Experiential Approaches to the Global City: London as Social Laboratory

Anthony Gristwood
CAPA International Education,

Michael Woolf
CAPA International Education,

Introduction: The Global City

London is the paramount example of a city that is not bounded by its geography and cannot be grasped in isolation. The U.K.'s national capital and the prime focus for business, finance and creative industries, London also transcends the U.K.'s borders as a hub of the world economy. A recent study commissioned by *The Independent* newspaper argued that Britain's capital had outstripped its global rivals as an economic and cultural powerhouse, to constitute an imagined "capital of the world" (Calder, 2007). This paper argues that London, a city riddled by the socioeconomic contradictions of its success, provides unparalleled opportunities for active experiential and inquiry-based learning which transcend the conventional study abroad agenda. The authors' intention is not to examine the various definitions of what constitutes a global city, but instead to outline some of the ways in which students' conceptions of London as a study abroad destination can be transformed by their active investigation of its global nature. London is shaped in multiple ways by its connections with the wider world, and in turn shapes the world through the decisions which are made there — a "factory" of globalization. London's distinctive global nature can be identified in terms of historicity and spatiality, located in both the legacy of its imperial dynamic and its contemporary place in the networks of the world capitalist economy. What, then, are the principal dimensions of London's "globality," which provide the contextual framework for its value as a learning laboratory?

Firstly, London was the capital of the British Empire — ruling over 400 million people at its height worldwide, a nexus of trade, migration and, initially, of slavery — whose legacy saturates many of the city's key public spaces,

institutions and heritage sites. Secondly, decolonisation has cemented London's status as a cosmopolitan city of migrants. Thirdly, London has become one of the three principal foci of the world economy, along with New York and Tokyo. A command and control point for global capitalism, it is also an arena within which its social contradictions are played out (Thrift, 1989, pp. 16–79). As a premier financial centre, decisions made here have global as well as local implications, as demonstrated vividly by the credit crunch crisis and the G20 summit. Finally, London's global environmental footprint is 125 times the size of the city itself, equivalent to the entire land surface of the U.K. About 80% of its foodstuffs are imported, it emits 50 million tonnes of CO_2 a year, and discards 18 million tonnes of waste, only 9% of which is recycled (Greater London Authority, 2003). The iconography of conventional study abroad and tourism fallaciously peddle the notion of London as a "traditional" study abroad location, ignoring the reality of the most transformed urban space in the world and its complex global connections.

Imagining London: "Global" as Metaphor

As a centre for exploration and discovery, participation and observation, the global city offers a rich field of academic potential precisely because it is (by its nature) multi-layered, multi-dimensional, complex and challenging. On one level, our task is to reconfigure — and enrich — students' imaginative conceptions of such places. The trope of the "global city" is, in a literal sense, metaphorical. Whilst we may conventionally think of cities as located in specific spaces and enclosed, however approximately, in geographical boundaries, cities such as London embody specific characteristics that transcend the local. More fundamentally still, they exist as a landscape of mind as well as a geographical space. They form a contested terrain where myths coexist with realities, where civilizations meet, and where diversity brings creative and intellectual energy, and conflict. In this sense, a key characteristic of the global city is that it is possible to explore and invent the place without ever having been there, as Sukhdev Sandhu (2003) implies:

> Cities have always been imaginative as well as physical places. We mythologise and fantasise about them. We create mental maps (pp. xxiv–xxv.).

For Jonathan Raban (1988), "the city as we know it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the

hard city" (p. 4). Constituted by the interplay between imagination and their material spaces, cities become a kind of white space into which meaning is constructed and reconstructed. Thus, Peter Ackroyd (2000) can define London as a paradox: "perpetually old, but always new" (p. 723). In this manifestation, it has a special relationship with history and time. Past and present are intertwined; the city contains the living and the sometimes dead: "London was a city of ghosts, some deader than others." (Billingham, 2002, p. 148). The London of Dickens still exists in the mind, as does that of Ealing film comedies, of the "swinging" heart of the 1960s, of Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia" and Britpop. In that sense, imagined Londons co-exist with contemporary realities and form a rich terrain for the critical interrogation of their multiple representations in literature, film or the heritage industry. For example, London Bridge is both a physical construct and an emblem for T.S. Eliot (1922/2003, p. 60) of a city of the dead:

> Unreal city,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.

Tropes of the global city imply duality, a concrete space and a concept for good or ill that may be imagined in various shapes by Eliot, and by Brecht (2008, p. 33):

> On thinking about hell, I gather
> My brother Shelley found it was a place
> Much like the city of London.

London spills into the surrounding countryside, invading, occupying, creating the world beyond the centre as suburbia. Simultaneously, it constitutes a nexus in the global networked urbanism of the twenty-first century. It is defined by its social, material — and imaginative — relations with other places and spaces worldwide. Beyond these geographies, it is bounded only by the imagination. Geography becomes a metaphor for intellectual and imaginative space. The village is small, constructed as parochial and narrow. The city, in contrast, is inclusive, wide enough to contain polarities and paradoxes: the global village. Geography becomes a metaphor for intellectual

and social space. Thus: bright lights and the city of dreadful night.

Cosmopolis: City as Paradox

As Peter Ackroyd indicates, "London is so large and so wild that it contains no less than everything" (2000, p. 3). In *London Calling*, Sukhdev Sandhu suggests that the global city is encompassing, inclusive, yet a crucible of contradictions. A "moral abattoir" (2003, p. 93), London is also a seat of learning and culture. Its influence extends far beyond city and national boundaries. The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) World Service radio channel was founded in 1932 as the BBC Empire Service. It is still located at Bush House in central London. It raises a fanciful question: is it broadcasting to the world or, in some implied manner, from the world? The World Service is both an imperial concept (we broadcast to the world from the world) and an indication of London's self-conscious sense of itself as a global entity.

London also, for Hanif Kureishi, transcends national identity. London is in England but is not wholly part of it: "We love our city and belong to it. Neither of us are English, we're Londoners, you see" (1987, p. 33). This trans-national urban identity characterises the city as a place where mobile populations intermingle, collide and co-exist. London has long challenged the imagined boundaries of British identity and its traditional "whiteness." The medieval cleric, Richard of Devizes, noted disapprovingly in 1185 that "all sorts of men crowd there from every country under the heavens. Each brings its own vices and its own customs to the city" (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 702). In *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith's version of contemporary London precisely reflects this dimension of the city:

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experience. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks. (2000, p. 326)

The 2001 census confirmed London as the most diverse city in Britain, receiving nearly a third of the international immigration into the U.K., and about a third of London's population was born overseas (Office for National

Statistics, 2009, p. 44). Furthermore, three hundred languages or more are spoken in its schools (Benedictus, 2005) and the city depends on migrant labour (Wills, Datta, Evans, Herbert, May, & McIlwaine, 2010, pp. 28–58). Over 40% of the population belongs to minority ethnic communities (London Councils, 2008). Identified as the city's prime asset by a majority of its inhabitants in the *Independent* study, this cosmopolitan hybridity also presents a series of profound challenges for the city's effective governance.

Of Kureishi (both exemplar and recorder of multicultural London), Sandhu writes that:

> ...his work illuminates one of the traditional features of London life—its ability to thrust people from different backgrounds and social spheres into sometimes fractious, sometimes harmonious co-existence. London isn't an organic community. On the contrary, it's a restless, clamorous agglomeration of exiles, migrants and refugees. And juxtaposition and collage are the ideal aesthetic modes for incarnating this higgledy-piggledy commotion of a metropolis. (2003, p. 259)

Such narratives bestow London with a postmodern sense of chaos, confusion and dislocation which captures postcolonial migrants' contradictory experiences of immersion in the imperial heartland and the transformative aspect of their arrival. For British-born minorities, such encounters are even more complex in their remapping of British cultural identities and the cultural landscape of the city (Upstone, 2006). As Jane Jacobs noted in her study of the intersections of class, ethnicity and urban restructuring in the East End, during the nineteenth century, when the British Empire was at its height, Britain's colonized "Other" was kept at a safe distance from the imperial heartland. A neat divide therefore existed between "Self" and "Other." Decolonization and the postwar waves of migration into the U.K. brought that "Other" of the imperial "Self" back home, so that it is now located within British shores — no longer a "safely distant supplement" to the British nation, but instead generating novel and immediate cultural encounters in urban space (Jacobs, 1996, pp. 65–98). In 2001, as a response to the events of 9/11 in New York, the British Council and Museum of London commissioned the African-Caribbean poet Benjamin Zephaniah to write a personal perspective on multicultural London. In *The London Breed* (2001), Zephaniah celebrates the energy and excitement of "dis great pol-

luted place," an edgy, but inclusive, cultural crucible:

> It's so cool when the heat is on
> And when it's cool it's so wicked
> We just keep melting into one
> Just like the tribes before us did,
> I love dis concrete jungle still
> With all its sirens and its speed
> The people here united will
> Create a kind of London breed.

To travel through London is to encounter juxtaposition and asymmetry, movement and flow but also friction and congestion. The notion of "flow" runs through much of the literature surrounding the global city. For Ackroyd, the Thames is in one sense a construct: "It would be possible to write the history of the Thames as a history of a work of art" (2007, p. 5). It is also the single point of historical continuity in the changing world: "The river is the oldest thing in London, and it changes not at all" (2007, p. 114). As Reichel (2006) observes, for Zephaniah, "dis overcrowded place" is a multifaceted encounter between such flows of history and futurity "Where old buildings mark men and time / And new buildings all seem to race / Up to a cloudy dank skyline" (2001).

Unequal City

The sociologist Manuel Castells has argued that contemporary globalization is characterized by the interplay between what he terms the "space of places" (specific locales, communities, sites) and the "space of flows" (of capital, information, commodities, people) (1996, pp. 377–412). These flows have transformed the social, economic and cultural landscapes of metropolitan areas worldwide and have re-ordered urban hierarchies and links between cities. Cities have experienced the impacts of such global restructuring and also interact with global forces in distinctive ways. Thus, to assign "global" status to a city is to assert its current status within the world economy. The core of Saskia Sassen's argument in *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* is that "for centuries, the world economy has shaped the life of cities…" (2001, p. 3). The reverse is also true: cities have shaped the world economy. Historically, great city states, such as Venice and Genoa facilitated

the flow of talent, goods, trade and power around the world. In the twenty-first century, the "city-state" is re-emergent. World cities occupy a position between the world economy and the territorial nation-state (King, 1990). Contradictory consequences flow from this.

Global cities of the first order, including London or New York, are "highly concentrated command posts in the organization of the world economy... key locations for financial and specialized service firms" (2001, p. 3), especially transnational corporations and international finance. Urban status within the world's urban network is highly dynamic: the "global" is constantly manufactured and re-shaped, flowing through and clustering around its centres (Halbert & Rutherford, 2010). Global cities concentrate wealth and control capital, and their glamour and potential riches attract international professionals in law, banking, insurance and specialized business services. In 2007 bonus payments to City workers hit a record high at £14.1 billion (Seager, 2007), boosting conspicuous consumption. Simon Bennett's ethnography of London's workforce recounts how one investment banker chose to celebrate her 30th birthday by flying all her friends to New York for "some silly stuff" (Bennett, 2009, pp. 17–20), whilst in the most fashionable clubs, customers vied with one another to spend £4400 on vintage champagne magnums encrusted with Swarovski crystals. Above all, the bonuses have had a huge impact on property and land prices in and around London. In Chelsea and Kensington, prices have risen by a third year on year since 2000 (Teather, 2006).

In direct contrast, though for similar reasons, the global city is a magnet for the dispossessed. Sassen's "urban glamour zone" and "urban war zone" (2006, p. 87) coexist in the global city where, consequently, the gulf between the wealthy and the deprived is dramatically present. Recent research has revealed the depth and complexity of patterns of social inequality and exclusion across the capital and how these have changed over time. The results are striking: London has the highest rates of poverty and income inequality in the U.K.. There are more people in London with an income in either the top 10% or the bottom 10% nationally than anywhere else, whilst a higher proportion of people of all ages in London live below the poverty line[1], including 41% of children and 36% of pensioners. Black and ethnic minority Londoners account for 45% of the city's unemployed, whilst the city's pay gap is greater than elsewhere: women average only 77% of men's full time earnings (Greater London Authority, 2002). London accounts for half of all

those sleeping rough in England and by 2009 the proportion of households in London living in temporary accommodation was ten times the national average (City Parochial Foundation and New Policy Institute, 2009).

In many ways, these characteristics reflect current global trends. London, as the flagship and focus of Britain's open economy, exhibits these clearly. Furthermore, migrant workers, always crucial to London's success, link the inequalities of the global city with those of the wider world. Firstly, the wildest excesses of the city's property market and conspicuous consumption have been driven by a highly paid global elite of corporate executives and senior managers, along with new global super-rich such as Russian oligarchs or Middle Eastern oil barons. Secondly, migrants fleeing collapsed economies with rising inequality and unemployment have depressed labour costs and therefore average earnings. For all the wealthy aspirants drawn to the city there are, as Emma Lazarus (1883/2005, p. 58) wrote in another urban context:

> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

London's poor, as the geographer Doreen Massey observes, are therefore caught between two visions of the world city: the global hub of neoliberal financial services and the cosmopolitan city of migrants with its hybrid cultures and identities — and are pressurized from both directions (2007, pp. 54–72). The global city is, in summation, not just a poetic construct, but demonstrates the conjunction of rich and poor and the primacy of wealth distinctions that are enormous, global and deeply unjust. That may be the final paradox: the global city is a landscape of the imagination and a place of deep, disturbing discord.[2]

The Learning Laboratory

London has usually been constructed in the field of education abroad as a "traditional" location, less challenging than "non-traditional" environments. However, London's complexities and paradoxes create an environment that offers profound academic opportunities, particularly for experiential education which can help students engage critically with the city in all of its diversity and contradiction. Below, we explore this potential specifi-

cally in terms of interdisciplinary action-research, using urban field studies, service-learning and internships as methodologies to analyse the contested terrain of global London.

Students on their way across the Atlantic carry much baggage, some of it within their heads. As Jane Edwards (2000) has indicated, "It is the Brits' own mythic past that the Americans have assimilated" (p. 89). What they know about London comes from a variety of received representations in popular culture, history and myth conveyed by TV, cinema or literature. London has been— much like Paris— highly mythologised. These myths contain certain realities but tell, at best, a partial story. The actor Tim Roth offers an excellent — characteristically blunt — summary:

> Americans have bought into the romantic Jeremy Irons-Kenneth Branagh England. It's phoney. It's fake. Merchant-Ivory? Bollocks! Notting Hill, all those mannerisms and flawless turns of phrase, people don't really talk like that in England… British films are manufacturing fairy tales and Americans are going for it like they are buying picture postcards. (Roth, 1999)

In this "Masterpiece Theater" model (Edwards, 2000, p. 93), the city is represented by a cluster of traditions and institutions: the Tower of London and its Beefeaters, the Changing of the Guards and Buckingham Palace, London buses, policemen with odd hats and so forth. These icons are used to promote London in study abroad material, thus selling students what is familiar and "known."

Unpicking the Masterpiece

Many of central London's monumental buildings are enlisted in this myth-making. Essentially Victorian, their architecture and iconography transmit narratives of national and imperial self-confidence which are anachronistic or in conflict with contemporary ideas of Britishness. A critical reading of such sites combining classroom and field studies allows the interrogation of such discourses and their contextualisation in modern British culture and society. Walking tours or site visits, so long the staple of urban "fieldwork," can reveal urban — and national — transformation and are arguably most effective when crafted to engage with spaces or experiences students do not necessarily associate with learning. The "edu-tainment" of the heri-

tage walk (such as the ubiquitous Ripper tour of the East End) provides a rich terrain for deconstruction of representations of the city's past, as well as a consideration of their continuing significance for London as a tourist "brand" (Gristwood, 2006). West End department stores offer a compelling canvas on which to examine the spectacular display of historical constructions of nation and empire, as well as cultures of British consumerism today (Frith, 2006). Such landscapes, and their role in the politics of heritage and identity, invite critical student inquiry.

The familiar hub of central London— Trafalgar Square — is another opportunity. Pivotal to the representation of London as the heart of empire (Driver & Gilbert, 1998), it was constructed to commemorate Admiral Nelson's victory over the combined Napoleonic fleets and unambiguously celebrates a strident and masculinist version of British heroism, self-sacrifice and martial culture (Hood, 2005). Dominated by Nelson's column in its centre — itself emulating Trajan's Victory Column from the ancient forum of Rome (an additional layer of meaning), the Square has a pedestal at each corner. One carries an equestrian statue of George IV; the second and third, the nineteenth-century military heroes Sir Henry Havelock and Sir Charles Napier. The fourth pedestal sat empty until the millennium, when temporary artworks began to be placed there. The Square's imperial spectacle offers a complex text of overlapping British imperial and contemporary values. A focused walking tour, with active student fieldwork to examine architectural iconography, statues and inscriptions, uncovers the ways in which the meanings of empire were scripted in the space and its significance as a site of memory. Participant observation at festivals or rallies reveals the Square's ongoing function as a focus for public celebration and protest. These activities can be contextualised in the classroom and complemented by newspaper and web-based research to enrich students' understanding of even such a familiar part of the city.

Such projects reveal, for example, Havelock's controversial status as hero, based on his involvement in the Burmese, Afghan and Sikh Wars, and his leadership in quashing the Indian Uprising of 1857 (which led to formal British imperialism in India). In multicultural Britain, individual Londoners are positioned very differently from one another in relation to such narratives of imperial domination or militarism. The inscription beneath Havelock's statue reads as follows:

Soldiers! Your labours, your privations, your sufferings and your valour

will not be forgotten by a grateful country

This exhortation to his troops (which was followed by a massacre of the locals) signifies supreme self-confidence in the persistence of memory and the continuing significance of courage in the face of adversity "which will not be forgotten." Ironically, most Britons today would be hard pressed to explain the significance of Havelock and his achievements. Further research quickly reveals an acrimonious debate, instigated by then mayor, Ken Livingstone, about the propriety of these statues' location. Livingstone suggested substituting figures more appropriate and relevant to modern Londoners (Kelso, 2000). Sikhs from Southall, west London, accusing Havelock of genocide, argued that he did not merit continued commemoration (BBC News, 2002). As research preparation, students can be asked to consider questions such as: how did imperial spectacle shape ideas of British identity? How are these values subverted in the cityscape? What do recent struggles in the square reveal about current conflicts in British society?

The Square's fourth plinth provides alternative readings of it as a cultural site. With its long-term emptiness itself significant, the recent rolling programme of temporary artworks placed there reveal shifting cultural values running against the grain of the Square's intended meanings, and indicate an environment in which cultural meaning is fluid and contested. Questions to consider include: how do the displays on the fourth plinth recast British identity and values, and how do they contest "traditional" notions of Britishness as articulated by the original monuments?

For example, the current installation (May 2010)— Yinka Shonibare's Nelson's Ship in a Bottle— comprises a scale replica of Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory, in a giant glass bottle with sails made from Indonesian batik, a patterned textile originally appropriated by Dutch traders for African consumption. In this case, Shonibare, a Nigerian, bought them from south London's Brixton market. A vivid expression of the complex intersections of the imperial and postcolonial city, the sculpture both celebrates and critiques their legacy (Higgins, 2010). Previous artworks placed on the plinth also entered into dialogue in complex ways with the dominant narratives of the square. Marc Quinn's Alison Lapper Pregnant rendered a nude pregnant and disabled woman in classical sculpture. It celebrated alternative models of heroism beyond the military and opened up public debate about British attitudes towards disability and gender. Although controversial, its extended display (2005–7) attested its success.

Anthony Gormley's One & Other involved volunteers standing atop the plinth around the clock and emphasized the Square's continuing role as an arena of public dissent and protest whilst celebrating the rich diversity of Londoners' individual lifeworlds. The recent (November 2009) commemoration of New Zealander Sir Keith Park's crucial role in the successes of the Battle of Britain was more orthodox, although he had been previously erased from official histories of World War Two.[3]

Interrogative research, therefore, can explode students' assumptions about London's cultural and social homogeneity. Even "known" sites are made unfamiliar. Short walks around any inner London neighbourhood reveal a plethora of Indian, Chinese, Turkish, Italian and Middle Eastern shops and restaurants. Brick Lane in the East End (another favourite tourist destination) has become synonymous of the ways in which the city has been shaped by successive waves of migration, notably Jewish, Huguenot and Bengali. Throughout the city, the sheer diversity of the inhabitants, as well as the built environment they have helped to shape, speak to a culture fundamentally transformed. Study abroad in London offers tremendous opportunities for student exposure to neighbourhoods and communities transcending the "known" sites of tourist London, but too rarely provides a meaningful framework for such engagement.

Exposing the Hidden

Study abroad practitioners aspire to have students cross the metaphorical borders between the "Self" and the "Other." In addition to interrogative research, service-learning and internships, by employing critical empathy, engagement, and guided reflection, potentially offer a powerful means for students to go beyond the first person and move from a purely personal view of the "Other" culture to an analytical perspective (Woolf, 2008, pp. 30–31). For example, internship placements in the global city transcend the purely vocational. They provide a valuable focus for participatory research in distinct workplace cultures and communication styles as well as the firsthand analysis of specific societal issues and attitudes, changing urban economies and infrastructures. Thematic classroom reflection around core topics such as class, ethnicity and gender in the workplace allows students to trace their differential impacts on social relations and identities in everyday life and work. Internships abroad are *not* just work experience in a different cultural

setting. Students might be involved in, say, the efforts of TfL (Transport for London) to run the city's mass transit system, or to appreciate the challenges offered by the polyglot schools of Inner London on teaching practice. Others engage with the politics of heritage and urban preservation in the city's museums or cultural NGOs, while political constituency offices and pressure groups offer insights into issues of social exclusion and disadvantage at the grassroots level.

Service-learning is not applicable only to the global South. Indeed, in a global city such as London it offers students the opportunity to encounter hidden geographies and communities and engage meaningfully with them. At the same time, students are able to make a real contribution to the wellbeing of local residents — potentially re-forging what can sometimes be a problematic relationship with host sites. In both service-learning and internship curricula, students should be able to hone the skills associated with active citizenship — communication, enquiry and critical thinking — through exploration of the society, politics and culture of a global city. For example, CAPA International Education London's course *The Social Dynamics of London: Contemporary Issues through Service Learning* features a community based service-learning experience designed to foster students' understanding of, as well as civic engagement with, the complex social fabric and urban inequalities of London today. Community service placement is therefore integrated with guided reflection and research project work.

Students have worked with St Hilda's East, a community centre located close to Brick Lane, which provides a wide range of services to the area's largely Bangladeshi and Muslim population. Others have been involved with challenging youth work in Camden, a dynamic, cosmopolitan neighbourhood in north London. Community service takes place every week and central to these activities are specifically tailored research projects based in the community, devised in partnership between student, instructor and placement. Recent examples have included demographic research, oral histories, and community outreach, intended both to focus on student enquiry and, crucially, to benefit the host communities involved. Reflection in seminars, lectures and workshops provide context for the service-learning and focus on core themes of urban social dynamics: gender, ethnicity, class and the historical development of welfare provision, social work and research in the U.K..

Berry has noted the enriched value of experiences that allow students

to transcend simplistic notions of cultural essentialism and engage with the multidimensionality of society (2002, p. 233). The model of participant observation and action research employed here operationalizes the full potential of the global city as learning laboratory, as students' summative reports have attested. One writes of the initial challenges:

> It was daunting in the beginning to be the minority and feel so different, but I have realized that so many Asian, Black, and Hispanic people feel that way in the United States and most White people do not give it a second thought. It was important to walk in their shoes for a change and see how they may be feeling for once

Another testifies to the transformative impact of his project involvement:

> The Junior Youth Project definitely contributes to the attempts to change structurally the surrounding communities… [many of which] are riddled with all types of deprivation… and helps foster social inclusion for young people… Not only did I enjoy a great work opportunity, I also developed relationships with the staff and club members that I will remember for the rest of my life

The nuanced understanding of social dynamics which may be gained is abundantly clear in a third student's analysis:

> A strong sense of community is visible within the group… There is no wall or barrier between staff and participants, they are visibly comfortable with one another… The Pensioners' Project serves this community well because it provides a service to a group that has been overlooked— not only in the sense that they are elderly but because of their ethnicities. The face of the new East End is Bengali and Southeast Asian, and none of the pensioners are that…

> The Boys' Youth Project is an after school program which aims to provide a safe and structured environment for male youth in Tower Hamlets… Most of the staff comes from the area and a few were once part of the youth program. This really helps build a sense of community in the group, as the men that are trying to mentor these boys know exactly where they are coming from and what they are going through… These boys have ties to Bangladesh through their families but they were born

British. I have learnt that it is too simplistic to argue that the Muslim population of London is "the Other," existing in a separate world with allegiance to another country: their identities, and the ways they project them, are complicated.

Conclusions

These case studies demonstrate the continued relevance and value of study abroad in "traditional" locations such as London. They outline some of the ways in which sustained and complex connections can be made between individual students' experiences and the social communities which they encounter. Critical urban studies, internship and service-learning projects all reveal how conventional perceptions of London may themselves be critiqued by a focus on the uniquely challenging milieu of the global city.

Many emergent global cities worldwide offer dynamic and stimulating environments for diverse experiential learning. The fastest growing and largest of them are already located in the global South with aspirants to global status appearing in the urban hierarchy such as Mexico City, Mumbai, Beijing or Shanghai. Despite common core characteristics, there is not one single model of the global city applicable in all contexts. Each performs different functions and occupies a separate and complementary niche within the world's networked urbanism. This generates distinctive socioeconomic outcomes and experiences for inhabitants. Opportunities for comparative and collaborative participant research and analysis between different centres or programs are therefore enormous. Some comparisons are obvious counterparts to one another, with similar functions, stature, and socio-cultural phenomena such as London and New York (Fainstein & Harloe, 1992; Zukin, 1992; Charney, 2007). Others, such as cross-cultural analyses of global cities in the global North and South (Prakash & Kruse, 2008) are perhaps even more challenging and rewarding as arenas for experiential inquiry and action research in the twenty-first century.

Bibliography

Ackroyd, P. (2000). *London: The Biography.* London: Chatto and Windus.

Ackroyd, P. (2007). *Thames: Sacred River.* London: Chatto and Windus.

BBC News. (2002, May 22). *Rage over road name.* Retrieved May 15, 2010, from BBC News Online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2003119.stm

Benedictus, L. (2005, January 21). Every race, colour, nation and religion on earth. *The Guardian* .

Bennett, S. (2009). *Londonland: An Ethnography of Labour in a World City.* London: Middlesex University Press.

Berry, H. A. (2002). The Global Voices: Is US Higher Education Listening? *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad (Winter)* .

Billingham, M. (2002). *Scaredy Cat.* London: Time Warner.

Bird, J. (1996). Dystopia on the Thames. In J. Bird, & e. al., *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change.* London: Routledge.

Brecht, B. (2008, Summer). On Thinking about Hell, trans. Nicholas Jacobs. *The Liberal*

Calder, S. (2007, December 22). London, Capital of the World. *The Independent* .

Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Charney, I. (2007). The politics of design: architecture, tall buildings and the skyline of central London. *Area* , 39.2 195–205.

City Parochial Foundation and New Policy Institute. (2009). *London's Poverty Profile.* London.

Driver, F., & Gilbert, D. (1998). Heart of empire? Landscape, space and performance in imperial London. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 16* , 11–28.

Edwards, J. (2000). The 'Other Eden': Thoughts on American Study Abroad in Britain. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad V.VI. (Winter)* , 89.

Eliot, T.S. (1922/2003). *The Waste Land and Other Poems.* London: Penguin.

Fainstein, S. S., & Harloe, M. (1992). Introduction: London and New York in the contemporary world. In S. S. Fainstein, I. Gordon, & M. Harloe, *Divided Cities: New York and London in the Contemporary World* (pp. 1–28). Oxford: Blackwell.

Frith, J. (2006, November 3). Spaces of Consumption, Leisure, and Pleasure in London's West End. *Teaching London Conference* . London: Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research and the University of Westminster London Studies Programme.

Greater London Authority. (2003). *London's Ecological Footprint: A Review.* London: Greater London Authority.

Greater London Authority. (2002). Mayor of London Report on Poverty and Social Inequality in London. London.

Gristwood, A. (2006, November 3). Urban Spectatorship, Exploration and Anxiety: Deconstructing the 'Ripper' Tour. *Teaching London Conference* . London: Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research and the University of Westminster London Studies Programme.

Halbert, L., & Rutherford, J. (2010). Flow-Place: Reflections on Cities, Commutation and Urban Production Processes. *GaWC Research Bulletin 352.* Loughborough: Globalization and World Cities Research Network, University of Loughborough.

Hall, P. (1998). Cities in Civilisation: Culture, Innovation and Urban Orders. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Hamnett, C. (2003). Unequal City: London in the Global Arena. London: Routledge.

Higgins, C. (2010, May 24). Yinka Shonibare celebrates Victory on Trafalgar Square's fourth plinth. *The Guardian* .

Hood, J. (2005). Trafalgar Square: A Visual History of London's Landmark Through Time. London: Batsford.

Jacobs, J. (1996). Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City. London: Routledge.

Kelso, P. (2000, October 20). Mayor attacks generals in battle of Trafalgar Square. *The Guardian* .

King, A. (1990). Global Cities: Post-imperialism and the Internationalisation of London. London: Routledge.

Kureishi, H. (1987). *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid.* London: Faber & Faber.

Lazarus, E. (1883/2005). The New Colossus. In E. Lazarus, *Emma Lazarus: Selected Poems.* New York: Library of America.

London Councils. (2008, January). *Press Releases.* Retrieved June 20, 2010, from London Councils: http://www.london councils.gov.uk/media/press-

releases/2008Jantodate/PressReleaseLondonsblackandminoritycommunities helped to have a greater voice by London Cou.htm

Massey, D. (2007). *World City.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Office for National Statistics. (2009). *Migration Statistics 2008 Annual Report.* London: Office for National Statistics / Home Office / DWP U.K..

Prakash, G., & Kruse, K. M. (2008). *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Raban, J. (1988). *Soft City.* London: Harvill Press.

Reichel, S. (2006). "A kind of London breed": teaching multiethnic literature (and much more). *Teaching London Conference.* London: Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research and the University of Westminster London Studies Programme.

Roth, T. (1999, December 21). Shoptalk, TV Interview.

Sandhu, S. (2003). London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City. London: Harper Perennial.

Sassen, S. (2006). Cities and Communities in the Global Economy. In N. Brenner, & R. Keil, *The Global Cities Reader.* London and New York: Routledge.

Sassen, S. (2001). *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Schwarz, B. (1991). Where horses shit a hundred sparrows feed: Docklands and East London during the Thatcher years. In J. Corner, & S. Harvey, *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (pp. 76–92). London: Routledge.

Seager, A. (2007, August 28). City bonuses hit record high with £14bn payout. *The Guardian* .

Smith, Z. (2000). *White Teeth.* London: Hamish Hamilton.

Teather, D. (2006, November 4). The bonus bonanza. *The Guardian* .

Thrift, N. (1989). The geography of international economic disorder. In R. Johnston, & P. Taylor, *A World in Crisis.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Upstone, S. (2006). Negotiations of London as Imperial Urban Space in the Contemporary Postcolonial Novel. In C. Lindner, *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture* (pp. 88–100). London: Routledge.

Wills, J., Datta, K., Evans, Y., Herbert, J., May, J., & McIlwaine, C. (2010). *Global Cities at Work: New Migrant Divisions of Labour.* London: Pluto Press.

Woolf, M. (2008). Not Serious Stuff? Service-Learning in Context: An International Perspective. *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* , 30–31.

Zephaniah, B. (2001). The London Breed. In B. Zephaniah, *Too Black, Too Strong.* London: Bloodaxe.

Zukin, S. (1992). The City as a Landscape of Power: London and New York as Global Financial Capitals. In L. Budd, & S. Whimster, *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Urban Change* (pp. 195–223). London: Routledge.

N o t e s

[1] The particular threshold used to define poverty was 60% of the median British household income after deducting housing costs, the most commonly used threshold of low income. The figures therefore represent what households have to spend on everything else they need, from food and heating to travel and entertainment. In 2007–8, this threshold represented £115 per week for a single adult without children and £279 per week for couples with children under 14.

[2] The physical expression of this inequality is perhaps most apparent in the social geography of Docklands, where conspicuous wealth nestles next to neighbourhoods of embedded deprivation. Here, a massive regeneration programme since 1981 has seen the former docks recycled for commercial and luxury residential use, an inner city social laboratory — and flagship — for Thatcherism (Bird, 1996; Hall, 1998; Hamnett, 2003; Schwarz, 1991).

[3] By contrast, Rachel Whiteread's earlier project, Monument (2001)— an inverted clear resin plinth— was intended to offer an ironic commentary on the other monuments around the square as well as the lacuna represented by the previously empty plinth itself. Above all, it was an anti-monument celebrating no individual and no event and in direct contrast to the other works, it was not intended to last. It confirmed change and denied confidence in the meanings of history, a visual representation of the profound mutability of culture in a post-heroic age. It represented the precise inversion of the assumptions that exist behind the other monuments in the square, the perfect emblem of the uneasy relationship between contemporary London and its own past.