed in the area of commercial trading, was inadequate to deal with complex social composites.

Even today social scientists find it difficult to tackle such complex issues. Nonetheless, in the last few years globalisation research has embarked upon new paths which have enabled sociologists – and historians – to throw more light on the mutual relationship between cities – or metropolises to use the current terminology – and the culture of modernity. These scholars are attempting to take account of the phenomenon that people today are able to move back and forth across international borders without having to change their life-styles or the way they live. In order to get closer to this phenomenon scholars first have to largely disregard the precise location. For under the conditions of worldwide international arrangements the primary point of interest in even world-ranking metropolises is their function as starting and finishing points for journeys and as portals of global culture. Thus the British sociologist Martin Albrow defines them as ‘resources’ and ‘consumer goods’.¹⁴ It is precisely this downgrading which opens up a second step towards a new theoretically acceptable perspective on the city. For ‘consumer goods’ have a market value which can be measured according to whether and in what ways a local ‘self-differentiation industry’ (the term has been coined by Zygmunt Baumann) succeeds in giving one particular place a distinct profile in contrast to another place.¹⁵

Globalisation scholars view urban culture in a broad sense as an important contributing factor in establishing the status of modern cities as ‘consumer goods’. This culture includes not only a highly developed architectural environment, and ‘highbrow’ institutions like libraries, muse-

14 Martin Albrow, ‘Auf Reisen jenseits der Heimat. Soziale Landschaften in einer globalen Stadt’, in Ulrich Beck (ed.), *Kinder der Freiheit* (Frankfurt, 1997), p. 323.

15 Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Schwache Staaten. Globalisierung und die Spaltung der Weltgesellschaft’, in Beck (ed.), *Kinder der Freiheit*, p. 323. See also Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (London, 1994); ead., ‘Global City: Internationale Verflechtungen und ihre innerstädtischen Effekte’, in Hartmut Häußermann/Walter Siebel (eds), *New York*; ead., *Strukturen einer Metropole* (Frankfurt, 1993), pp. 71-90; Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

ums, theatres and opera houses, but also commercially popular mass culture particularly in the area of leisure. These enable both residents and visitors alike to experience trends and life-styles at first hand. Not only that. In the current service economy popular and mass culture also contribute indispensably to widening the spectrum of contacts, information, stimuli and cooperative relationships, without which modern businesses are unable to analyse their market opportunities. The urban sociologist Klaus Brake speaks of a contact benefit (*Fühlungsvorteil*): Since nuances are often decisively important, business success is not simply dependent on collecting information but also, even primarily, on 'evaluating this [...] by means of discourse'.¹⁶

The drawback to this approach is that it is tailored to the outgoing twentieth century and that it does not consider the particular features of earlier periods – here the era around 1900. In principle there is nothing to be said against historicizing the connections outlined above and utilising them for long-term, comparative research work. By all accounts this might even be very advisable, given the fact that some sociologists have extremely vague ideas about the extent of globalisation today and in the past. But the problem is that globalisation scholars themselves have failed to provide any firm foundation on which such historicisation could be based. Thus historians are left to decide for themselves whether to include in their considerations colonialism, or the international exchange between states and national economies, or the creation of trans-national businesses or any other factors.

That said, the approach undertaken by globalisation scholars has one major advantage. It is able to structure research, and this is why I should now like to use the approach in the following discussion. For since the approach states that the relationship between major cities and modern culture can be analysed under the categories of supply and demand, it opens up an effective method of analysis. The bodies which supply urban culture have been summarised as the 'self-differentiation industry' – or, in plain English, this industry is responsible for urban planning, tourism, and promoting all manner of events. The demand comes from immigrants, business people, tourists and other globetrotters who observe and enjoy such urbane pleasures, generally from the remote perspective of anonymous *flaneurs*.

16 Klaus Brake, 'Die räumliche Struktur der Dienstleistungsökonomie oder: Warum gibt es keine Dezentralisierung?', in: Häußermann/Siebel (eds), *New York*, pp. 99f., quotation p. 104 (translation CE).

I have applied this approach to Paris and London around 1900 and found a sharp diversity in the intensity of supply and demand in each city. In addition, the amount of interaction in London turned out to be considerably weaker than in Paris.

To explain these findings it is appropriate to begin with a short review of the course of urbanisation in both cities. In terms of size, at the end of the nineteenth century both the British and the French capitals can be regarded as mega-cities. The central area of London had around 4.5 million inhabitants and central Paris, 2.8 million. In the Greater London area there were 7.2 million inhabitants and Greater Paris, 4.1 million.¹⁷ These figures, however, fail to reveal different patterns of growth. In the later seventeenth century London was already the largest city in Europe and grew further during the eighteenth century along with industrialisation and the early expansion of the service sector. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, however, this development came to a temporary end, and the influx of people into the city began to drop off. The major reason for further population growth was that birth rates exceeded death rates. The census of 1911 showed that two thirds of all Londoners were born there. If we compare this with Paris at the turn of the century, the capital of a nation where industrialisation not only began later but grew comparatively slowly, we see that population growth due to the influx of people from outside the city was still in full flow here. The number of native-born Parisians in 1911 was only 40 per cent.¹⁸ If we relate this to the questions I formulated at the start of the article this means that the proportion of inhabitants for whom life in a modern metropolis was a new and possibly confusing experience was greater in Paris than in London. And this confusion required a form of cultural alleviation.

The differing growth tempo in both cities led to distinctive time perspectives in the minds of their inhabitants. Whereas the majority of Londoners took it for granted that they would be living there for the rest of their lives, this was not necessarily the case for Parisians. Indeed for many people – including the artists and intellectuals who came to breathe in the revolutionary atmosphere of the French capital – their residence did

17 The data are from John Lawrence et al., 'The Outbreak of War and the Urban Economy: Paris, Berlin, and London in 1914', *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), p. 566.

18 Data from *ibid.*, pp. 566, 568; see also Jean-Louis Robert, 'Paris, London, Berlin and the Eve of the War', in Jay Winter/Jean-Louis Robert (eds), *Capital Cities at War. Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 30f.

in fact prove only temporary.¹⁹ Looking at the cultural life of a capital this is significant to the extent that people who feel at home in a city generally develop an interest in building up a long-term relationship with the community, whereas those who are only passing through prefer fleeting communications in informal groups.²⁰ The former case, which was characteristic of London, was conducive to the growth in popularity of group activities like team sports, brass bands and choral music. The latter, as in Paris, encouraged the growth of a bohemian culture with a tendency to experiment in the areas of art and eroticism.²¹ Both these developments were modern in their own way; but conditions in Paris were more conducive to the *flaneurs*.

The London perspective on life, being more settled, had additional repercussions in urban planning. For all classes had an ingrained need to create living conditions suited to family life. In practical terms there was a general demand for standard community housing with gardens and parks and running water in kitchens, bathrooms and toilets. The central problem for London urban planners was that the city was continually spreading over an ever greater area and they sought to react to this primarily by extending the underground railway network.²² Urban planners in Paris on the other hand were forced to deal with the problems of fluctuation and population density. And from the time of Haussmann at the latest they began to speed up the construction of large-scale blocks of rented flats.²³

On the basis of the different emphases on urban planning different experiences of urbanity had arisen by 1900. The London model, where people lived some distance away from their workplace, was conducive to thinning out the inner city areas – a development which was speeded up

19 Cf. the examples in William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns. Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago and London, 1998), pp. 142-58.

20 Cf. Herbert J. Gans, 'Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Reevaluation of Definitions (1991)', in Philip Kasinitz (ed.), *Metropolis. Center and Symbol of our Times* (New York, 1995), pp. 170-95.

21 Cf. R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites 1780-1850', *HJ*, 26 (1986), pp. 95-118; Jerrold Seigel, *Paris bohème 1830-1930. Culture et politique aux marges de la vie bourgeoise 1830-1930* (Paris, 1991).

22 In greater detail H.J. Dyos, 'Railways and housing in Victorian London', 2 parts, *Journal of Transport History*, 2/1 (1955), pp. 11-21 and 2/2 (1955), pp. 90-100; Roy Porter, *London. A Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.), pp. 314ff.

23 Cf. Christophe Charle, *Histoire sociale de la France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1991), pp. 121f.; David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 73ff.

even more by the growth in the price of land which went hand in hand with the concentration of banking and insurance companies in certain inner city areas. In Paris, on the other hand, living and working were permanently bound up together. The first stretch of the metro between Vincennes and Porte Maillot was opened in 1900, and more and more Parisians began to make use of it in order to get to work. But, unlike their London counterparts, they were moving between similarly densely populated areas and similarly mixed suburbs. At the turn of the century a *flâneur* in the London City area and its adjacent suburbs would have mostly come into contact with businessmen, office employees, and tourists – i.e. male adults –, whereas in Paris he would have had additional and constant contact with ladies, female messengers and children. The characteristic artistic motif to be found in London street scenes were gentlemen with bowler hats.²⁴ For Paris on the other hand the Impressionists and their successors concentrated their attention on urban parks, food and flower markets, and popular evening and Sunday leisure pursuits – café concerts, sporting events, bathing in the Seine and dealings with prostitutes.²⁵

Londoners of course also had their pleasures. And if it were possible to establish the precise number of cinemas, music halls, bands, orchestras and sporting facilities in both cities the British capital would doubtlessly come out on top. For certain elements of modern mass culture like the music hall and modern football, whose traditions can be traced back to pre-industrial times, had been imported into all areas of London by the people who had moved in from the countryside.²⁶ But a large proportion of such pleasures was distributed all over the suburbs and therefore not immediately accessible to tourists who tended to keep to the leisure areas around Leicester Square.²⁷ This particular area in turn was not so very dif-

24 Cf. Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler-Hat. His History and Iconography* (Chapel Hill and London, 1993).

25 Cf. Robert Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society* (New Haven and London, 1988).

26 Cf. James Walvin, *English Urban Life 1776-1851* (London, 1984); Richard Holt, 'Football and the Urban Way of Life', in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism. British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700-1914* (London, 1988), pp. 67-85; Harold Scott, 'The Pub Music Hall', *Architectural Review*, 105 (1949), pp. 121-8. For an overview, see Andrew Horrall, *Popular Culture in London c. 1890-1918. The Transformation of Entertainment* (Manchester, 2001).

27 Porter, London, pp. 169ff., describes this 'topography of pleasure' for the eighteenth century. See also Francis Sheppard, *London 1808-1870: The Infernal Wen* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), p. 356.

ferent from those in other large British cities, so that British people in general did not tend to visit the capital for its night-life.²⁸ The comparable centre of leisure and pleasure in Paris, Montmartre, only sprang into being in the 1870s and 1880s and gained its popular reputation as a 'den of vice' not least from the fact that there was scarcely anything similar in the provinces.²⁹

To sum up: the specific course of urbanisation in London created comparatively little demand for modern culture, at least in the inner city areas where businessmen, tourists and other outsiders tended to gather. Was the range of offers less than in Paris as well?

London's cultural life was fundamentally determined by its global relationships. This occurred, however, in a different manner from that suggested by globalisation scholars. The many threads of global trading and financial activities all came together in London. These were an important source of the high level of consumption and general affluence since a large part of employment in the City and the central area as a whole were in the broadest sense directly or indirectly dependent on the exercise of these functions.³⁰ Looked at from a cultural history perspective, however, global interconnections also had their drawbacks. The network of trading and financial relationships had to be linked up and maintained on the other side of the oceans. This, in turn, meant that a great many potential organisers and financial sponsors of the culture of modernity were permanently living abroad with their families. Around 1900 these included a good number of very rich aristocrats and bourgeois plutocrats who would normally have attempted to buy themselves social recognition by sponsoring modern art, major sporting events as well as other events. Because many of these were involved in such activities overseas London was permanently deprived of a large part of its cultural capital both metaphorically and literally.³¹ Given the fact that there was a general lack of

28 Cf. Porter, *London*, p. 205; and Sheppard, *London*, pp. 354ff.

29 Cf. Willms, *Paris*, pp. 450ff.

30 Cf. Anthony D. King, *Global Cities. Post-Imperialism and the Internationalization of London* (London, 1990), pp. 63ff.; Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900. The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven and London, 1999).

31 The argument was stimulated by Peter E. Henneck, 'Zur Entwicklung der englischen Städte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert', *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 20 (1960), pp. 226-233, 231f. Also see Charles A. Jones, *International Business in the Nineteenth Century. The Rise and Fall of a Cosmopolitan Bourgeoisie* (Brighton,

public funds for cultural purposes in London – I shall come back to this later – this is an extremely relevant factor.

I am not trying to argue that London had been utterly deprived of its rich and super-rich by 1900, but rather that these particular species did not play such a major role as in other urban cultures. This tendency was further aggravated by the fact that the British upper classes were accustomed to conducting their social life on their country estates to which receptions, balls and other events of the social season had been transferred in the course of the nineteenth century.³² By contrast with their counterparts on the other side of the channel prosperous families did not merely spend the summer months living in the countryside but tended to be permanently resident there. Here they spent the major part of their 'cultural budget' – in the upkeep of their estates, for fox-hunting, horse-racing and also for that concomitant of rural pleasures, 'sporting art', a genre which might be said to have more to do with journalism than art.³³ It is accepted by most historians that the flight of the British bourgeoisie to the countryside was an expression of the cultural mimicry of the aristocracy. But this custom was also connected with the fact that worldwide trading and financial activities meant that banking and insurance firms were concentrated in the city. For landowners preferred to exploit real estate for profitable functional buildings rather than their own representative city villas. This also explains why British gentlemen were generally satisfied to spend their evenings relaxing in comfortable leather armchairs in a club in the Mall or St. James Street.

Furthermore, whenever they sought entertainment beyond their rural confines or wanted to take their families away for a break many of them travelled to the European continent.³⁴ Their favourite destinations were not only seaside resorts or spas like Nice, Cannes and Baden-Baden but

1987); Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles. Society Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1986), p. 83.

32 Cf. F.M.L. Thompson, 'Town and City', in: F.M.L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, vol. 1: Regions and Communities* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-86, esp. pp. 72f.; Davidoff, *Best Circles*, pp. 28f.

33 Cf. Angela Teller, 'Pferderennbilder. Studien zu einer Bildgattung im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert' (PhD Dissertation, Aachen, 1987). For art collections in country houses, cf. Frank Davis, *Victorian Patrons of the Arts* (London, 1963), p. 13; Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 85f.

34 Cf. J. A. R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (2nd edn, Hassocks, 1976) (first published 1947).

also Paris. The French capital was therefore able to benefit from British trading profits.

Paris also took on such a role because members of the British upper classes would attend entertainments there which they refused to take part in at home. For around the turn of the century modern entertainment in Paris was mostly the preserve of the affluent classes, i.e. the local bourgeoisie and foreign tourists.³⁵ In London, by contrast, factory workers and craftsmen actively participated in urban leisure for, as a result of the extraordinary affluence in the country (and also the fact that trade unions were prepared to fight for their members), they had the necessary time and income at their disposal. The upper classes regarded football matches in the English league as proletarian, and therefore unattractive to 'better circles'. And if they attended music halls, which they generally considered coarse and politically anarchic, this was restricted to the 'classier', more expensive halls in and around Leicester Square. They also tended to look down on Sunday leisure activities like hiring a rowing boat on the Thames, for this had also become attractive to the masses.³⁶ This finding is of relevance to the theme of this chapter because in London (and elsewhere in England) impressionists, expressionists and other modern painters generally no longer considered such scenes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as suitable subjects. For recent research by art historians revealed that they produced their pictures expressly for the art market – meaning the rich and respectable.³⁷ It is remarkable that an artist like Claude Monet, who lived in London for a time after the Franco-German

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- 35 Cf. Donald J. Olsen, *Die Stadt als Kunstwerk* (London, 1988), p. 290 (English edition: *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* [New Haven and London, 1986]); Julia Csergo, 'Extension et mutation du loisir citadin, Paris XIX^e siècle début XX^e siècle', in Alain Corbin (ed.), *L'avènement des loisirs 1850-1960* (Paris and Rome, 1995), pp. 119-68, 428-38.
- 36 Cf. the picture 'Boulter's Lock – Sunday Afternoon' by Edward John Gregory, reproduced in: Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panorama. Paintings of Victorian Life* (London, 1976), plate 192. Cf. also Holt, *Urban Crowd*; Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class, and Conflict* (Cambridge, 1996).
- 37 Until the mid-nineteenth century, popular-culture motifs had been quite en vogue in England; cf. Wood, *Victorian Panorama*. On modernist painters observing market requirements cf. Herbert, *Impressionism*; and Alan Robinson, 'Aesthetes, Impressionists and Parvenus: Some Early Trials of Modern Painting in London', in Andreas Fischer et al. (eds), *Aspects of Modernism. Studies in Honour of Max Nännny* (Tübingen, 1997), pp. 19-32. Robert Jensen mentions that British art dealers sold the impressionists comparatively late and priced them comparatively high; cf. *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton, 1994), p. 9.

war of 1870/71, preferred to paint fog-covered bridges over the Thames rather than popular recreational activities, which he would have done in France.³⁸ And British artists were quite simply blind to later trends in modern art, above all cubism, futurism and Dadaism, which took up motifs of popular culture.³⁹

One reason why this global city around 1900 had not yet developed to a capital of the culture of modernity was the fact that the profits from worldwide trading and financial dealings were in many cases spent elsewhere. A further reason can be found in its importance as the capital of Great Britain, the world's most powerful nation in the nineteenth century. For over the decades this role had created and cemented a political culture steeped in smugness and self-importance. To understand this connection it is worth taking a look at France once again.

There the nineteenth century was shot through with ever new crises, conflicts and revolutions which encouraged the instrumentalisation of culture for symbolic politics. Urban modernisation after the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 by men such as Haussmann gave Paris the reputation of being 'the city of open spaces'. Such measures, however, were not only undertaken for hygienic, social and aesthetic reasons but were also motivated by tactical considerations with regard to the dangers of civil war. Spacious boulevards, squares and parks could facilitate troop movements, give them an exposed shooting-range, and make it difficult for insurgents to find hiding places or erect barricades.⁴⁰ Political considerations once more played a role in modernisations undertaken during the second half of the nineteenth century. This time symbolic politics were not only directed internally but – as a result of the French defeat in the 1870/71 war – towards the outside world. The fact that several consecutive world ex-

38 Cf. John House, 'London in the Art of Monet and Pissarro', in *The Image of London. Views by Travellers and Emigrés 1550-1920*, ed. Barbican Art Gallery (London, 1987), pp. 73-98; The Arts Council of Great Britain (ed.), *The Impressionists in London* (London, 1973).

39 Cf. Herbert, *Impressionism*; Jeffrey Weiss, *The Popular Culture of Modern Art. Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-Gardism* (New Haven and London, 1994); Pierre Chazaud, *Art et Football/Football and Art 1860-1960. Impressionism(e), Cubism(e), Pop-Art* (Touloud, 1998), esp. pp. 7, 10.

40 Cf. Markus Junkelmann, 'Die Präsenz des Militärischen in der Hauptstadt', in Hans-Michael Körner/Katharina Weigand (eds), *Hauptstadt. Historische Perspektiven eines Themas* (Munich, 1995), pp. 117-136, 133.

hibitions were staged in Paris should also be viewed against this background. The exhibition of 1878 was intended to signal the end of the post-war period and the triumph of the republic over the strong tendencies in favour of restoring the monarchy; that of 1889, which was held on the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution, was intended to mark the conclusion of the Boulanger crisis; and that of 1900 was intended not only to celebrate the start of a new century but to wipe out memories of the Dreyfuss affair.⁴¹

Representative buildings were erected for all these exhibitions – the Trocadéro, Grand and Petit Palais des Beaux Arts, Pont Alexandre III, and the Gare d’Orsay – and these were made even more attractive by a large variety of technical effects. Water and lighting effects, electric lighting, moving staircases and walkways, panoramas, cinematography and other similar pointers to the future were meant to impress both French and foreign citizens alike.⁴² Whether they were useful or not was a secondary consideration. This is exemplified in the case of the Eiffel tower which was built between 1885 and 1889. The French Minister of Trade had invited architects to tender for a 300 metre high tower with the aim of ‘frapper le monde’. The architect Gustave Eiffel never tired of emphasising the multi-functional nature of this, the indisputably most spectacular building of all the Paris world exhibitions. Arguing against critics who were offended by this ‘ruination’ of the city’s image he claimed that the tower was needed to take aero dynamic and radio-electric measurements to pave the way for telecommunications, to conduct meteorological studies, and to plan studies of the movements of climbers. But all this could have been achieved by other means. The same applies to the panorama of the city from the viewing platform, long familiar to balloonists. For visitors to the world exhibition of 1889, as well as for later tourists, the essential fascination of the Eiffel tower was – and still remains – its inherent uselessness. As Roland Barthes has pointed out, it has no political, religious or any other cultural meaning; it is neither a memorial, nor a work of art, nor a museum. The only thing which tourists

41 Cf. Willms, pp. 454f.; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas. The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester, 1988).

42 Cf. Christina Mareske, ‘Treffpunkt Eiffelturm. Die Pariser Weltausstellungen von 1889, 1900, 1925 und 1937’, in *absolut modern sein. Culture technique in Frankreich 1889-1937. Eine Ausstellung der Neuen Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst in den Räumen der Staatlichen Kunsthalle Berlin, 20.3.-8.5.1986* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 118-27.

can gaze at, climb, photograph and fantasise about as 'imaginative engineers' is the tower as such, constructed from steel girders, plates and screws. It is an end in itself, and this explains precisely why it has become the trade mark of Paris. Between 1897 and 1930 Robert Delaunay alone painted around 30 pictures of the tower.⁴³

In the late nineteenth century such a spectacle was inconceivable to the political establishment of Great Britain and their Empire which embraced the world, the more so because many different critics associated it with absolutist ostentation.⁴⁴ The British lack of fantasy was reflected in the way they gave expression to their own capital. It was not only the fact that Buckingham Palace, which had been the monarch's residence since the eighteenth century, was utterly lacking in the luxurious facades which were customary on the European continent. With the exception of the Houses of Parliament most public buildings in London tended to be down-to-earth, even shabby, and at best unremarkable. They closely resembled the architecture of privately erected buildings which were determined by usage and profit motives. Within this context a building like the Eiffel tower seemed to be a sheer squandering of money. In London public funds were at best expended on improving canalisation, removing traffic hindrances or – the pinnacle of urban aesthetics – for parks as 'green lungs'. Thus, on a technical level, the city had reached its zenith around 1900 in that it was fulfilling contemporary standards of hygiene. But it looked less modern than it was.⁴⁵

It took until the turn of the century before Londoners began to turn their backs on these principles. This was due to a gradual shift in international power relationships. The national unification of both Italy and Germany, the recovery of the USA from the setbacks of the Civil War, the race for territory in Africa, the customs policies of the continental powers, the Boer War and the crises in Fashoda, Agadir and Morocco all raised fears amongst Britons that they would not be able to maintain their economic, political and colonial domination. They reacted by renewing forms of public representation. A Queen Victoria Memorial Committee under Lord Esher came up with fresh forms of 'Pomp and Circumstance'

43 Roland Barthes, 'The Eiffel Tower' [first printed 1979], in Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and other Mythologies* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 3-19. Cf. also Christoph Asendorf, 'Der Eiffelturm', in *absolut modern sein. Culture technique in Frankreich 1889-1937*, pp. 107-17, esp. p. 114 (on Delaunay).

44 Donald J. Olsen, 'The Changing Image of London in *The Builder*', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, no 19 (1973), p. 7.

45 Cf. Olsen, *Stadt*, p. 43.

and gave a new impulse to patriotic music. In 1908 a Franco-British Exhibition, whose programme included – as I have already mentioned – the IVth Olympic Games, attempted to provide a link with the legendary world exhibitions of 1851 and 1862. Inner London was given an impressive amount of splendid new buildings: the County Hall to house the London County Council which had been created in 1888, the War Ministry in Whitehall, the government buildings in Parliament Square and Westminster Cathedral. The Mall was extended, Admiralty Arch erected and Buckingham Palace received a new façade etc etc.⁴⁶ The efforts of the Royal Family and public bodies went hand-in-hand with the new signs of liberal sponsorship of the arts. For between 1900 and 1914 a greater number of plutocrats who felt a need to give themselves a public profile began to move their business headquarters back to London. Amongst these was Henry Tate who had made a fortune from refining sugar.⁴⁷ At the same time the Arts and Crafts Movement which had originated in the 1870s and whose most famous members were William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, began to gain international recognition because the British government had insisted on their participating in the Paris world exhibition.⁴⁸

Looked at from the perspective of this article these modernisations were only partially successful. On the one hand, they generally came too late to achieve the desired effect, for most of them occurred in the decade before the First World War, an event which deprived them of the attention which they might otherwise have enjoyed. On the other hand, there was still no sense of risk about such undertakings; no feeling of breaking into undiscovered territories.⁴⁹ The new buildings were in the so-called ‘Edwardian baroque’ style and interwoven with classicism. The William Morris Company fed the myth of ‘Merrie Olde England’. And the Royal

46 Cf. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 123; David Cannadine, *Die Erfindung der britischen Monarchie 1820-1994* (Berlin, 1994), p. 29; Susan Dabney Pennybacker, *A Vision for London 1889-1914. Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (London, 1995); see also the photographs in Barker, London.

47 Cf. Janet Minihan, *The Nationalization of Culture. The Development of State Subsidies to the Arts in Great Britain* (New York, 1977), p. 154; Jones, *International Business*, ch. 5.

48 Cf. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, pp. 122ff.

49 On the absence of a prominent discourse about modernism in the British upper middle class, cf. Bernhard Rieger, ‘Envisioning the Future: British and German Reactions to the Paris World Fair 1900’, in Martin Daunton/Bernhard Rieger (eds), *Meanings of Modernity. Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (Oxford and New York, 2001), pp. 145-64, esp. 154 ff.

Family with its sumptuous coronation and funeral ceremonies, its coach processions to the Opening of Parliament and its guardsmen with their bearskin helmets created not so much the impression of modernity as a carry-over from the Middle Ages. 'Invention of tradition', not 'the culture of modernity', is the byword applied by British cultural historians to the events around the turn of the century.⁵⁰

That concludes my case study of London and Paris. I began this chapter with a discussion of the approaches of Weber and Simmel. I should now like to confront present-day globalisation research with my own findings. What use has this approach in explaining the connection between major cities and the culture of modernity?

First it is possible to argue that globalisation research provides a useful historical impulse. For the cities of Paris and London around 1900 did indeed offer an opportunity to observe how involvement in world market relationships and prestige competition between nation states transformed itself into culturally significant social activities. Having said that, I should put this statement into perspective. For the professed functional connections between major cities and the culture of modernity, when looked at in individual detail, are not recognisable. One surprising finding was that in London, the global city par excellence, the criterion of being able to communicate internationally was comparatively non-existent. Paris, on the other hand, the capital of a backward and second-rate world power, was the city which set international standards in the area of modern culture. Also contrary to the assumptions of global researchers the status of Paris as a global city was derived first and foremost *from* its modern culture which acted as a successful compensation for deficits in global power in politics and the economy.

Furthermore – and this also helps to put the uses of this approach into perspective – my examples have shown that examining the question predominantly from the perspective of tourists, businessmen and other outsiders in the city is too one-sided. On the one hand foreigners, being consumers, could only indirectly influence the shaping of modern culture and were forced to accept what permanent residents and their political representatives offered. On the other hand another surprising finding reveals that the international quality of a city not only attracts foreigners but

50 Cf. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 122; Eric Hobsbawm/Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1993).

equally – mediated by the desire for global profit – draws away local inhabitants by confronting them with the possibility or necessity of leaving the city.

The results of these extensions and corrections to recent globalisation studies seem to throw up similar problems to the approaches proposed by Max Weber and Georg Simmel, which I criticised at the beginning of this essay. I therefore regard it as pointless to pursue this approach any further as a means of investigating the culture of modernity and how it became rooted in major cities. It would probably be much more promising to investigate more closely those intervening factors which resulted in unexpected urbanisation and modernisation effects.

The following intervening factors have become apparent in my comparisons between London and Paris: the traditions of political culture in both countries which were mediated by wars; war defeats and imperial expansion; the availability of private and public capital; the social relationships which had evolved between the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the lower orders; and lastly the traditions which sprung up from the culture of modernity itself: Whereas these traditions were still missing in Paris, in London they had already brought forth specific British features.