

# Paris-Amsterdam Underground

*Essays on Cultural Resistance, Subversion, and Diversion*

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## Foreword

*David Pinder*

In one of the many striking images in this book, a figure scrutinizes the earth through a giant magnifying glass. A painting by Jean Dubuffet, it is one of many that he composed from the mid-1940s that depict the ground and what lies beneath. Readers of the book are often invited similarly to look downward, to consider spaces that are literally under the ground of Paris and Amsterdam. Our attention is directed to what is under the paving stones, asphalt, and concrete on which so many people daily tread. What may be found there unseen, buried, sequestered, and forgotten? How can explorations of those depths transform understandings of the urban? The vertical line down may be a relatively neglected dimension of cities, the subterranean largely an unknown realm. But the latter, in its darkness and opacity, as a place to which expelled matter and waste flows and in which secrets as well as bodies are buried, has also long been a source of fascination combined with repulsion. That is particularly the case with Paris where the underground became an obsession during the nineteenth century among many writers and artists as well as politicians and administrators as the construction of new sewers, cemeteries, trains, and other infrastructure proceeded. Traditional imagery of underworlds was reworked as spaces under the city came to harbor all manner of fears, superstitions, fantasies, dreams, and visions. Associated with danger, decay, criminality, terror, insurrection, and the demonic, it was also a site of technological accomplishment, beauty, and wonder as well as escape, shelter, and refuge (Williams; Pike).

Looking downward provides a distinct perspective on the city above, the underground even perhaps offers a key to unlock certain of its mysteries. Yet the underground cannot be comprehended through an abstract viewpoint and instead requires entering its 'shadows'. That is an observation drawn toward the end of the book from one of the most famous chroniclers of Paris souterrain, Victor Hugo. The preceding pages take us on many journeys below the surface. The underneath is at times literal, for example via train or metro. But it is also metaphorical. The underground of these pages is both a place and an idea, one that resonates in manifold ways with the histories of Paris and Amsterdam. They have become renowned for their underground movements and practices of cultural resistance, subversion, and diversion (and some of the paradoxes and recuperations involved in that 'renown' are explored insightfully in what follows). Opposing dominant power relations, these movements and activities have typically operated below dominant culture's threshold of visibility, even clandestinely.

One characteristic mode has been that of digging, grubbing, burrowing, undermining – and on occasion erupting through the surface. That is to use the terms of the ‘old mole’ evoked by Marx, an image he borrowed from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to refer to revolutionary struggles in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. It is also the language adopted a century later by the Situationists, who play a prominent role in this book. Positioning themselves as ‘the catacombs of visible culture’, they sought not to gain access to the artistic and cultural establishment but rather to undermine it (SI ‘The Adventure’, 79). Renunciating the ‘world of the spectacle’, they looked to desires, resistances, and struggles from below that threatened the current social and spatial order. ‘An irreducible dissatisfaction spreads subterraneanly, undermining the edifice of the affluent society’, they noted with satisfaction in 1962, adding that the ‘old mole’ conjured by Marx ‘is still digging away’ (SI ‘Bad Days’, 107). It was an image to which they often returned, including during the uprisings in Paris, in May 1968, when they believed ‘a decisive threshold’ was crossed: ‘Europe can only leap for joy and cry out: “Well dug, old mole!”’ (Viénet, 15).

The book focuses on the decades since the mid-twentieth century. The underground at its heart is that associated with the counterculture whose designation as ‘the underground’ the editors and others trace from the 1950s and 1960s. The text nevertheless resists a single track and gives free rein to the term’s fluid meanings and associations. Maps are reworked, detours taken, and lines hijacked. Routes and destinations are varied. The journeys productively unsettle familiar narratives and images, most obviously those of the ‘official’ cultures of the two cities but also those which have coalesced around their undersides. While there is an extensive literature on aspects of the post-war counterculture, an important contribution of this book lies in its spatial as well as historical approach. Not only does it trace how cultural movements arose within particular urban contexts that also shaped them, raising questions about why and how Paris and Amsterdam have been such conducive and distinctive sites for artistic, creative, and ludic practices of resistance since the 1950s; it further addresses how, for these movements, urban space is itself a medium of expression, conflict, and struggle. Cultural creation is not sealed in specialized institutions but enters into the realms of everyday life and space, which in turn are remade. What are subverted and diverted are urban life and the definitions, uses, and production of its spaces. When in the momentous year of 1968 Henri Lefebvre declared, ‘Let everyday life become a work of art!’ – and when, at the same time, he articulated ‘the right to the city’ – they were cries and demands that resonated strongly with many artistic and cultural radicals in both cities.

The book’s most vital contribution is indicated by the hyphen in its main title, which is to say its effort to think the cities and their cultural politics together. That the title suggests a train line or route is no accident for the book is deeply concerned with encounters, exchanges, and traffic. Recent work in urban studies and geography has demonstrated the importance of understanding cities not as bounded locations but in terms of their interrelations with other places and peoples, as nodes and meeting places within flows and networks. This demands looking outward, as it were, as well as downward (Massey). Through the politi-

cal economic lens of global cities literature in particular, focus most often falls on cities regarded as command centers within the global economy, on their hierarchical and competitive relationships to other cities, and on the flows of money, information, and people between them in response to economic restructuring and changes in the geopolitical order. The movement and mutation of urban policies has also been examined and unpacked, including in relation to the reception of ‘creative city’ visions in Amsterdam (Peck; see also McCann and Ward). Addressing Paris-Amsterdam through notions of the underground, then, explicitly invites different ways of conceiving connection, movement, exchange, and place. While some chapters explore and compare movements between the cities, others address one city or the other, and the argument emerges through combination and juxtaposition.

Far from collapsing the different inflections and trajectories of underground cultures, the chapters bring out their specificities as well as interconnections. The movements they address include those that of dissident ideas and practices, for example those involved in the formation and legacies of the Situationist International, in the sexual undergrounds of Amsterdam, and in the writings of the Beats based in Paris but whose networks stretched wider. What comes through strongly is the significance of material urban spaces for these exchanges and circulations, for example the specific neighborhoods of Paris and Amsterdam whose collective exploration played a crucial role in the development of Situationist ideas and ideals. They were exchanges that literally *took place*, and a critical element of the book lies in taking that seriously.

If there is traffic of ideas, however, there is also that which ferries passengers, most particularly the metro that cuts across a number of chapters. In one chapter, for example, we follow the daily commute between city center and suburban home by a resident of Sarcelles. Attending to metro lines, stops, delays, and detours calls into question understandings of culture as travel promoted by recent cultural theorists, and enables the complexities of place, identity, and journey to be addressed. In another chapter we descend to the metro with Dubuffet to observe commuters awaiting or riding carriages. Again its ordinariness as an everyday underground space is part of its appeal, yet his metro paintings are shown to lead into a fuller exploration of the undersides of both Paris and painting, and into efforts to find a space for aesthetic contestation. A further chapter on the metro tells of the controversial construction of lines in Amsterdam during the late 1960s and 1970s, of the furious mobilizations against its ‘economically-driven tunnel visions’ and displacements of populations, and of the subsequent integration of some of those involved in an ‘official’ memorialization of the struggles. At such moments the book’s concern with the multiple meanings of the underground becomes particularly provocative, directing us with new insight back to the city as a contested material and symbolic space.

A question running through many of the chapters concerns the fate of the underground as it confronts the mainstream and becomes fragmented, dissipated, commercialized, or absorbed into contrary interests. Wariness about the abilities of cultural undergrounds to avoid recuperation has, of course, been common since their inception. So, too, has the stronger suspicion that they fuel, more

than challenge, fundamental aspects of the dominant capitalist order, not least in their emphasis on innovation and the new. Among the underground's sharpest critics were the Situationists, who targeted among others the Beats and the Angry Young Men for their innocuousness and also ultimately their reactionary faith in the redemptive power of literature. One response is to avoid romanticizing the lines between the oppositional underground and the recuperative powers of commerce and state, and instead to analyze their entanglements in particular situations. That is something that the nuanced account of the Amsterdam metro struggles does so well. But another task is to examine in critical detail, as a number of other chapters do, how the undergrounds of these cities have now become part of their spectacular images, and how each city trades in various ways on its renown as a center of underground culture to distinguish itself on the global stage. The very proposition of a commercial guide to the underground, considered in the book's final chapter, embodies some of the paradoxes involved in this process, as it attempts to render visible for consumption what is meant, in its designation as underground, to resist by being oppositional, marginal, and ephemeral.

Yet, if the book could slide into a longing for past undergrounds, now lost to a world of neoliberalism and hypercommodification, the authors collectively avoid this. Looking downward, they have the present conditions and possible futures of cities in mind as much as their pasts. In so doing, they encourage exploration of the underground's changing configurations as well as the varied subterranean relationships, circulations, and forces currently at work in constituting urban spaces. Included among them are perhaps those quietly burrowing away, hidden from view, awaiting their time. What forms they might take, and through what images they might best be thought, remain open questions. This rich collection of essays nevertheless reminds us of the significance of sounding these depths, and of how differently cities appear when addressed in terms of their undersides.

## 1. Concepts and Practices of the Underground

*Christoph Lindner and Andrew Hussey*

### Paris-Amsterdam

The post-war histories of Paris and Amsterdam have been significantly defined by and frequently encounter each other in the notion of the ‘underground’ as both a material and metaphorical space. The underground traffic between the two cities has most often occurred in avant-garde movements. For example, the CoBrA movement, although centered in Amsterdam, Brussels, and Copenhagen, also exerted a strong influence on the Parisian *Nouveaux Réalistes* in the 1950s. Throughout the 1960s, the work and activities of the Situationists, Constant, and the Provos were an important part of the counterculture in both Paris and Amsterdam, often in parallel or simultaneous moments. What all of these projects had in common was a radical reinvention of city space that was both political and aesthetic.

This insight is at the center of this book, which seeks not only to interrogate the interrelating countercultural histories of Paris and Amsterdam in the mid- to late-twentieth century, but also to cast those forward to twenty-first-century realities, where the notion of the underground has also come to include the problems of violence and integration in the Parisian *banlieues* and Amsterdam suburbs, the sex and drugs trade in both cities, the re-imagining of city limits, globalized boundaries, and, in the most literal sense, the impact of the Paris and Amsterdam metros on urban mobility and the heterogeneity of city life. Shuttling back and forth between Paris and Amsterdam – as well as between post-war avant-gardism and twenty-first-century global urbanism – this book seeks to create a mirroring effect over the notion of the underground as a necessarily dissonant but also culturally-binding force in the making of the contemporary European city.

### Hipsters and Counterculture

The origins of the first usage of the term ‘underground’ – meaning, in this context, cultural resistance to mainstream power structures – are notoriously unclear. Most cultural historians agree, however, that the word probably first took on this meaning at some point in the 1950s in the United States (see Green; De Groot; Sandbrook). Indeed the various anxieties and dissident currents which coursed

in an underground fashion through post-war America were most famously given a wider public in Norman Mailer's extended essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster*, published in 1957. The aim of this essay was to give an account of young white people from the 1920s to 1940s who had fallen so deeply in love with jazz music that they had adopted black culture as their own. Mailer's essay was not the first to document this phenomenon. As far back as 1948 *Partisan Review* had published an article by Anatole Broyard called 'A Portrait of the Hipster' which hailed the Greenwich Village jazz fan as a 'kind of Surrealist' and 'an underground poet' (43).

Mailer's essay went one step further, however. Drawing upon his recent readings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Mailer defined the hipster as 'an American existentialist' (11) who rejects all forms of conformity as the enemy of real culture. More than this, Mailer's hipsters, with their own secret language (based on the jive talk of their jazz heroes) and a nihilistic philosophy of total freedom, were 'wise primitives' (11) who had declared war on the orthodoxies of the McCarthy era. From this point of view, *The White Negro* is not mere journalism, nor just the uncomfortably-titled self-indulgences of a swelling writerly ego, but also, and more importantly, a call to arms.

The sociologist Bernice Martin has described what happened next in Western society as an 'Expressive Revolution'. By this she meant the explosion of the counterculture in the 1960s, as the hip American 'underground' went 'overground'. Across all of the arts, in politics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, the term 'underground' became a codeword to designate a way of thinking and behaving which, if it was not always totally new, was always at odds with received ideas. Martin has described this impulse as being driven by what she calls 'anti-structure' as the guiding principle of all 'underground activity', from art to aesthetics, from cinema to 'happenings' and 'anti-psychiatry' (132-3). This cuts across all oppositional movements and personalities of the era, she implies, ranging from the Beats to Timothy Leary to the Black Panthers. More precisely, she defines all of this activity as drawing together 'the pitting of freedom and fluidity against form and structure ... a long and concerted attack on boundaries, limits, certainties, conventions, taboos, roles, system, style, category, predictability, form, structure and ritual. It was the pursuit of ambiguity and the incarnation of uncertainty' (133).

The real paradox at work here, however, is the extent to which this activity made its presence felt – even visible – in mainstream culture, where it disrupted but did not dislodge established power structures. It is hard to find a better example of this than the Beatles's song 'Revolution 9', a dislocated and sinister sound collage, influenced by Stockhausen and John Cage, which was owned by millions around the world within days of its release in 1968, and then listened to mainly with indifference and boredom from a public who probably preferred commercial pop but who could also just about put up with the self-indulgent noise of the 'underground'.

This apparent problematic was one of the many reasons why so many European avant-garde groups at first kept their distance from the 'pop revolutionaries' in Britain and America, who seemed only to confirm and to consolidate

the spectacle of commodity culture, against which these Europeans – many still steeped in the language of classical Marxism – had been fighting their own long war. More to the point, what this ironic dead end seemed to highlight was that the ‘Expressive Revolution’ of the Anglo-American counterculture was not at all the same thing as the concrete, concerted action of a real political Revolution. There was of course much talk of ‘Revolution’ in underground circles in the Anglo-American world, but for the most part this was focused on liberating sexuality, awakening the unconscious mind, and dreaming up myriad varieties of utopianism.

Nonetheless it was inevitable that the seismic shifts which were taking place in the ‘Anglosphere’ would eventually have an impact within Europe, as the sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll culture met the dialectical rigor of European Marxists head-on. The twin capitals of this encounter were Paris and Amsterdam.

### Urban War Games

In Paris, until the mid-1960s, the post-war underground most often meant resistance to the French Communist Party, the monolith that dominated working-class politics during this era. Other ‘underground’ movements included the French and Algerian supporters of the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*), which were determined to bring the Algerian war to Paris. These insurgents had their corollary on the right in the form of the OAS (*Organisation de l’armée secrète*) and their armed proxies who were fighting their own war against the French government, whom they saw as the betrayers of the *Algérie Française*. Against this background, the avant-gardists of the period – including former Surrealists, Lettrists, and Situationists – were forced through necessity to conceive of their work in hard political terms.

Similarly, in Amsterdam, the avant-gardists of the *Vrij Beelden*, the *Nederlandse Experimentale Groep*, the early CoBrA group, and others had been marked by their own experience of war, occupation, and resistance. The most persistent motif in the work of these interrelated groups was building on the wreckage of the blasted cityscapes of post-war Europe: art and architecture had a political mission to replace the failures of the ‘old civilization’. One of the key texts of the era for Amsterdam avant-gardists was Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*, first published in Dutch in 1938. This was translated into French in the early 1950s and was devoured just as eagerly by their Parisian counterparts. Essentially, the appeal of this text was Huizinga’s argument that all true civilizations emerged from play and not work. Writing in the 1930s, Huizinga seemed to have analyzed and predicted the demise of *homo politicus* and *homo economicus*. In the post-war period, to his readers in Paris and Amsterdam, Huizinga was laying out the blueprint for a new form of city, a new way of existing.

Interestingly, both Paris and Amsterdam provided a ready-made home to ludic traditions of resistance. In Paris, this tradition went back to the 1940s, to the jazz-addicted youth of Paris who hated the Germans who occupied their city with the same venom that they had traditionally directed at teachers or priests. The

most fervent disciples of the American jazz masters adopted the baggy zoot suits and greasy, lank hairstyles they had seen in the Hollywood movies that made it through the German censor and called themselves 'Zazous' – apparently a Gallic corruption of the 'zah-zuh-zah' phrase used by the much-cherished bandleader Cab Calloway. As far back as 1942, a journalist called Raymond Asso had written in the collaborationist newspaper *La Globe* of the 'Zazou Menace'. Asso was referring to distinct groups of young people whose main aim in life seemed to be irritating the German authorities as much as was humanly possible.

They were mostly under twenty-one years of age (the 'Zazous' also nicknamed themselves 'J3' – a reference to the ration books which were assigned to those Parisians who had not attained the age of majority). 'Zazous' haunted the terraces of the Champs-Élysées – at the Pam-Pam or La Capoulade – or the Latin Quarter, at the Dupont-Latin, Le Petit Q or Café Cluny. They were distinguished not only by their American suits and tendency to invent slang out of the remnants of English that they took from jazz songs, but also by dandified details, such as wearing a miniscule knot in a necktie or always carrying an umbrella. Female 'Zazous' were unashamedly sexy, sporting the reddest lipstick, thin dresses adorned with big modernist squares, short skirts, and high heels. Both sexes adopted incomprehensible but modish fads as a mark of tribal belonging. These included drinking beer with grenadine or, most bizarrely of all, ordering *carottes râpées*, or grated carrot salad, with every meal.

The 'Zazous' were pranksters and teenage rebels a decade before these attitudes were properly codified in the pop culture of post-war Europe. It would be a ludicrous exaggeration to say that they represented anything like a true threat to the occupying forces, but they were a genuine nuisance and a rallying point for disaffected youths who, precisely because they were below the age of majority, were harder to police and control than other sections of the population.

Twenty years later in Amsterdam, the Provos, a group of anarchistic young people who took their name from the verb 'provoke', turned the antics of disaffected youth into a series of serious insurrections that by 1967 had become a direct challenge to the Dutch government. The Provos had their roots in the variety of anti-consumerist campaigns which became popular among students in Amsterdam from 1962 onward. One of the most playful ways to attack the rigidity of post-war Amsterdam culture during this period was to invoke magic, poetry, and play as weapons against the stultifying rationality of mainstream consumer culture. Throughout the early 1960s, mysterious graffiti appeared across the city: 'Gnot', 'K', 'Klaas comes' or 'Warning'.

The Provos at this stage probably had no more than a dozen adherents at the hard-core of the group. But their style had a massive influence – their name was adopted as '*geuzen*', a rebel name, while a new hip language emerged around it, including '*vogel*' (boy), '*chick*' (girl), '*blowen*' (to smoke a joint), '*te gek*' (crazy), and '*kip*' (policeman). Most importantly, the Provos had a firm grip on the power of signs and symbols in the culture wars of the 1960s: their occupations and demonstrations were all characterized by a willful, antic spirit which was the most effective way of wrong-footing the authorities, whether at the royal wedding in 1966, or the various riots and sit-ins at Vondelpark or Dam Square. For a genera-

tion, in the Netherlands and in the wider world, the Provos were the very emblem of underground Amsterdam made into the most spectacular forms of mutiny.

### **Projections, Mobility, Visibility**

This, however, is not just a book about the extended, interconnected history of the underground in Paris and Amsterdam. Indeed the very notion of the underground as defined above actively militates against nostalgia. This does not mean, however, that the passage of time should eradicate memory. With this in mind, the essays that follow aim to engage with the particular nature of the underground in each city and how they speak to each other in the past and present. Reflecting the recurring concerns of the authors, the book is organized into three interlocking sections which focus, respectively, on ‘projections’, ‘mobility’, and ‘visibility’.

The essays in Part 1 (projections) focus on the aesthetic, performative, and socio-philosophical strategies used by underground artists, groups, thinkers, and activists to re-imagine dominant, established images of Paris and Amsterdam in the urban imaginary. The essays in Part 2 (mobility) focus on the underground as both a material and metaphorical space of movement, diversity, encounter, refuge, and political action. The essays in Part 3 (visibility) offer new critical insights into the existing underground cultures of Paris and Amsterdam in the early-twenty-first century and reflect on these cultures’ relation to the so-called ‘surface’, to the dominant, visible, and increasingly commodified dimensions of urban space and experience. While some essays specifically address either Paris or Amsterdam, and some work comparatively across the two cities, all retain a sharp focus on how concepts and practices of the urban underground animate countercultural spaces, scenes, moments, and movements.

The opening essays by Sophie Berrebi and Andrew Hussey begin in the 1940s and 1950s and seek to excavate from those periods a sense of the material nature of the underground. In the case of Dubuffet in the Paris metro, Berrebi identifies the central ambiguity of Dubuffet’s work during this period as the slide, or swerve, between the notion of the underground as a literal space and a metaphorical experience. This ambiguity is unresolved in his painting, and therefore remains a defining tension in revisiting these works.

In a similar way, Andrew Hussey establishes the conflict and tension between the Parisian Situationist Guy Debord and the Dutch artist and architect Constant as the crucial dynamic in the early history of the Situationist International. The word ‘Situationist’ would of course go on to have great significance in the underground histories of both Paris and Amsterdam: this essay identifies the key debates and points of divergence and suggests that this history is still shaping debate about urban space in both cities.

In the next essay Gert Hekma looks at the history of the sexual underground in Amsterdam, tracing with a forensic eye the fast-moving and sometimes blurred evolution of the city from a provincial metropolis to the world capital of sexual freedom. This is linked to the ludic nature of Provo revolt and also the pre-histo-

ry of the subcultures that preceded them – the gay youth cultures of ‘Pleiners’ and ‘Sissies’, ‘Dijkers’ and ‘Nozems’. Here, the sexual underground is seen as the site of theory as well as activity. Reich, Sade, and Foucault are all regularly invoked by Hekma as avatars of the underground; but this is also, as he points out, a lost world in the fragmentation of twenty-first-century transnational realities.

The essays by Sudeep Dasgupta and Ginette Verstraete focus on the politics of spatiality in, respectively, Paris and Amsterdam, with an emphasis on mapping the margins as the center. In his reading of Karin Albou’s 2005 film *La Petite Jérusalem*, Dasgupta analyzes the Parisian metro as the space of transition for a young woman of Tunisian-French-Jewish origins, as she journeys daily between her home in the *banlieue* and her philosophy classes in the center of the city: a journey which takes her literally and metaphorically between worlds. Dasgupta’s innovation is to focus on how the film’s treatment of delay, detours, and diversions disrupts the hegemonic cultural dichotomy of fixity and mobility.

Verstraete presents a compelling history of the controversial project of the Amsterdam metro line. Most significantly, she situates the varying strategies of opposition to the project beyond the power-resistance divide, demonstrating how the ‘messy entanglement’ between the underground and institutionalized power functions as a motif in the experience of everyday life in Amsterdam. In particular, she considers how a countercultural art movement was ‘integrated’ by the municipalized underground space of the metro; and how, as a consequence, resistance was moved from margin to center with conflicting results.

In his essay on ‘The Beats in Paris and Beyond’, Allen Hibbard establishes the Beat writers of the 1950s and 1960s as the unstable center of a shifting network of like-minded dissidents, with their headquarters in Paris, but with floating islands of influence in Amsterdam, Tangier, and beyond. Hibbard looks to Deleuze and Guattari for a theoretical explanation of how flows of communication traverse the social field into the open space of the ‘rhizome’, the in-between where accelerated movement propels history forward. This, asserts Hibbard, is how the underground works – a kind of anti-dialectic which carries meaning through desire rather than ideology. Hence the emergence of the transnational underground network of the Beats and their followers, for whom geography is both an accident and an inspiration.

Carolyn Birdsall and Joyce Goggin focus on the visible/audible nature of underground activity in Amsterdam – especially the city’s tourist image, place-branding, and the Red Light District, the last of which is arguably the most conspicuous articulation of a normally clandestine activity. Both Birdsall and Goggin are concerned with the paradox of how Amsterdam sells itself as an underground capital, and how this process is sometimes validated, and at other times negated, by the consumerist nature of the spectacle on offer. Most significantly, both essays express an anxiety about Amsterdam’s countercultural self-image as mediated through the spectacularization of the underground.

Back in Paris, Anna-Louise Milne gives an account of how illegal immigrants challenge the legal and institutional framework of the city when they make themselves visible on their own terms. She reads this activity within the register of Parisian particularity and the universalism of the French concept of the Law.

The underground she describes is not just in opposition to these forces, but is also a defining component part of them. Also in Paris, Stephen Sawyer maps the underground as a matrix of metaphors and experiences, asking questions about how much is concealed and revealed in everyday Parisian life. The underground he encounters is both a place and a mechanism. More to the point, he argues that knowledge of underground activity in the city exposes the limits of urban experience, at the same as it traces the experience of liminality.

## **Future City**

The meaning and nature of underground activity – already a fluid and elusive concept – has inevitably evolved and mutated in the twenty-first century. Yet, as many of the essays in this volume reveal, the questions asked by so-called underground artists and activists in the 1960s and 1970s have not yet gone away. Rather, their questions about the condition and future of urban space, commodity culture, sex, money, and identity have become ever more acute in the transnational, rapidly globalizing environment of contemporary Europe. What this book reveals in the end is that the underground is not an anachronism but an integral component of how we live in cities and how we will choose to live in cities in the future. That, indeed, is one of the lasting insights of this necessarily eclectic and challenging collection of essays, which reveals Paris and Amsterdam to be, albeit in increasingly complicated and paradoxical ways, enduring epicenters of cultural resistance, subversion, and diversion.