

# Consumer Spaces as Political Spaces: A Critical Review of Social, Environmental and Psychogeographical Research

## Abstract

The purpose of this review is to critique the social and environmental psychology literature on spaces and places with a focus on consumer culture and neoliberalism. By drawing on social theory and the Continental philosophical literature the review argues that an alternative approach to knowledge production is required. To this end recommendations are provided for what a psychogeographical approach in social and environmental psychology could look like. It argues that such work could be of benefit to academic and local communities by exposing the social costs and consequences associated with consumer culture and neoliberalism.

Key Words: consumer space, Continental philosophy, commodification, decommodification, neoliberalism, mainstream social and environmental psychology, psychogeography, social theory.

## Introduction

Mainstream social and environmental psychologists<sup>1</sup> typically observe and measure people's behaviours in different spatial environments by investigating internal mental states such as self-schemas and attitudes (e.g. Altman, 1976; Canter, Jesuino, Soczka, Stephenson, 1998; Darley & Gilbert, 1985; Gifford, 2013; Proshansky, 1976; 1981; Steg & Gifford, 2008). However, the mainstream approach is underpinned by a problematic dualistic philosophy in which the individual is abstracted from their socio-spatial context. To address this issue we argue that a spatial turn is needed drawing on concepts from social theory (Bauman, 2005; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 2005; Ritzer, 2009; Sandel, 2013; Soja, 1989) and Continental philosophy (Baudrillard, 1970/1998; Debord, 1978/1982; Foucault, 1975; Lefebvre, 1974/1991) to understand how aspects of self-identity, attitudes and prejudice are constituted by consumer culture and neoliberalism in the urban and suburban context.

Social and environmental psychologists predominantly study the concept of 'place', whereas social and Continental theorists predominantly study the concept of 'space'. Place-based research tends to focus on the micro level of peoples' experience and behaviour and the way in which environmental variables such as heat, noise, crowds and interior design influence these (e.g. Evans & Lepore, 1993; Evans, Lepore & Schroeder, 1996; Harris, McBride, Ross & Curtis, 2002). In contrast space-based research tends to focus on the macro level, on how historical, cultural, political and economic forces constitute socio-spatial relations and their influence on peoples' experiences and behaviour. Although macro forces are exerted at a distance, their effects on people are still felt as proximate and profound (Smail, 2005). We focus mainly on space- rather than place-based work as it is more closely aligned with our ontological and epistemological vision of a social psychology that fosters positive social change.

A number of the critiques of mainstream social and environmental psychology presented in this paper are not without precedent. However, the critique of mainstream theories and research from a socio-spatial perspective has only been sparsely dealt with in the critical social psychology literature. The mainstreams unquestioning acceptance of consumer culture and neoliberalism calls for an analysis of its failure to acknowledge the social embeddedness and emplacement<sup>ii</sup> of subjective experience and the power relations inherent in these dominant institutions.

The following review aims to provide some basic principles and to map the potential contours of a socio-spatial perspective in critical social psychology. It is limited in that its arguments tend to be of a generalised nature and are largely non-empirical. It seeks to address the spatial problems that consumer culture and neoliberalism pose by arguing for a decommodified approach to knowledge production in the form of psychogeographical research, which has the potential to challenge the neoliberal (market) hegemony in Western countries.

The review is organised into three main sections. The first section analyses the commodification of self-identity in consumer spaces. The second section explores the manner in which social behaviour is governed according to a neoliberal consumerist rationality in urban and suburban environments. The third section explores an alternative form of qualitative psychological research and practice based experience in the form of psychogeography.

### The Commodification of Space and Self-Identity

Our definition of space draws on the work of Foucault (1986) who viewed it as a social construct used to govern the population by eliciting thinking, feeling and behaviours aligned with the dominant political and economic discourse of the era. Foucault and other Continental philosophers highlight how people are governed by discourses on the superiority of market

forces and lifestyles based on consumption. The argument presented here is that mainstream social and environmental psychologists have largely failed to engage with and question the social and spatial change wrought by consumer culture and neoliberalism since the early 1980s. Its theories and research have become enmeshed in this dominant political economy (Cushman, 1995; Kasser & Kanner, 2004; Sugarman, 2015).

Consumer culture and neoliberalism influence the way in which urban and suburban spaces are conceptualised, planned, designed and managed (e.g. Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Voyce, 2006; Miles, 2010, 2012; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Shopping malls, shopping arcades, hotels, sporting stadiums, theatres, galleries, airports, convention and entertainment centres are commodified spaces designed to “serve the calculative needs of money which...prioritises modes of interaction through exchange” (Miles, 2010, p. 17).

Urban and suburban environments more broadly have become increasingly commodified, that is sold as ‘experiences’ to be consumed (Miles, 2010, 2012). The tourism industry for example promotes the consumption of urban spaces by selling the cultural and creative activities associated with them. New Orleans *qua* ‘brand’ is sold through tourism advertising, guidebooks and stories published in magazines, so that tourists consume the symbols and motifs used to represent it as well as physical objects such as souvenirs and merchandise (Gotham, 2002, 2007). The reorganisation of these spaces both conceptually and physically can also be seen in inner-city gentrification, open air marketplaces and the staging of “urban spectacles on a temporary or permanent basis” (Harvey, 2001, p. 355).

Many of the social interactions in consumer spaces such as shopping malls are based on “relationships between individualized consumers and a market detached from local physical space” (Voyce, 2006, p. 274). The design and management of consumer spaces has seen the turning of many inclusive public spaces turned into exclusive privately owned spaces where

people's behaviours are governed so as to promote consumer spending (Davis & Monk, 2008; Kowinski, 2002; Voyce, 2006).

Consumer spaces are “physical-emotional environments” (Miles, 2012, p. 224) that influence the formation of self-identity through leisure experiences. However, beneath their enchanting surface is a process of neoliberal rationalisation that commodifies social interactions and self-identity (McDonald & Wearing, 2013; Ritzer, 2009; Voyce, 2006). In spaces where monetary exchange dominates, there is a tendency for people to become estranged from one another as products and services are bought and sold in a sphere of anonymity (Miles, 2012; Simmel, 1950). The impoverished nature of social interactions in consumer spaces is illustrative of a wider phenomenon that Giddens (1991, p. 242) refers to as ‘disembeddedness’, which is defined as “the lifting out of social relationships from local contexts and their recombination across indefinite time/space distances”. In this way self-identity becomes divorced from proximal spaces and local happenings due to exposure to global events, stories, ideas and fashions (McDonald & Wearing, 2013; Urry, 1995). Concepts of disembeddedness are in line with the work of psychologists such as Manzo (2003) who argue that individuals can simultaneously feel ‘emplaced’ and out of place. Such arguments are expanded further in reference to peoples’ experiences of being homeless and ‘emplaced’ in major cities (Hodgetts, Stolte, Chamberlain, Radley, Groot & Nikora, 2010).

Under these socio-spatial conditions self-identity becomes influenced by locationally distant happenings, events and an ever-changing consumerist and symbolic universe (Baudrillard, 1970/1998; Bauman, 1992; Ritzer, Ryan, & Stepnisky, 2005). These conditions challenge mainstream social and environmental psychology, which assumes that “social perception and identification may be regarded as relatively enduring (reliable) facets of individual psychology” (Condor, 1996, p. 288). Group memberships based on social bonds and networks tied to locales developed over periods of time provided the basis for relationships and

a stable and enduring self-identity. This has given way to weaker short-term affiliations characterised by an ongoing process of group expansion, differentiation, dissolution and disembeddedness (Bauman, 1992, 2004; Condor, 1996; Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Sennett, 1998). Despite this, mainstream social and environmental psychology continues to subscribe to a concept of self-identity abstracted from these socio-spatial transformations (e.g. Diener, Larsen & Emmons, 1984; Harms, Roberts, & Winter, 2006; Suls, Martin, & David, 1998).

In summary, we have argued that changes in urban and suburban environments into consumer spaces underpinned by a neoliberal consumerist discourse has led to the commodification and disembedding of self-identity. We now turn to a review of the governance of consumer spaces by problematizing the notion of the ‘citizen as consumer’. This challenges mainstream theories of prejudice which are seen to stem from people’s internal attitudes as opposed to being constituted by neoliberal socio-spatial relations.

### The Neoliberal Governance of Consumer Spaces

In Western countries a range of institutions such as government, government agencies, corporations and the judiciary seek to govern social interactions in consumer spaces in line with neoliberal principles of rationality (Rose & Miller, 1992; Miles, 2012; Sandel, 2013; Shankar, Cherrier, & Canniford, 2006). The advent of neoliberalism in the early 1980s led to changes in the relationship between the state and its citizens. Citizenship, once tied to a set of obligations to a collective, has now been recast. Citizens are viewed as individualized consumers who make choices in the marketplace based on economic self-interest in competition with other consumers (Davies, 2014; Leitner et al., 2006).

Neoliberalism ‘governs at a distance’ through the promotion of enterprising subjectivities (Binkley, 2014). This is not to indicate the shrinking of the state or indeed a reduction in its regulatory functions (i.e. ‘small government’) for in many ways the opposite

has occurred. The rise of liberal government in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a shift in the way governmental power was applied. The use of direct, coercive and violent techniques gave way to subtle yet often more powerful tactics that sought to persuade, cajole and discipline the population into embracing normative truths based on a (neo)liberal rationality (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1977; Lemke, 2001; Rose, 1999; Rose & Miller, 1992).

For example, policy makers in the U.S. and U.K. promote personality traits such as being ‘enterprising’, ‘flexible’ and ‘competitive’ (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016, p. 55). The electorates in these countries have been won over with rhetorical statements painting ‘big government’ as the root cause of their ills. Despite this political leaders such as Reagan, Thatcher, Blair, Clinton, Bush, Obama and Cameron, all of whom subscribed to a neoliberal worldview, used the functions of government to expand the ideals of enterprise and competition beyond the confines of business, projecting these directly into people’s social and psychological lives<sup>iii</sup>. This has led to a new and stifling bureaucratic regime described by one commentator as ‘neoliberal pettifogging’ (Monbiot, 2016) in which business based ‘performance management’ techniques such as obsessive monitoring, quantification, record keeping and surveillance are used by governments to promote, and in some cases enforce, a neoliberal subjectivity (Binkley, 2014; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Cromby & Willis, 2013).

Neoliberal governmentality can be seen in the way consumer spaces are managed and controlled, for example, elements of the population that do not conform to the ‘citizen as consumer’ ethic are tacitly or explicitly excluded from them (Miles, 2012; Voyce, 2006). Under this regime the population is divided into two main categories. The first is the citizen as consumer: the self-governing, responsible and independent individual whose life revolves around an enterprising engagement with the market. The second are ‘targeted populations’: citizens deemed to be irresponsible, helpless, dependent and unable to adequately manage their own risks. They are seen to hamper the leisure/consumer experience and include people such

as the mentally ill, disabled, homeless and loitering groups of young people (Kowinski, 2002; Oliver, 1990 cited in Kitchen, 1998; Voyce, 2006; Williams, Hubbard, Clark & Berkeley, 2001; Zieleniec, 2007).

Neoliberalism and the subjectivity it engenders can also be seen in the modern obsession with property ownership and makeovers (Deery, 2006; Matheson, 2010). The renovation, buy to let and gentrification phenomena in inner city areas all over the Western world by the upper and middle classes has become a form of geographical capital-owning distinction that bestows cultural capital. The reconfiguration of Western cities' economic base from industrial production towards services and consumption generated new opportunities for those able to take advantage of them. However, it has created "severe social problems for those...not able to compete in the new circumstances, lacking access to resources and skills" (Mandipour, 2004, p. 269). This has led to spatial segregation as those who have lost out in the competition over property ownership are expelled to live in outer suburban and rural areas that lack employment and educational opportunities (Baudrillard, 1970/1998; Smith & Williams, 1986). Davis and Monk (2008, p. 15) add, "the spatial logic of neoliberalism (cum plutonomy) revives the most extreme colonial patterns of residential segregation and zoned consumption".

These contemporary socio-spatial phenomena expose some of the failures in mainstream social and environmental psychology, which maintain a conception of space as a neutral container of things devoid of politics, economics and power relations (Spinks & Spinks, 2015). Its narrow conception of the 'social' and 'spatial' means that it rarely moves beyond the confines of an individual's (social) cognitions and the affect of environmental variables on cognition, emotions and behaviour such as heat, noise, light, ventilation, interior design, privacy and crowds (Evans & Lepore, 1993; Evans, Lepore & Schroeder, 1996; Harris, McBride, Ross & Curtis, 2002). The political economy of space is ignored in favour of a mentalist approach where knowledge of social behaviour is produced by investigating socio-

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cognitive processes such as self-schemas, personality traits, group memberships, sense of place and social norms (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003; Stedman, 2002). This research agenda has been achieved by maintaining an illusion of certitude by employing simplified research questions, necessarily made so as to be methodologically manageable, as neoliberalism and consumer culture are viewed as too difficult to operationalise.

Mainstream research and theories fail to acknowledge, ignore or overlook how consumer culture and neoliberalism constitute people's attitudes and prejudice in the way it turns inclusive public spaces into "privatized spaces" where diversity and freedom of movement are constrained (Voyce, 2006, p. 269). There is an opportunity here for critical social psychologists to fill the void by employing the principles of decommodification to underpin their research. Decommodification is any historical, social, political, economic or cultural process "that reduces the scope and influence of the market in everyday life" (Vail, 2010, p. 313). The basis of this approach would be to challenge social and environmental psychological research that colludes with or maintains consumer culture and pro-market (neoliberal) values by producing alternative forms of knowledge that:

promote democratic control over the market...that are politically and socially embedded and grounded in a logic predicated on social needs rather than profit. It would include efforts to undermine the grip of market hegemony by increasing the transparency of the market and revealing its true social costs and consequences. (Vail, 2010 pp. 312-313).

One way this can be achieved is to employ psychogeographical work, which we will now explore in more detail.

## Psychogeography

### *Background*

Guy Debord (1958, n.p.) defined psychogeography as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviours of individuals”. This definition is not too dissimilar to that put forward by mainstream social and environmental psychologists. However, the theoretical assumptions and practices used in such work produce clear differentiations in claims and findings. The ‘experience based’ research practices used by writers such as Debord (1958) involve doing disorientating walks around the everyday places and spaces which they frequent in order to gain a richer understanding of the historical, cultural, political and economic landscape and their place within such contexts.

Debord’s work can be paralleled to Walter Benjamin’s in that both wandered the streets where they lived in order to make sense of the changing form of their home cities which were undergoing rapid gentrification. Benjamin’s (1982/2002) *Arcades Project*, taking as its object the urban milieu of Paris in the early 1900s, is important in terms of providing a historical yet prefigurative critique of the neoliberal ordering of the city and subjectivities, linked to what he referred to as ‘the commodification of everything’. Similarly, Raban (1974/1984, p. 16) argued that it is important to understand the nature of cities in order that “we may better understand what it is that cities do to us, and how they change our styles of living and thinking and feeling”.

Readers will be aware of the vastness of social and environmental psychological research on ‘place’ with topics including place identity, group conflict, the contact hypothesis and community psychology. What binds these areas together is the study of peoples’ relations to place and how psychological research can be used to make sense of one’s place in the world. The situatedness of identity is key, as Cuba and Humoon (1993, p. 112) rightly argue: “Like

people, things and activities, places are an integral part of the social world of everyday life, as such, they become important mechanisms through which identity is defined and situated”.

To assume that all social and environmental psychological research in this area is flawed due to its focus on the micro level of peoples’ experience and behaviour would be misguided. It is possible to extend the repertoire of some of this research to draw closer to a macro psychogeographical orientation. For example, Dixon and Durrheim (2004, p. 456) argue that place should not simply be seen as “inert backdrop(s) to social relations” or as having any “negligible impact on the social psychological processes that it frames”. Context is all important and highlights the need for a consideration of power in relation to prejudice, oppression and exclusion. Dixon and Durrheim’s (2004) work is useful in this respect as it considers the spatial relations of segregation in the KwaZulu Natal beach resort in South Africa. They explain that desegregation alters the relations between people in places and that the dominant group in this context, the whites, made attempts to resist racial integration in their localities. Their work reveals the underpinnings of prejudice and exclusion in different communities and how social psychological research can play a part in exposing it. There is a need in social and environmental psychology to further expand on this line of inquiry to analyse the power relations that function at the macro or institutional level in terms of how consumer culture and neoliberalism commodifies self-identity and fosters prejudice, oppression and exclusion between individuals and groups in society.

### *Power & Space*

Power stratifies social relations and spaces and so it should be a key criterion of social and environmental psychological research and practice. Turning to Foucault (1997, p. 24) again, his work drew on two main concepts in his formulation of an analysis of space – “utopias and heterotopias”. Utopias refer to what perfect places could ideally look like but are not real,

whereas heterotopias are “effectively enacted utopias” that are overlaid with other potentially unseen meanings. For example, consumer spaces are designed to attract people by offering settings that are seemingly carefree and inclusive, however, they are tightly controlled spaces that often employ sophisticated forms of surveillance and architectural design for the purpose of governing consumers. This can be seen in shopping malls (Voyce, 2006) and night clubs (Gallen, 2013). Also Hook’s (2007, p. 205) work on gated residential communities in South Africa illustrates how “spacialisation” is used as a “means of making meaning and power” and the process by which “historical structures of privilege and exclusion are continually reproduced”. The nature of power, prejudice and exclusion has also be analysed by Davis and Monk (2008) who reveal how space is used as a disciplinary tool for classifying, policing, controlling and exploiting elements of the population such as immigrant labourers, refugees, the poor and the mentally ill.

Lefebvre (1974/1991, 1976), Harvey (1973) and Parker (2015) maintain that the formation of social spaces in cities is a historical and political process. This aligns with a number of critical social psychologists (e.g. Hayes, 2003; Hook, 2007; Spinks & Spinks, 2015) who argue that psychological research needs to produce knowledge that challenges socio-spatial prejudice and oppression. It is at this point that ‘critical’ and ‘mainstream’ social psychology diverge (Stainton-Rogers, 2003). Due to the latter’s reluctance to engage with powerful societal institutions such as consumer culture and neoliberalism, the commodification of space is overlooked in the way it influences the formation of self-identity and attitudes. Mainstream social and environmental psychology is focused instead on producing micro calculations of behaviour for the purpose of control and prediction, which is used to sell and maintain consumer lifestyles (Bowlby, 1993; Cushman, 1995; Hansen, McHoul & Rapley, 2003; Kasser & Kanner, 2004).

Whereas much of the social and environmental psychological research has focused on studying social processes and individuals' behaviour in places, Debord used the practice of psychogeography to critique the encroachment of consumer spaces. These concerns provide the prospect for novel approaches to research on consumer spaces such as mobile based methods, which we will now explore in more detail.

### *Mobile Based Research Methods*

Employing the principles of mobile based research methods (Sheller & Urry, 2006) is one way to challenge the power relations that underpin consumer culture and neoliberalism. Qualitative psychologists have argued that walking is a useful means for studying environments (Bridger, 2014; Chamberlain, 2011; Hodgetts et al, 2010). If walking is central to how we experience everyday life then it makes sense to use it in social and environmental psychology research. However, researchers need to be careful not to view mobile research such as walking as if somehow 'novel' methods get us closer to how things really are or if more politically based approaches can activate and achieve real and long lasting social change. If we are to take seriously the idea of resisting market encroachments into everyday life then we need to do more than just conduct research that is a bit radical.

If we start with the assumption that social change is created by politically active community groups, then critical social psychologists should look to undertake 'public critical social psychology' (Block, 2007). Here they can take a leaf out of the American Sociological Association (ASA) who supported the U.S. labour union UNITE in their contract negotiations for their members employed in the hospitality industry. The ASA took action by threatening to boycott all hotels and convention centres that did not work with the union to negotiate a living wage and safe humane working conditions. If neoliberalism is to be confronted then critical

social psychologists need to “work in concert with political allies to wage campaigns that will challenge Market Fundamentalism directly” (Block, 2007, p. 326).

In a similar vein the Situationists comprised a collaboration between political theorists (including Debord) and political active community groups who formed in Europe at the end of the 1950s. Their work is of relevance to this review because they “conducted walks in towns and cities to challenge the capitalist ordering of space and to begin to imagine what environments could look like if these contexts were not underpinned by the concerns of capitalism and consumerism” (Bridger, 2014, p. 80). The Situationists have inspired more recent artistic and activist groups who draw on their ideas and practices to conduct their own psychogeographical investigations of towns and cities where they live, work and play.

The Situationists referred to the psychogeographical walking method as a *dérive*. Doing *dérives* is a way of exploring social spaces and places via walking that attempts to stimulate an ‘opening up’ to a variety of possible conscious and unconscious experiences. The approach has an affinity with the psychoanalytic technique of ‘free-association’. Sadler (1999, p. 80) pointed out that psychogeography could be used as a type of “therapy”; a way of gaining important insights about self and world.

Change is bound up with the ways in which *dérives* are carried out to enable free associative experiences. As Gergen, Josselson and Freeman (2015, p. 4) contend, autoethnography allows researchers to describe their “personal experiences in a way that it connects to larger social and political issues”. The process of free association and the linking of personal experience to social structures can reveal the hegemonic nature of neoliberalism, which has become an unquestioned “part of...society’s common sense” (Block, 2007, p. 328). This is quite different to the traditional priorities of mainstream research, which is to do objectivist ‘scientific’ work that frequently obscures, overlooks and/or ignores questions of political economy and its influence on socio-spatial relations (Bridger, 2010; McDonald &

Wearing, 2013). Dérives are carried out to think about alternatives to the current market hegemony of neoliberalised consumer spaces and how these spaces might be reappropriated for the social (common) good.

An illustration of this can be seen in the way that Bridger (2014) undertook a *dérive* in one of Manchester's (United Kingdom) largest shopping malls (the Arndale Centre). In this research he developed a set of questions (further adapted for this review) that can underpin psychogeographical research of consumer spaces, these include: What are my experiences of consumer spaces and would I usually undertake short visits and/or go there on a regular basis? What types of thinking, emotions and behaviours does the space invoke? What type of social encounters occur in the space? What type of ambience (its character and atmosphere) does the space try to create? What are the power relations that enable the space to function? How might certain elements of the population be excluded and discriminated from freely accessing the space? How might a social valuing of the space be promoted to challenge the instrumental relations and calculations that are carried out for the purpose of increasing consumer spending? How should the space and its meanings be changed? The answers to these questions and the researchers experiences are documented and written up as an autoethnographical narrative complimented with photographs.

Such research practice is similar in ways to Raban's (1974/1984) ideas of exploring what cities do to us and how they make us think and feel. Themes related to surveillance, privacy in relation to public and private spaces and also power relations are explored (Bridger, 2014). Indeed, Benjamin's (1982/2002, p. 37) thesis on the arcades as "temples of commodity capital" would appear to be strikingly similar to modern day shopping malls, arcades and redeveloped serviced based urban areas. The aim of psychogeographical work is to promote more democratic, inclusive public spaces that transcend the narrow instrumental basis of most consumer spaces whose purpose is commodity production and consumption.

However, as noted previously researchers need to do more than psychogeographical research if they are to successfully challenge the neoliberal hegemony. As touched on previously, critical social psychologists need to undertake ‘public critical social psychology’ by working with non-academic groups who have a similar interest in seeing greater democratic control being exerted over urban and suburban environments. Examples of this include the Huddersfield Psychogeographical Network and Leeds Psychogeographers in organising the World Congress of Psychogeography at the Heritage Quays building in Huddersfield in September 2016. The conference was a free event open to the public as well as to academics, artists and activists (accessible at: <http://4wcop.org>). Events included academic and non-academic talks, psychogeographical walks and workshops relating to considering Huddersfield in a post Brexit world, the relevance and impact of the northern powerhouse in Huddersfield and the migration experiences. Other psychogeographical work that the authors of this paper have been involved with includes the running of sessional workshops with people with mental health needs at a local community centre in Huddersfield (Bridger et al, 2016). Participants at the World Congress and the local community centre indicated that doing psychogeographical work led to new insights about self and world. Involvement in psychogeographical work would then seem to be an effective way to work not only in academia but also with local communities to consider and explore how we think and feel about the everyday places and spaces in which we live, work and play as well as to consider a different order of how things could be.

### Conclusion

In conclusion it is useful to consider how we can use our positions in academia to create alliances with those outside the university by participating in community group projects aimed at reclaiming neoliberal consumer spaces (e.g. Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, see Chapter 5; Sandel, 2013; Vail, 2010). Campaigns can be waged in a number of different ways,



such as working with community groups to undertake the doing of *dérives*. This has the potential to highlight the social, spiritual, historical and cultural values that local communities attach to place and space (Cunningham, 2006). Doing *dérives* reinforce these values as well as provide the basis for developing alternative decommodified visions for these places and spaces, one that views them as social goods to be protected from the deprivations of the market.

Brenner, Marcus and Mayer (2009, p. 180) write that commodification is the “intellectual and political reference point for any critical account of the contemporary urban condition”. They quote Lefebvre (cited in Brenner et al., 2009, p. 180) who insisted that “limiting the world of commodities” is essential to any project of radical democracy. We argue that psychogeography along with other forms of politically orientated inquiry can form the foundation of a decommodified approach to research in critical social psychology.

The decommodifying actions of psychogeography expose the way in which the neoliberal consumer ordering of space commodifies self-identity and constitutes prejudice, oppression and exclusion. This review has employed the work of social theorists and Continental philosophers to explore the power relations that underpin neoliberal consumer spaces, however, it still leaves the question as to what should replace these spaces and by what process this might occur? As authors of this review we acknowledge that social change is something that is enacted by people and therefore it is not possible to say what the world could look like in the future. Rather it is the case that doing psychogeographical work in a range of contexts including academia, art and activism enables us to see the ‘cracks’ in the pavement and to envision alternatives to the dominant neoliberal political economy. Psychogeographic theory and practice is one tool in our armoury that can be used to chip away at the existing market hegemony so as to move beyond the general aims of social and environmental psychology, which is often predicated on a narrow study of mind and behaviour processes with

little regard for the material conditions of everyday life and the power relations that determine them.

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<sup>i</sup> Mainstream social and environmental psychology is dominated by theories based on individual (social) cognitions (see for example Gifford, 2013, Ch. 2-4; Hogg & Vaughan, 2013, pp. 37-72). In contrast critical social psychology “stresses the social embeddedness of experience” and “challenges social institutions, practices and power relations - including the discipline of psychology - that contribute to forms of inequality and oppression” (Gough, McFadden & McDonald, 2013, p. 2).

<sup>ii</sup> The term ‘emplacement’ refers to “physical and spatial contexts” that are more “than mere backdrops to social and psychological phenomena” (Devine-Wright, 2009, p. 427).

<sup>iii</sup> A good example of this is the British Government’s Behavioural Insights Team tasked with among other things to ‘nudge’ welfare claimants “towards acceptance of the precepts of neoliberal subjectivities” (Cromby & Willis, 2013, p. 241; see also Thomas, 2016).