

Markets in modernisation: transformations in urban market space and practice, c. 1800-c. 1970

Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme

Introduction

This special issue addresses the changing role and later history of physical, face-to-face markets for goods, which in modern cities all over the world are mainly or wholly used by individuals and families for consumption purposes. Our focus is on the urban market as a specific urban place and its shifting relationship with important alterations in the governance, society and economy of modern, industrial cities (until c. 1970). The main intention of this collection is to move beyond traditional (western) views of the so-called ‘decline’ of these urban marketplaces. In the history and theorisation of the type of cities that came into being all over the world in the wake of economic and political transformations in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, ‘markets’ are usually thought of in terms of their institutional meaning. They are referred to as abstract notions of commerce and exchange, be it in commodities, labour, cash or shares. Seldom are they studied as real, physical marketplaces within cities; as entities that take up space; function in changing production and distribution chains, and evolve as a result of changes in wholesaling, retailing, consumption and the political regulation of urban space, society and economy. Indeed, it is often argued that ‘marketplaces’ in this spatially delimited and concrete sense, ceased to be of importance once modernisation took hold of urban landscapes all over the world. That this is not the case, is amply demonstrated by the papers gathered here: markets continued to be vibrant parts of a wide variety of towns and cities across the globe.

Any attempt to offer a broadly applicable definition of the marketplace quickly becomes mired in the specificities of time and space: manifestations of markets as physical urban places of interaction between buyers and sellers are simply too diverse and place-specific. Victoria Kelley defines markets in this issue as having to do with buyers, sellers, commodities, place and time (see Kelley in this volume). However, cooking a general ‘formula’ with these ingredients – producing a typology or model of some sort – would not only mask the important diversity of markets, but also obscure the sort of historical changes

that are precisely at stake in this collection of essays. It is a cliché, but one market is, indeed, not the other. They might be located in the centre or in the suburban belt of a city or somewhere in between in a specific neighbourhood; they might take place on a public square, on a street or in semi-open or covered market hall (or, for that matter, on boats, as still happens in some waterborne cities in Asia); they might sell a mixture of produce or specialise in a specific commodity like fish or fruit; they might cater for specific consumer-groups or for the urban masses; they might (or might not) be eventually eclipsed by, for instance, supermarkets or change from being a retail to a wholesale market (or vice versa). The worldwide and even local diversity in market space and practice is precisely what is discussed in the following pages; it needs to be further developed and explored, time and time again, for the different and often unique empirical cases assembled here.

Taking this diversity in urban market space and practice as the starting point – and focusing on a subject that defies definition and categorisation – runs the risk of losing any sort of intellectual coherence and structure from this collection. To avoid such a pitfall, we develop three overarching questions that tie together these empirical studies. Therefore, in the remainder of this introduction, we will firstly delve deeper in the reasons why urban marketplaces have failed for to attract the attention of urban historians and theorists working on the modern city (in stark contrast to those working on the medieval and early-modern periods). Next, we justify the approach taken and outline what there it to learn by pursuing historical comparisons of urban market space and practice in the modern world. Finally, we outline some of the general themes that emerge from and draw together the various essays presented here – linking unique cases in a meaningful historical and conceptual dialogue.

The market as physical place of urban interaction: from all pervasive to all invisible

Marketplaces and cities are closely entangled concepts, especially in urban history where their relationship is often considered self-evident, to the point that it goes unquestioned. The existence of a ‘central market’ – a physical core of exchange of goods between buyers and sellers – becomes so closely linked to an explanation of the origins and functioning of cities that a history of urbanisation often reads like a tale from trade-centre to commercial

metropolis.¹ What starts out as local provisioning, speeds up the wheels of commerce to the point of becoming an unstoppable engine of capitalist growth. The historiography of medieval and early-modern European cities and towns in particular has elevated an analysis of urban market space and practice into a centrepiece of causation.² Markets as physical, face-to-face places selling food, provisions, consumer goods and commodities are seen as taking a central role within the urban fabric. As nodal points in a still primarily agrarian economy, they are accorded a privileged social and cultural position in the urban community. Well ordered ‘free’ and ‘open’ market exchange, it is argued, not only backed urban prosperity, it also underpinned notions of good governance, social stability and the ‘moral economy’.³ Thus, throughout medieval and early-modern history, the production of urban market space, with adjoining town halls, churches, guild houses, and other forms of civic power, is thought to have been crucial to ideas of urban progress, development and modernisation. To put it simply, the ‘magic of the market’ both generated urban wealth and social cohesion, and stood at the heart of urban pride and modernity.⁴

However, from perspectives focusing on urban and economic modernisation from the late eighteenth-century onwards, the market as specific urban space and practice becomes eclipsed by the advent of arcades, department stores, retail-chains and the shopping practices of nineteenth-century *flâneurs*.⁵ Suddenly, or so it seems, European shopping experiences were altered in a revolutionary way. The supposedly new shopping environments created by these

¹ For classic overviews, see: H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton, 1952 [1925]); J. Jacobs, *The economy of cities* (Harmondworth, 1972 [1969]); F. Braudel, *Civilisation Matérielle, Economie et Capitalisme*, vl. 2 Les jeux de l'échange (Paris, 1979); P. Bairoch, *Cities and Economic Development: from the Dawn of History to the Present* (London, 1988).

² Recent contributions are found in: D. Calabi and S.T. Christensen eds., *Cities and cultural exchange in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge, 2007).

³ For instance: P. Stabel, ‘The city is the market, the market is the city. Retail and urban space in late medieval Bruges’, in B. Blondé, P. Stabel, J. Stobart and I. Van Damme (eds.), *Buyers and sellers. Retail Circuits and Practices in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2006), 79-108; and M. Boone and M. Howell (eds.), *In but not of the Market: Movable Goods in the Late Medieval and Early-Modern Economy* (Brussels, 2007).

⁴ See: D. Calabi, *The market and the city: square, street and architecture in early modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2004); and E. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: consumer cultures in Italy, 1400-1600* (New Haven, 2009).

⁵ This historiographical bias is all too apparent in writings on nineteenth-century retailing such as E. Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure. Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, 2000); and G. Crossick and S. Jaumain eds., *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot, 1999).

retail innovations, and the new organisational systems of supply and selling which they employed, transformed consumers from casual buyers to pleasure shoppers. They also helped to reshape the consumer landscape, functioning and experience of the city, often being seen as central to the construction of the ‘modern’ industrial city.⁶ So, whilst the role and significance of urban market space and practice is recognised in historical accounts of medieval and early-modern periods – to the point of repetition – markets refuse to play a key role in narrative accounts on urban modernisation in the industrial age. Why should this be the case?

It goes without saying that the intellectual forerunners of urban history as a separate discipline enshrined the market as a physical space, economic mechanism and socio-political institution into their definitions of what made cities and towns different from their surroundings. Marketplaces and the face-to-face interactions on those places shape cities; they define the *raison d’être* of urbanity, or so at least reasoning goes. An influential example of such thinking can be identified in the well-known essay of Max Weber on *The City (Die Stadt, 1921)*.⁷ Famously, Weber built the definition of a city on ‘the existence of a regular, and not only occasional, exchange of goods in the settlement itself, an exchange which constitutes an essential component of the livelihood and the satisfaction of needs of the settlers – in other words: a market’ (p. 1213) A city, in Webers’ terms, is essentially a medieval market centre, the sort of settlements that was emerging across north-western Europe from about 1000AD onwards. These were places where both rural and urban populations could ‘satisfy their wants for craft products or trade articles by means of exchange’ which was ‘based on concessions and guarantees of protection by the lord or prince’ (p. 1214).⁸ From this starting point, Weber

⁶ R. Dennis, *Cities in Modernity. Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁷ First published as M. Weber, ‘Die Stadt: eine soziologische Untersuchung’, *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 47 (1920-21), 621-772. We make references to the English translation published in M. Weber, *Economy and Society. An outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley, 1978), 1212-1372.

⁸ Weber does not go so far as to claim that the marketplace is the only element of urbanity, giving, for instance, attention to the ‘fort’ as political centre, being equally crucial to medieval urban development. In many ways the regulations enforced by the ‘fort’ were ways of countering urban market failures from food shortages to health issues. See, for instance, M.W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (London, 1967) and, more recently, W. Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee. Geschiedenis van Nederland, 1100-1555* (Amsterdam, 2010) on strategies of urban promotion by feudal superiors in order to create marketplaces, almost invariably as sources of income.

goes on to connect such a ‘pure market place’ to political categories of autonomy and authority: the city as a partially autonomous association, a community (*Gemeinde*) with special administrative and political institutions. The political autonomy and economic market stands in a ‘plastic duality’ besides one another, sometimes even physically and symbolically integrated into an *Agora*-space (p. 1224).

According to Weber, this combination of commerce and citizenship was unique to the occidental city, but this viewpoint has been frequently criticised for its ‘teleology of a unique Western history, which serves as a grid in terms of which other histories are read’.⁹ Oriental cities, whether in Islamic regions, India, Japan or China, are mainly interpreted in terms of what they lacked and the West possessed. In the meantime, a narrative arch was created in which the trajectory of the European city from middle ages to industrial times, with emphasis on its commercial and communal underpinnings, was perceived as the standard paradigm, capable of explaining growing Western hegemony and political superiority over the rest of the world.¹⁰ We return to this point later. For the present, we want to focus the links between Weber’s notion of urban markets as a force and constituent of a distinctive civic burgher democracy, and an influential nineteenth-century liberal tendency to see a free functioning ‘market’ – now in its extended, institutional meaning of the word – as a beacon of increasing democratic freedom, progress and human liberation.¹¹ Again, the city is seen as a locus for the emergence of capitalist, market-based enterprise: a bourgeois way of life inextricably linked to the rise of modern, industrial society.¹² It is no coincidence that both Ferdinand Tönnies and Émile Durkheim described the typical urban social relations of, respectively, *Gesellschaft* and *solidarité mécanique* in market-based, contractual terms, contrasting these with so-called organic community values and modes of conduct on the countryside.¹³ For Karl Marx and

⁹ S. Zubaida, ‘Max Weber’s The City and the Islamic City’, *Max Weber Studies*, 6.1 (2006), 111 (111-118).

¹⁰ M. Liverani, ‘Power and citizenship’, in P. Clark (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in world history* (Oxford, 2013), 164-167 (164-180).

¹¹ H.S.J. Jansen, ‘Wrestling with the angel: on problems of definition in urban historiography’, *Urban History*, 23 (1996), 284-85 (277-299).

¹² On perceptions of the city in Western thinking, see: C. Schorke, ‘The idea of the city in European Thought – Voltaire to Spengler’, in: O. Handlin and J. Burchard (eds.), *The Historian and the City* (Cambridge, 1963), 95-114; and, more recent, A. Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940* (Manchester, 1985).

¹³ M. Gottdiener and R. Hutchison, *The New Urban Sociology* (Colorado, 2006, 3th edition), 43-46. Read more extensively on sociological thinking about the city in P. Saunders, *Social theory and the urban question*

Friedrich Engels as well, the horrors and faults of the bourgeois city notwithstanding, a return to what they described as the ‘idiocy of rural life’ was a route to be avoided at all cost.¹⁴

It seems crucial to pursue German thinking on the city just a little bit longer, since these ideas were so essential in the genealogy of urban history and urban sociology as distinctive disciplines.¹⁵ In any case, typical late nineteenth-century oppositions between city and countryside, or between a capitalist and non-market-based society, become most outspoken in another influential German essay. In *Metropolis and Mental Life* (*Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903), Georg Simmel equates the rapidly modernizing cities of his time, in particular his hometown Berlin, with ‘the seat of the money-economy’.¹⁶ Whereas before, the market was an identifiable and locatable space of face-to-face exchange between, mostly, buyers and sellers, the metamorphosis of urban life as market practice is now complete: the City has become the Market.¹⁷ For Simmel, urbanity as a way of life in the industrial age is dominated by ‘the many-sidedness and concentration of commercial activity’ (p. 12), which effectively ‘reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level’ (p. 12). In place of the more deeply felt emotional relationships of rural and small town existence, Simmel sees in the city the rational, calculating behaviour of buyers and sellers at work, waging their interests against each other. Citizens are thus forced to create a ‘blasé attitude’ in order to preserve their identity and integrity in the face of a ‘rapid telescoping of changing images’ and ‘rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves which are thrown together in all their contrasts’ (p. 11 and 14). This sensory bombardment of smells, sights, sounds and frictions with other people – historically always associated with a frenzied market day on a actual, physical place – has now become the everyday norm in the Metropolis. It dictates the rhythm of the *flâneur*, and dominates the decorations of shop and department store, billboards,

(London, 1981); and Idem, ‘Space, the city and urban sociology’, in: D. Gregory and J. Urry (eds.), *Social relations and spatial structures* (London, 1985), 67-89.

¹⁴ P.J. Corfield, ‘Cities in time’, in Clark (ed.), *Cities in World History*, 833 (828-846).

¹⁵ A. Lees, ‘Berlin and modern urbanity in German discourse, 1845-1945’, *Journal of Urban History*, 17 (1991), 153-180.

¹⁶ Simmel’s essay was first published in 1903; our references are drawn from the English translation in G. Bridge and S. Watson (eds.), *The Blackwell city reader* (Oxford and Malden, 2002), 11-19; quote from page 12. On the centrality of the Berlin experience in the thinking of Simmel, see D. Jazbinsek, ‘The Metropolis and the mental life of George Simmel: on the history of an antipathy’, *Journal of Urban History*, 30 (2003), 102-125.

¹⁷ See also M. Bevir and F. Trentmann, *Markets in Historical Contexts: Ideas and Politics in the Modern World* (Cambridge, 2004).

vaudeville stage, theatre, museum, and other spaces of a now, deeply commercialised amusement culture.¹⁸

It is within this modernising, contractual and market-driven European townscape of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the urban market as physical space and practice evaporates in its pervasiveness as intellectual key and metaphor to grasp modern, urban culture and living. Urban sociologists acknowledge the market's historical significance as the spatial focus (the central business district) around which European cities grew and flowered in concentric circles. This is, for instance, evident in the work of one of the most famous pupils of Simmel, Robert Park, who publishes with his colleagues of the Chicago school their manifesto on *The City* (1925).¹⁹ Its significance is equally apparent in the emerging disciplines of urban geography and urban economy, not least in Walter Christaller's placement of the market centre in the middle of the building blocks that make up his central place theory (see Baics in this issue).²⁰ Finally, in urban planning as well, the idea of a city as market holds strong. For Ebenezer Howard, the garden cities were meant to be for farmers a 'new market for their produce close to their doors' – similar to the medieval model of town building.²¹

And yet, whilst the market had become a guiding concept to understand the historical rise, economic and spatial organisation of European cities and urban systems, its more limited meaning as place of face-to-face exchange had ceased to be a concrete subject of analysis to comprehend modernisation in industrial society. Urban market space, and practices and processes that occurred therein, were thought to be no longer innovative or modern, to the point of being 'naturally' eclipsed by ever more efficient, large-scale commercial spaces and

¹⁸ Such a sensory approach to the history and sociology of cities has recently gained renewed interest, as is evidenced by M. Diaconu et al. (eds.), *Senses and the City: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Urban Sense-scapes* (Münster, 2011); and the recent 2013 CHORD conference 'Retailing and the senses: historical perspectives' (see <http://home.wlv.ac.uk/~in6086/2013conf.htm>).

¹⁹ R.E. Park, E.W. Burgess and R.D. McKenzie, *The city* (Chicago and London, 1925). A nice analysis of their urban framework is provided by M. Savage and A. Warde, *Urban sociology, capitalism and modernity* (Houndmills, 1993), 9-18.

²⁰ W. Christaller, *Central Places in Southern Germany* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966 [1933]).

²¹ E. Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London, 1902), 22 (see also p. 26 and 76-77).

leisure-like shopping behaviour.²² It is telling that for Howard's cities of tomorrow the market as physical space has become a wholesale market to be planned in an outer ring. The centre of town is now dominated by a garden, park, civil buildings and a fashionable glass-arcade called 'Crystal Palace', to be used for 'that class of shopping which requires the joy of deliberation and selection'. Thus, the old market square has given away to a 'great shopping centre', while the actual markets for diaries and other daily necessities are relocated to the periphery (see Beeckmans and Bigon in this issue for other modernist visions on urban marketplaces).²³

Urban markets were increasingly considered remnants of the past, and in linear, evolutionary models bound to decline and disappear once the city cloaked itself in modernity. Their continued existence in the early-twentieth century European townscape was seen as anachronistic, only made intelligible from a cultural standpoint: the urban market as a place where the modern, efficient, shop-addicted *homo-economicus* seeks the 'thrill' of gone by, or the 'authenticity' of the past.²⁴

From teaming with life to the fall of public man

Urban historical accounts after WWII have followed quite closely this interpretive and, quit obviously, western scheme of market decline in modernisation. Whilst the volume of data and research on pre-industrial urban market space and practices grew exponentially, the subject lacked for a long time its supporters for modern times. The connections between commerce, civic power and progress that medievalists wove around market squares, were focused in narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth-century onto other urban spaces, most notably the

²² See G. Shaw, 'The study of retail development', in J. Benson and G. Shaw (eds.), *The evolution of retail systems, c. 1800-1914* (Leicester, London and New York, 1992), 1-14; and N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, 'The emergence of modern retailing, 1750-1950', *Business History*, 40 (1998), 1-15.

²³ Howard, *Garden cities of tomorrow*, 23, 76.

²⁴ These associations frequently pop-up in remarks on persistence of second-hand markets in the modernizing townscape. See M. Charpy, 'The scope and structure of the nineteenth-century second-hand trade in the Parisian clothes market, in L. Fontaine (ed.), *Alternative exchange. Second-hand circulations from the sixteenth-century to the present* (New York and Oxford, 2008), 127-151; and J. Sobart and I. Van Damme, 'Modernity and the second-hand trade: themes, topics and debates', in Idem (eds.), *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade. European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900* (London, 2010), 1-15.

department store and shopping mall, but also exchanges, banks (see Toftgaard in this issue) and later shopping precincts.²⁵ Certainly, urban historians continued to argue that urban markets had become unimportant by the end of the nineteenth-century, mainly by focusing on historical changes that hinted at its supposed decline and demise (see also Kelley in this issue). Such reasoning was not only backed up by taking evolutionary economic factors into account, but by looking at the impact of cultural and social changes – as regards gender, leisure, the public and private spheres – on the supposed demise of marketplaces.

This picks up again on lively debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which questioned whether public markets could withstand the onslaught of modernisation, especially in the face of Haussmann-inspired urban planning. The famous Viennese architect Camillo Sitte argued in his influential and widely read *City planning according to artistic principles* (*Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, 1889) that:

‘In our time public places (fora, markets, etc) hardly serve any more for grand popular festivities, nor for daily necessities. Their only reason for existing consists in bringing more light and air to a monotonous ocean of houses. (...) What a difference with Antiquity. Back then, public places were of prime importance, because they were the theatre of all the principal scenes of everyday life, which are now occurring in the interior’.²⁶

His cultural pessimism was mainly aimed at an increasingly oppressive municipal government, concerned with sanitizing and regulating urban space to an unprecedented extent. For adhering to such drastic urban reforms and rebuilding schemes, taking action in the name of public safety and public health was not only right, but also morally righteous. With true revanchist panache the ‘city of dreadful night’ and potentially dangerous socialist uprising could be remade in a pleasant and beautiful bourgeois townscape in which the liberal circulation of water (through modern pipes and sewers), light, air (through new avenues and squares) and people (and policemen!) took centre stage.²⁷ As such, a cleansing sunlight could

²⁵ See I.S. Black, 'Spaces of capital: bank office building in the City of London, 1830-1870', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26 (2000), 351-75; K. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping* (New haven, 2003), 251-61.

²⁶ This is our own translation. See C. Sitte, *L'art de bâtir les villes. Notes et réflexions d'un architecte. Traduites et complétées par Camille Matin* (Genève and Paris, 1902 [1889]), 7 (see also pages 16, and 135-137).

²⁷ P. Joyce, *The rule of freedom. Liberalism and the modern city* (London, 2003).

finally reach ‘attractive public places (...) which for centuries had only known moisture and darkness’.²⁸

In the vision of these reformers, public markets had to change as well; especially those selling food and livestock. Their medieval and early-modern charters and regulations had to be abolished; their stench and filth dampened and partly interiorised behind the fashionable facades of new market halls; their location removed from the historic centre to emerging suburbs. These processes had begun in the eighteenth century, but gathered pace in the nineteenth century, often as part of wide-reaching programmes of urban improvement and civic boosterism (see Toftgaard and the article of Fava, Guardia and Oyón in this issue).²⁹ For antimodernists like Sitte, however, such reformatory actions heralded the fall of public man and the loss of the ‘soul of the city’.³⁰ In his romantic take on town planning and the urban past, the streets and squares of European cities were once teeming with life: pigs and chickens grubbing around, children playing, beggars and market sellers shouting, passers-by carefully picking their way through the dirt and odours of urban life. The proposed changes of contemporary reformers and town planners – which Sitte could experience at first hand with the construction of Vienna’s Ringstraße – promised what was for him a deplorable vision of an ‘immaculate’ cityscape: monumental streets and public spaces in which all life has been sanitised, zoned, serviced, controlled, and dominated by precisely the avoidance of the sort of sensory onslaught and human friction that Georg Simmel associated with the Metropolis. In his popular manifesto *Aesthetic of cities (Esthétique des villes, 1893)* Charles Buls, a contemporary soul mate of Sitte and himself a reformist Mayor of Brussels, rephrased such dystopian readings of the modern city as follows: ‘In former times public squares were exclusively markets. (...) When a square has no practical use it is sad and deserted. It is an artificial creation lacking life and not justifying its existence’.³¹ Modern public places built

²⁸ C. Daly, *L’architecture privée au XIXe siècle sous Napoleon III. Nouvelles maisons de Paris et ses environs* (Paris, 1864), 5-7.

²⁹ See, for example J. Stobart, ‘Building an urban identity. Cultural space and civic boosterism in a ‘new’ industrial town: Burslem, 1761-1911’, *Social History*, 29:4 (2004), 485-98.

³⁰ This metaphor for the historical city was used in the widely read and pessimistic account of modern life: O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Perspectives of World-History* (London, 1928 [1922]), 89-110. See also M. Hebbert, ‘The vision of the European city’, *Tiedepolitikka*, 30 (2005), 27-34.

³¹ C. Buls, *Esthétique des villes* (Brussels, 1893), 20. For an English translation, see <http://www.library.cornell.edu/Reps/DOCS/buls.htm> (Municipal Affairs, 3, December, 1899, 732-741).

solely around a monument, palace or church appear to him cold and empty, a cemetery doomed to fail as a place of human interaction.

The extent to which urban historians and sociologists took such gloomy discourse on social and cultural change in society for reality is debatable. There is, however, a pervasive grand narrative that sees public life in modernizing cities increasingly retreating into safe, disciplined and controlled semi-public spaces, such as the political meeting room, the covered market hall, the department store, the museum and the coffee house.³² Thus, a certain historical process of internalisation and a retreat from open and unmanaged public space – the kind of environment formed by the market square – becomes aligned with several influential accounts of Western urban modernization itself.

Markets in modernisation: in need of more research

It is only in the last two or three decades that the urban market has re-emerged in accounts of urban modernisation that seek to explore more fully the historically complex, contingent and fragmented nature of urban change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Urban historians have increasingly become aware that, although market-exchange was pervasive in all domains of the early-twentieth century Metropolis, this did not exclude the continued operation and use of urban market space and face-to-face interactions on these places between, mostly, retailers and consumers.³³ The historical core of the city may have been sanitized and reconstructed for the interests of bigger businesses, tourists and traffic flows, but in surrounding suburbs newly installed and well-frequented neighbourhood markets indicated that markets were clearly more than a fossilised remnant of the past or a simply a relic cultural practice. Moreover, even this neat core-periphery distinction was not always followed because the same ‘rule of freedom’ that cleaned-up the European townscape also liberalised and *de facto* accepted the existence of street trading and street markets – at least to an extent

³² This is apparent in the works of such diverse thinkers as Walter Benjamin (*Passagenwerk / The Arcades Project*, 1927-1940), Jürgen Habermas (*Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit / The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962), Michel Foucault (*Surveiller et punir / Discipline and Punish*, 1972), and, most recently, Richard Sennet (*The Fall of Public Man*, 1977).

³³ See, for example: H. Tangires, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore, 2003).

(see Kelly and Baics). Modern streets were clearly still teeming with life, because urban market space and practices fitted widely shared consumer needs for differentiated prices, quality and goods. Markets served labour needs and sensibilities, but also bourgeois purposes: new covered market-halls and newly engineered market-squares, for example, were often planned and built in the same architectural forms and processes of urban modernisation that gave rise to arcades and department stores. Nineteenth-century retail markets became, as a recent edited volume on the subject argues, ‘one of the most obvious expressions of municipal pride, architectural innovation, urban renovation and new commercial structures of capitalist cities’.³⁴ So, rather than emphasising clear-cut discontinuities between pre-industrial and industrial times or imprinting a certain grand-narrative of modernisation on the complexity and diversity of historical change, we are becoming more aware of the long running connections between markets and urban pride – even in the modern metropolis (see especially Fava, Guardia and Oyón in this aspect).

Old habits die hard, however. Whilst Michel de Certeau, Frank Trentmann and others increasingly point to the need to address everyday practices and consumer politics in the modern period, too little attention has been paid to the analysis of urban market spaces and practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁵ Moreover, a research strategy that pursues urban comparisons of market space and practice in the modern world from a world perspective has yet to be initiated. Indeed, it is telling that the interesting anthropological studies of Daniel Miller and others on shopping practices in the modern world, almost always focuses on shops and shopping malls.³⁶ These are the key consumer spaces, it seems; markets remain marginal and anachronistic to modernity. What we need, then, are more empirical studies to add to extra layers to our understanding of the market in modern society, and more attempts to think conceptually about how urban markets function in and for the modern city. Non-western studies in particular can open up new ways of seeing the market in the era of urban, industrial capitalism. Only then will we be able to address properly questions concerning the changing relative importance of the market in urban distribution chains (was it always eclipsed by more ‘modern’ retail institutions?); in the production and representation of

³⁴ M. Guardia and J.L. Oyón eds., *Fer ciutat a través dels mercats Europa, segles XIX i XX* (Barcelona, 2010).

³⁵ M. De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (London, 1984); F. Trentmann, ‘The politics of everyday life’, in Idem (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of consumption* (Oxford, 2012), 521-547.

³⁶ D. Miller, *A theory of shopping* (Ithaca, 1998); D. Miller a.o., *Shoppig, place and identity* (London and New York, 1998); Idem, *The dialectics of shopping* (Chicago, 2001).

modern urban space, and in discussions around urban governance, spatial planning and social engineering.

Key themes

It was questions of this kind which prompted us to organise a session at the 2012 EAUH conference in Prague, some of the papers from which are published in this collection. In that session and in this volume, we wanted to explore the diverse fortunes of the urban market in the world through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the ways in which studying urban market space and practice in a modernising urban landscape of consumption opens up debates regarding key economic, social, cultural and political changes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century cities. In particular, the papers draw out four important sets of ideas.

First is the challenge that they pose to the assumed decline of the urban market in the modern city. Whilst Toftgaard notes the progressive marginalisation of the market in nineteenth-century Odense, it is striking that even in great metropolitan centres, such as London and New York, urban markets remained dynamic and vital elements of the retail distribution system. Kelly notes how London street markets continued to prosper right alongside more ‘modern’ retail forms, proving robust in the face of competition from multiple stores and even the destruction of wartime bombing. Resilience did not mean ossification; indeed, both the papers by Baics (New York) and Fava, Guardia and Oyon (Barcelona) demonstrate that urban markets were adaptable and flexible institutions, capable of responding to changing contexts of demand, urban structure and political regulation. The last of these, in particular, could have profound impacts on the organisation markets, as Baics and Harada demonstrate in the context of the deregulation of New York food markets and the establishment of Japanese fish markets respectively. The continued importance of the market in processes of provisioning the urban population should not be too surprising, although it is often overlooked. What Fava, Guardia and Oyon, Kelly and – in a very different context – Beekmans and Bigon all make clear is that the market also structured the daily lives and social relations of a large proportion of the city’s population. In this way, understanding the operation of the market is central to comprehending the modern city, just as it is for the early-modern and medieval city. The study of market space and practice therefore opens up broader questions of urban resilience and economic adaptation, social interaction, and urban form and structure.

Second is the additional insight into the spatiality of city offered by fuller analysis of the urban market. Its location has elicited much interest in the past; spatial marginalisation being seen as both metaphor and symptom of a declining importance in the geography of the city. However, as Fava, Guardia and Oyon argue, urban markets continued to play a key role in shaping the geography of provisioning, social relations and economic day-to-day interaction of Barcelona throughout the twentieth century. Markets remained spaces worth fighting over, even as cities modernised. This was true in a formal sense, with municipalities and capitalist institutions such as banks seeking to redefine market spaces in nineteenth-century Denmark. It was also apparent in the more mundane arguments over space and regulation which embroiled the street market in Lewisham analysed by Kelly. Whatever the specific context, the market remained an important element in the urban spatial matrix, one that is structured by the architecture and use of space – a point brought out clearly in the analysis of Dakar and Kinshasa offered by Beekmans and Bigon. It was both a product and constituent of the political economy. As Baics demonstrates, the geography of retail food markets in New York shifted markedly in response to the transition from public to free-market provision. Far from being marginal, then, the urban market thus comprises a touchstone for the wider space economy of the city.

Third are the new conceptual and methodological approaches adopted by the various papers, which illustrate how a concern with the urban market can help to develop urban history as a discipline. In this context, Baics' paper is again important in the way that it links questions of spatiality to those of political economy through analysis of retail food markets. Charting the changes that ensued as food was reconceptualised from a public good to a private commodity offer a model for assessing broader arguments over the so-called 'fall of public man'. An alternative approach is offered by Toftgaard, who argues that Lefebvre's tripartite model of space is useful in understanding the ways in which urban space is produced and contested. His attempt to analyse the market as a space of consumption is thus a welcome addition to a relatively limited historiography exploring such theorisations of space. More pragmatically, Fava, Guardia and Oyon offer us an example of the insights to be gained from a profoundly empirical approach. Their detailed analysis of relative spatial location and socio-economic linkages centred on markets and market traders provide both an excellent overview of the spatial influence of the market and detailed insight into its constituent elements: the daily interactions of real people.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, is the way these papers highlight the importance of comparative analysis. This is an approach explicit in the contributions from Harada and Beekmans and Bigon. The former shows how the Japanese market system developed at least partly in reference to European models, but also how it reflected local cultural and regulatory milieus – as, of course, did markets in Europe. The latter argues that markets in colonial towns took references from the metropole, but also from regional neighbours. More generally, it is an approach that underpins the collection as a whole and gives coherence to it. By looking at case-studies in Africa, America, Asia and Europe, the assembled papers become, on a meta-historical level, an exercise in comparative research; one that attempts to grasp differences and similarities between specific urban trajectories situated in their own time and space.³⁷ One thing that emerges from this comparative framework is the different trajectory of markets as a public good. In nineteenth-century New York, there was a shift from public control to private ownership, but the direction of travel was reversed in Japan, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Dakar and Kinshasa. Such changes tell us a lot about the broader shifts in political economy that characterised these very different countries and the willingness (or otherwise) of the state to involve itself in the provision of food – often seen as a key part of governance in medieval and early-modern towns. More generally, juxtaposing European and non-European narratives is particularly useful in ‘provincialising’ the modern, Western experience of urban development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a recent volume on urban issues in global perspective argued convincingly: urban theorists and historians ‘have tended to remain entrenched in conceptual and empirical approaches that have barely moved beyond the study of a small number of ‘Western’ cities which act as the template against which all other cities are judged’.³⁸ While the papers on London and New York fall confidently within such ‘standard’ Western narrative of urban modernisation (although they problematize in their own right the western narrative of ‘decline’), case studies on Barcelona, Danish cities, Kinshasa, Dakar and the Japanese townscape open up new lines of research on patterns of consumption, retailing and urban governance. More importantly,

³⁷ See, among others, D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton, 2000); J. Kocka, ‘Comparison and beyond’, *History and Theory* 42 (2003) 39-44; D. Cohen en M. O’Connor (ed.), *Comparison and history* (New York, 2004); M. Siegel, ‘Beyond compare: comparative method after the transnational turn’, *Radical history review* 91 (2005) 62-91; en H.-G. Hapt, ‘Comparative history. A contested method’, *Historisk Tidskrift*, 127 (2007) 697-716.

³⁸ T. Edenso and M. Jayne (eds.), *Urban theory beyond the West. A world of cities* (London and New York, 2012) 1.

they lead to a fuller appreciation of patterns of convergence and divergence within modern urban history more generally.

Taken together, then, these papers make an important contribution to the process of bringing the urban market to a more central position in discussions of the modern, industrial city that came into being in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They demonstrate its continued importance to the everyday lives of citizens; the integration of social and economic networks, and the production and contestation of urban space. In this way, they challenge long-established notions of the market as somehow anachronistic or even irrelevant to urban modernity.