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Spaces of every-night life¹: for geographies of sleep, sleeping and sleepiness

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Abstract: Over one third of most human lives – and hence one third of human geographies – is spent *asleep*. It is our contention in this paper that human geographers should take sleep, sleeping and sleepiness more seriously as topics for theoretical, empirical and critical research than has hitherto been the case. This paper provides a preliminary indication of potentially fruitful directions for geographical research on sleep, reviewing salient extant work in geography and (especially) in cognate disciplines in order to develop a case for research and enquiry in four domains: sleep and consumption; sleep and health; sleep and difference; sleep and bodily practice. The potential ramifications of ‘sleepy geographies’ for prevailing assumptions habitually underpinning wakeful, cognate geographies (ie, the vast majority of human geographies to date) are also considered.

Key words: childhood, consumption, difference, embodiment, ethics, health, sleep, sleeping, sleepiness.

Sleep is a state of great human and physiological interest. Like our breathing and the beating of our hearts, we take it for granted until it eludes us. Human beings spend about one quarter to one third of their lives asleep, so that in a span of three score years and ten, sleep occupies 17 to 23 years. (Cooper, 1994: xv)

Sleeping is no mean art: for its sake one must stay awake all day. (Nietzsche, 1961: 56)

Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. (Weber, 1974: 157)

It seems that we have not evolved fast enough to keep pace with our present technological world. It is obvious that we can and do cheat on the amount of sleep we have to accommodate to technological and societal demands. Unfortunately, such cheating can ultimately make us clumsy, stupid, unhappy, and dead. (Coren, 1996: 11)

I Touching on sleep

A decade ago, sleep became a (very) brief and satirized topic of debate for critical human geographers. Writing in response to an editorial in *Environment and Planning*

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D: Society and Space by Neil Smith (1996), Hamnett evaluated Smith's critique of:

the grandiose claims, pretentious language, but essential vacuity of some contemporary cultural writing ... [wherein] this kind of language and analysis is sending him [Smith] to sleep or, alternatively, that sleep is a reasonable strategy in the face of the uncritical nature of much of what passes for alternative cultural politics ... In my reading of Neil's piece, he is using 'sleep' as a metaphor for his concerns about the direction of contemporary human geography. (Hamnett, 1997: 127)

Foreshadowing ongoing debates regarding 'relevancy', 'usefulness' and criticality in the discipline (Peck, 1999; Martin, 2001; Dorling and Shaw, 2002; Horton and Kraftl, 2005; Blomley, 2006), this debate was intended to stimulate geographers to consider 'modes of writing [which] have permeated human geography which bear an increasingly tenuous relationship to social relations and social practices as they are lived and experienced by many people' (Hamnett, 1997: 127). Figured, comically and light-heartedly, as an appropriate reaction to such modes of writing (whether out of bored bewilderment, or strategic refusal), sleep is typified here as thoroughly *useless* and unproductive. Indeed, it is easy to think of sleep as basically useless and irrelevant to the concerns of human geography. Intuitively, perhaps, sleeping seems (as per the tenor of Hamnett's satire) too banal, too fey, too *useless*, and too distant from weightier scholarly concerns to *matter* in this context. Moreover, the quotidian, taken-for-granted, unconscious, uncanny, ineffable nature of sleep ensures that it typically eludes and exceeds the terms, methods and foci of much human geographical enquiry. Perhaps, too, there is a kind of prevailing, moral undercurrent to all this: certainly, in contemporary Anglo-American popular culture, sleep is frequently positioned as an unproductive, idle, indolent, luxurious, weak and, often, basically (as per Weber) morally condemnable activity in many ways, via manifold discursive formulations

(think: 'laziness', 'tiredness', 'doziness', 'exhaustion', 'daydreaming', 'nodding off', 'sleeping on the job', 'having a lie-in', being 'bed-bound').

Notwithstanding (and perhaps in defiance of) such reservations and suspicions, it is our contention that recent and developing directions in human geography might (perhaps to the bemusement of Smith and Hamnett) prompt geographers to consider sleep *seriously* as a focus for theoretical, empirical and even critical research. We contend that sleep is a fundamentally spatial, and spatially-productive phenomenon, and – as we hope to suggest in the following pages – some understanding of sleep, sleeping and sleepiness (and attendant experiences, social/spatial manifestations, and material paraphernalia) should afford new understandings of both the 'human' and 'geography' in human geography. Thus, this paper is intended as both a review of extant salient geographical research *and* a case or preview of possibly fruitful future research and enquiry by human geographers. To this end, we review, by way of introduction, four compelling antecedents for human geographical research regarding sleep, sleeping and sleepiness, before outlining four propositions for future geographical research in this area.

II Antecedents: for geographies of sleep, sleeping and sleepiness²

There are at least four key antecedents for human geographical research regarding sleep, sleeping and sleepiness. Individually and collectively, these lines of research and enquiry constitute a considerable, compelling case for human geographers to acknowledge sleep as a focus for future empirical and theoretical endeavours.

First, the significance of sleep should come to the fore via significant, ongoing enquiry concerning contemporary geographies and cultures of consumption (cf. Gregson, 1995; Jackson and Thrift, 1995; Doel and Segrott, 2003; Cook *et al.*, 2004). Here, as very nascent 'sociologies of sleep' and 'anthropologies of

sleep³ have begun to articulate (Hislop and Arber, 2003a; Steger, 2004; Williams, 2005), scant attention has been paid to cultural practices of sleep and sleeping. The principal aim of these sociologies and anthropologies of sleep has been to temper traditional understandings of the social role of sleep which have been dominated by psychology and neuroscience, by foregrounding the everyday social production, construction, consumption and experience of sleep (Williams, 2005). Importantly, this work has depicted socio-spatial trends which – although spatio-temporally diverse – highlight the (likely increasing) significance of ‘sleep’ as a cultural, scientific, political, legal and, especially, as a *commercial* ‘good’, certainly in many parts of the ‘developed world’ (Williams and Boden, 2004: section 1.4; see also Schwartz, 1970; Melbin, 1989). To date there has been little research concerning the multi-million pound industries and economies which – as these sociologies make plain – have rapidly come to surround contemporary sleeping, or (perhaps of most interest and importance to geographers) its spatial and geographical impressions and effects. While there are precedents for investigation of the paraphernalia surrounding sleeping – in the work of American historical studies of material culture (Wright, 1962; Calvert, 1992; Brown *et al.*, 1994; Salinger, 1995; Steele and Brown, 1995; Stearns *et al.*, 1996; Jacobson, 1997; Lees-Maffei, 2002), or nascent anthropological research (Steger, 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006a; 2006b), for instance – we contend that there exist many economies and consumer cultures of sleeping which are socially and politically significant and/or problematic, and spatially and materially complex, but which remain, as yet, unwritten.

A second prompt for taking sleep more seriously is located in a renewed concern with geographies of health and physical and emotional well-being (Kearns and Moon, 2002; Parr, 2002; 2003; Smyth, 2005). Sleep is surely of fundamental significance

here. A cursory reading of any textbook of human physiology or epidemiology suggests the significance of sleep (or, more often, sleeplessness) as a causal variable in a vast spectrum of physical and emotional ill-health, including – to give just the most widely cited examples – headaches, nausea, gastro-oesophageal complaints, urinary complaints, asthma, problematic blood pressure, back pain, poor dental health, low fertility, depression, psychosocial disorders, anxiety attacks, clumsiness, serious accidents (Driver and Shapiro, 1993: 1601–2). It is estimated that ‘around one-in-three visitors to Doctors’ surgeries ... [in the USA] suffer from complaints caused by, or producing the symptom of, non-restorative sleep’ (Driver and Shapiro, 1993: 1601). Moreover, sleeping and sleeplessness are the foci of manifold popular, everyday talk and knowledges regarding well-being which are, in turn, fuelled and supplied by a vast complex of commercially-available products, substances and knowledges. In particular, these knowledges have become well-documented – and well-publicized – in psychoanalytical interrogations of dreaming (Pile, 1998; 2000), where sleep has ironically become backgrounded in interpretive analyses.⁴ Despite the intimate relationships that are evident between sleep and physical and emotional health and well-being, the importance of sleep has, however, seldom been articulated or acknowledged as a fundamental factor in geographies of health and well-being. We therefore contend that an interest in sleep might extend and develop contemporary geographical understandings of health and well-being.

Third, an engagement with sleep should be prompted by human geographers’ long-standing concerns to map everyday spatial-temporal routines, rhythms and geographies (May and Thrift, 2001; McCormack, 2002), and the forms of sociality and – crucially – *difference* produced through them (Philo, 1992; Sibley, 1995; Valentine, 1999). Sleep/ing is surely of fundamental

importance here, such is their importance in producing and delimiting the everyday time-space rhythms and rituals of most human beings, and such is the difference that different experiences or regimes of sleep have. However, human geographical research and enquiry has, as yet, seldom entailed consideration of the diurnal rhythms and routines of sleeping and waking, and the relationships, spaces and lines of difference produced through and around them. A key, but now too-often overlooked, exception is the foundational work of early feminist time-geographers who, in mapping the everyday time-space constraints upon women, recognized household and familial sleep patterns and routines as fundamentally important in limiting women's potential movements and actions (see, for example, Hanson and Hanson, 1980; Ardener, 1981; Palm, 1981; Miller, 1982; Pickup, 1984; Tivers, 1985; Fortuijn and Karsten, 1989; MacKenzie, 1989; Dyck, 1990; for an overview see Rose, 1993). We further contend, therefore, that a focus upon rhythms and routines of sleeping might afford new understandings of rhythms and temporalities and their everyday social and political import and manifestations. Sociologists' research regarding in detail, on personal, haptic, gestural and domestic scales, the gendered nature of sleep disruption and sleep routines would provide one effective starting point (see Fairhurst, 2000; Hislop and Arber, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c).

Fourth, a conceptual and empirical interest in sleep (and diverse somatic states evoked by the word 'sleep') should be prompted by the ongoing upswell of interest in embodiment and affect in human geography (Rodaway, 1994; Nast and Pile, 1998; Teather, 1999; Valentine, 1999; Dewsbury, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Longhurst, 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Anderson and Smith, 2001; Bondi *et al.*, 2005; Anderson, 2006; Paterson, 2006) and the social sciences at large (Turner, 1991; Butler, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Conboy *et al.*, 1997; Kirby, 1997; Warr and Jones, 2000; Shilling, 2001; Young, 2004). While a

growing range of social scientific research and practice has been concerned to think and write about the affective, somatic and bodily bases of everyday human practices and experiences, the states and practices of sleeping and sleepiness (and, indeed, the easily taken-for-granted states of waking and wakefulness) remain largely overlooked. This is all the more surprising given that recent neuroscientific and physiological research on sleep has drastically expanded contemporary languages and knowledges pertaining to human embodiment, consciousness and somatism (see, for example, Shapiro and Dement, 1993; Cooper, 1994; Hobson, 1995), such that, potentially:

the study of sleep ... is changing humankind's view of itself by shedding light on the ways in which our daily behavioral rhythms, our perceptions, our feelings and our thoughts reflect the detailed workings of the 100 billion nerve cells within our head that spark, secrete juices, and code and store data ... around the clock. (Hobson, 1995: 10)

We therefore argue that empirical and theoretical work on sleep might afford geographers new apprehensions of embodiment, consciousness and affect (see Meadows, 2005, for a preliminary sociological framework). In particular, such work could offer an opportunity to reflect upon, and extend, the current interest in non-representational, more-than-cognitive geographies (Lorimer, 2005), and the difficult ethical, conceptual and methodological questions thus raised.

In at least these four senses, then, it is our view that the socio-spatial experiences of sleep and sleeping ought to constitute significant domains of empirical and theoretical work for human geographers. It is our observation, however, that (with some listed exceptions) virtually no geographical research to date has grappled, explicitly, with the spaces, practices and issues associated with sleep. In this context, the aim of this paper is to develop a case for such research, by providing a preliminary

and far-from-exhaustive indication of *some* potentially fruitful directions for geographical research on sleep, sleeping and/or sleepiness.

III Four (possible) geographies of sleep

The remainder of this paper sketches four relatively short propositions for theoretical and empirical interventions into the geographies of sleep. Each proposition is grounded in, and propounds just one line of enquiry suggested by, each of the four antecedents outlined above. Thus, what follows should be read as a preview as much as a review: although each proposition begins from a well-established line of human geographical enquiry, each theme constitutes a (sometimes significant) departure from these groundings. Consequently, despite occasional reference to extant geographical research, each theme should be read as a creative and anticipatory – but by no means agenda-closing – foray into potentially important geographies of sleep. Four topics are considered: the architecture(s) of sleep; sleep, health and the rise of the expert; sleep, difference and childhood; and, sleeping bodies and intimacy.

1 *The architecture(s) of sleep*

For nearly 100 years, geographers have demonstrated a keen interest in individual buildings, adopting diverse approaches to studying architectural form (Zelinsky, 1973; Tuan, 1974; Cosgrove, 1982; Goss, 1993; Madenipour, 1996; Imrie, 2003). Drawing on these approaches – whilst retaining a critical distance from the practicalities and politics of ‘reading landscapes’ – architectural geographers have of late been concerned with the manifold everyday practices, performances, materialities, affects and events that always constitute built form (Lees, 2001; Llewellyn, 2003; Jacobs, 2006; Kraftl, 2006a, 2006b). Inspired in part by literatures on consumption, newer architectural geographies have signalled a concerted attentiveness to the ways in which built spaces are consumed, experienced and imagined by their many

‘users’. Architectural geographers (one of the authors included) have, however, rarely attended to the significant ways in which built forms invite, house, symbolize or effect/affect sleep. We would like to outline just two of many potential areas of research in which architectural geographers might effectively contribute to geographies of sleep.

First, and simply, we invite geographers to consider the built spaces that are dedicated to sleep: from hotels to motels, and from bed and breakfasts to hostels. We suggest that such buildings offer a rich vein of research potential for geographers to explore critically the socio-spatial construction of sleep. In the case of hotels, the scope for sustained, critical geography is massive: for instance, in 2003, the turnover of the UK hotel industry alone was £10.9 billion.⁵ The variety of geographical approaches to studying architecture could readily be applied to hotels in order to uncover fascinating insights into the economies, cultures and politics of the business of sleeping. In terms of symbolism – Las Vegas aside (Chaplain, 2003) – hotel facades, foyers, bedrooms and leisure facilities may signify (or may mask) the type of sleeping that goes on there. As the shopping mall may evoke other places and times (Goss, 1993), the themed hotel room may recall a luxuriant royal palace, or the rustic charms of a country cottage. In terms of their layout and form, hotels may vary from converted farmhouses to purpose-built, extra-urban complexes. In every case, the (re)design and layout must gesture to some degree to the organization of sleeping spaces, the separation (acoustically, visually, spatially) of bedrooms from ‘backrooms’ and the more lively, wakeful spaces of the hotel. Of course, a good deal else than sleep occurs in hotel rooms. Materially and symbolically hotel room design may seek to place sleep amongst rest, retreat, eroticism, escape, immorality and a whole host of other si(g)ns. Historically, hotels have had an ambiguous, contentious, yet often affecting place within popular culture. As such, the design and

symbolism of the hotel is only properly understood by the happenings – however extraordinary – that go on there. And so finally, following recent ‘critical geographies of architecture’ (Lees, 2001), we argue that attention to everyday practices within hotels is crucial if we are to understand the socio-spatial construction of sleep, and its place among hotels’ other functions. From cleaning to cooking, sleeping to swimming, reading to resting: the fundamental human need for shelter sweeps up so many materials, symbols, practices and emotions that a geographical intervention into the places dedicated to sleep is surely warranted.

Second, sleep is partially (but as equally embroiled as is wakefulness) in the construction of diverse spaces such as (to name but a few) airports, kindergartens, asylums, apartment blocks and even libraries. These are all places that have been scrutinized by architectural geographers, but they also constitute significant spaces where sleep occurs and may even actively be encouraged. In one way, we would ask architectural geographers to spend a few moments thinking back to the buildings at which they conducted their research, to consider whether and how sleep perhaps was an important, but unregistered and unrepresented part of life at those buildings. They might question, for instance, how sleep is treated, organized, controlled or planned for (or not) in airports. In another, related, way geographers might consider how important sleep is to the construction of significant idea(l)s such as childhood (Kraftl, 2006a) or modernity (Llewellyn, 2003) in and through architectural design and experience, inasmuch as those ideals can be identified in more wakeful practices. They might question, for instance, how the ways in which children’s sleep is managed in the kindergarten both reflect and enact particular ideals about childhood. Finally, then, and in connection with the latter example, geographers might explore the ways in which sleep is institutionalized in such spaces as prisons, schools and asylums.

In line with the discussion of hotels, it would be useful to consider the ways in which certain symbolic and material design elements are engineered to mark certain spaces as for sleep, or for particular types and temporalities of sleep. We might also attend to the production of very diverse affective atmospheres that are conducive (or not) to sleep, and whose evocation needs not only careful design, but ongoing, constant negotiation through bodily practice: perhaps through calm, warmth and stillness in the kindergarten; or, perhaps, through a state of enforced rest in the asylum or prison, whose possibility and whose ideals lie in very different spatial practices and forms of bodily comportment (cf. Philo, 1992).

Approaches to the sleepy geographies of architecture – which similarly attend to the materialization, signification and everyday practice of sleepiness in and through built forms – could offer valuable ways in which to explore and question the production and consumption of sleep as a constituent element of some of our most important institutions. If these geographies of architecture can offer new modes of ‘critical’ intervention (Lees, 2001) into the commodification and institutionalization of so many everyday spaces, then so much the better.

2 *Sleep, health and the rise of the expert*

In theory ... the value of sleep should increase in a society such as ours, which thrives on learning, creativity and knowledge. In practice, our generation is doing more than any before it to eat into this precious fraction of our lives. ... The result is a society suffering from a chronic sleep deficit. More than a fifth of UK adults say they have severe daytime sleepiness and one estimate suggests that, on average, we’re sleeping 1.5 hours less per night than people did a century ago. (Leadbetter and Wilsdon, 2003: 40)

At Spirit Of Nature we recognise the importance of a good night’s sleep – especially for babies and young children. Let’s face it, if your baby or child cannot sleep soundly at night, neither will you. We provide everything

you need for your child to sleep in a healthy, chemical-free environment. That is why we offer a comprehensive range of bedding, including a solid beech cotbed, that is certified free from potentially harmful chemical residues.⁶

As suggested earlier, the importance of sleep seems not to register in any consistent manner – if at all – in recent (post-)medical geographies. In this section, we seek to answer two questions which might enable geographers to address this imbalance. What might a (post-)medical geography of sleep look like? And what might a (post-)medical geography of sleep contribute to broader debates within and beyond the discipline? Perhaps unsurprisingly, we would initially advocate a turn to the (post-)medical geographies and ‘therapeutic landscapes’ (Smyth, 2005) of sleep, if only in a relatively simple, empirical sense, drawing on well-established modes of enquiry. Taking this relatively literally, for instance, geographers may wish to focus on the purportedly therapeutic role of sleep as a ‘healer’, and on the efforts and strategies of individuals who are unwell, their carers, or (for example) hospital managers to facilitate sleep in the face of the bustle of the hospital. As another example, it was, until recently, commonplace in Austria for health insurance companies to send their customers to thermal spa resorts for rest and recuperation following serious illness or medical treatment. Sleep is an important part of an overall process (or experience) which is closely designed and monitored in a purpose-built environment. It goes without saying that similar treatments exist elsewhere, and for a variety of conditions. Yet the role of sleep within such treatments has not been fully understood. Extrapolating from this example, it can surely be argued that geographers are well placed to provide more nuanced, contextual, *comparative* and place-aware (post-)medical geographies of sleep that attend to the many ways in which sleep is negotiated as part of the therapeutic, care-giving/care-receiving process.

On a quite different tack, geographers may also wish to expand the nascent work of sleep sociologists, who have explored the ways in which sleep has become a medical ‘problem’ itself (see Hislop and Arber, 2003a). Their discussions of ‘healthicization’, ‘medicalization’ and ‘personalization’ mirror current geographical debates regarding the interaction of consumer culture with, for example, people’s attitudes to complementary alternative medicine (Doel and Segrott, 2003). Their work and the discussion of these different ‘levels’ of engagement with sleep medicine (in its broadest sense) might be extended by geographers in at least two significant ways.

First, geographers may seek to explore the rise of the ‘sleep expert’. In particular, an array of books, websites and self-help material is now available for parents of young children wishing to improve their sleep.⁷ As we discuss in the third ‘preview’, below, their advice centres on providing the correct settings and atmospheres for sleep, and on providing routines through which a household culture of organized sleeping can be instituted. In other words, to explore the discourse of the sleep expert is to provide another set of cases through which to explore the increasingly pervasive role of the ‘expert’ *per se* within contemporary culture (Bauman, 1998).

Second, and perhaps more ambitiously, the rise of the sleep expert also signals an opportunity for geographers interested in the inter-mingling of spatial scales (through practices, texts and materials) to consider how the medicalization of sleep is constitutive of new connections between the small (domestic) and large (public) scales. For instance, parents are now bombarded with information on children’s sleep from experts, various media, friends and community members, and family members. In order to proceed at all (with getting children to sleep), they must negotiate this information through various practices, and in different settings. Whilst the sleep experts’ tips for designing the perfect sleeping atmosphere

may penetrate the bedroom walls (and be repeated in bedrooms elsewhere), a parent's interpretation of media hype around sleeping routines may both integrate with bedroom design, and be played out in discussions at the local playgroup, or in the internet chatroom. Simply put, sleep as a medical condition – as much as a social or biological function – invokes geographies both related to, and very different from, those of wakeful geographies. If the medical sleep economy is becoming as pervasive as Williams (2005) and others suggest – and if whole nations and cultures are indeed experiencing purportedly problematical 'sleep debts' – then these inter-relating materials, practices and discourses require the engagement of geographers.

3 *Sleep, difference and childhood*

The production, consumption and experience of sleep invoke a number of important discussions which concern social difference, and which have not yet received attention in previous everyday, waking geographies. In particular, sleepy geographies have the potential to provoke new conceptual and empirical understandings of difference, through a consideration of *other* everyday (or every-night) spaces, inequalities and forms of alterity or injustice. In this section, we would like to outline one set of initial (and perhaps necessarily simple) contributions that sleepy geographies could make in relation to our own research: children's geographies.⁸ We end this third preview by moving beyond children's geographies, in order to articulate some more general thoughts on the difference that sleep makes.

As we suggested in the previous section, discussion about children's and teenagers' sleep is becoming an increasingly common facet of 'expert' discourse, and is especially geared around potential solutions to problems associated with young people's sleep. Many of these solutions are surrounded by media and consumer culture. There are thousands of websites, originating in

numerous countries, which are dedicated to mainstream and alternative sleeping cures, bedroom decoration, cot choice, pre-bedtime rituals, bedtime music, food and drink, and all manner of sleep-inducing paraphernalia (with associated advertisements). Numerous sociologists and geographers have demonstrated how media and consumption discourses surrounding children are constitutive of ever-changing notions of 'childhood' (Skelton and Valentine, 1998; James and James, 2004). To date, however, they have not considered the crucial role of *sleep* discourses in these constructions: we believe that there is thus significant potential for geographers to contribute to debates about the construction of childhood through exploring the production and consumption of these discourses. We wonder what constructions and politicizations of childhood – perhaps conservative, perhaps affirmatory, perhaps alternative – might be uncovered in this process.

The relationship between sleep and childhood as a social category may also take geographical research in quite a different direction. For, without submitting to the argument that children are 'future adults', it is appropriate to point out that childhood has been theorized as a crucial period during which (in the 'developed world', at least), humans become socialized, and learn norms, rules and laws. To generalize, it is also, therefore, a key period during which *spatial* norms and practices (such as boundaries between public and private, appropriate behaviours, conditions of access) are learned. These are issues which have concerned social geographers for many years (Sibley, 1995). Yet, we contend, the figure of sleep has been largely and problematically missing from these debates, which have privileged the ways in which *behavioural* norms are learned and regulated through wakeful practices. In addition – and this is an important addition – wakeful socio-spatial rules are inherently but often implicitly underwritten by the

organization of sleep. For instance, both according to sleep experts and (hence) according to common sense, a child must *learn* that night-time is *for* sleep. A child must learn that a bed (indeed a bedroom) is *for* sleeping. Less obviously, a child must learn that private, domestic spaces are sanctified not only in perpetuation of the capitalist system of property ownership (which in any case they may only realize at a later age), but in the protection they afford vulnerable, sleeping bodies. A child must learn not to be noisy in the street at night, so that they do not 'wake the neighbours'; and so on. The right and responsibility to sleep become engrained at an early age, and condition a child's development almost as much as do the apprehension of manners, of appropriate speech, and even as does formal education. Much of the spatio-temporal organization of society is predicated upon not only wakeful but *sleeping* rhythms that are not only natural (the circadian rhythm), but which are socially constructed and take a full part in the organization and proper functioning of society. These issues are so fundamental – and in many ways so simplistically blatant – that this is perhaps why they have gone virtually unnoticed. That we must *learn* when and where to sleep seems both obvious and bizarre, when sleep comes largely naturally to most people. These issues are not confined to our youngest years, or to childhood *per se*. But if geographers are to fully and critically explore the ways in which societies organize themselves – at sometimes the most basic and fundamental level – then we should take a closer look at the ways in which sleep and social space are always-already mutually implicated in each other's construction. Quite apart from shedding new light upon (for instance) the perpetuation of capitalist economic spaces, we may more modestly also appreciate how and why styles of learning, of teaching, and of growing up are as suffused with sleeping geographies as they are wakeful – the latter being the more common ground for children's geographers (Sibley, 1991; Skelton and Valentine, 1998;

Matthews and Limb, 1999; Holloway and Valentine, 2000).

In addition to research in children's geographies, however, a number of further points can be made about the role of sleep in relation to differences between and amongst any social groupings. For we have little clear understanding of how sleep is produced, consumed, experienced and practiced across different generations, genders, ethnicities, abilities, cultures (except Williams, 2005; Steger, 2005). Any sleepy geography would need to be aware of – and would be well placed to interrogate – these differences in order to continue the widely-accepted emancipatory precepts of, for example, feminist (time) geographers (see Rose, 1993). Whether concerned with the specific details of women's or children's bedtime rituals, or with global comparative studies (beyond the 'developed world') between 'sleeping cultures', it almost goes without saying that geographers would be well positioned to extend current, *different*, sociologies of sleep. Merely adding to the growing body of sociological work on *different* sleeping practices is a beginning: but geographical research regarding sleep has the potential to re-interrogate geographies of difference in ways which we would not want to anticipate (or foreclose) here. One brief example demonstrates the types of research that may figure in such a debate. There is surely significant potential for geographers to contribute to emergent neuroscientific and sociological enquiry regarding the new, unprecedented forms of sleep deprivation constituted (frequently inequitably) by contemporary geographies of urbanity (eg, the impact of neon-lit work spaces, and flood-lit city streets), cultural practices (eg, the impact of consumption of narcotics, hypnotic drugs, alcohol or caffeine), social formations (eg, the impact of rough-sleeping [cf. Hebdidge, 1993; Pile, 1997; also Cloke *et al.*, 2003]) and working practices (eg, the impact of temporary and shift-based contracts, or, alternatively, of frequent international travel).

4 *Sleeping bodies and intimacy*

The sooner you establish a bedtime routine, the better. When your baby is as young as 6 or 8 weeks old, start following a set pattern every night; she'll quickly come to appreciate the consistency and predictability. Stick to your routine as best you can even when you're not home – it can make it easier for your baby to settle down in unfamiliar surroundings. What you include in your ritual is up to you. There's the standard bath, putting on pajamas, reading a story, and having a cuddle, or you can play a quiet game. Just make sure you choose something that helps calm your baby instead of riling her up. And while you can certainly start your ritual in the bathroom or the living room, it should end in your baby's bedroom. It's important to teach your baby that her room is a nice place to be, not just where she's 'banished' at bedtime. Sometimes it helps to let your baby get any pent-up energy out of her system before you try to settle her down for the night. So feel free to give her a 'horse' ride or let her bounce in the bouncer if she's in the mood. As long as you follow up any rowdy play with something calmer and quieter – like a bath and bedtime story – before she goes to sleep, it can be the first step toward bedtime.⁹

The practices associated with sleep, sleeping and sleepiness open up substantial realms for both debate and research. It could be argued, for instance, that one is not conscious of one's body during sleep, and that we are therefore unencumbered; or, alternatively, that in the moments immediately before entering, and after exiting, sleep, one is indeed acutely aware of one's body (finding the 'ideal' sleeping position, annoying itches, waking up with pins and needles, feeling cold, or hot, or stiff, or hungover). In themselves, these rather generic examples could provide important foci for research – yet they constitute one small part of potentially diverse sleepy geographies of the *body*. As with all 'embodied' geographies' (cf. Teather, 1999) – and as the excerpt that begins this section illustrates – there is the potential to articulate previous debates (such as children's sleep) via the body, as much as there is to examine the particular implications engendered by the

body, bodily practice and the embodiment of sleepy geographies. In this section – inspired by recent embodied geographies and indeed by non-representational geographies – we flesh out five ways in which sleepy geographies of the body might develop.

First, drawing on geographical research concerning everydayness (eg, Doel and Segrott, 2003), we might wish to consider all manner of small-scale and banal bodily details and happenings which occur in and through sleep – some of which are 'normative', some of which are social(izing) and some of which are profoundly abnormal, anti-normative or antisocial. For instance, bodily rituals such as the preparation of the bedtime drink, or assuring the perfect bedroom temperature for sleeping may involve complex, repetitive and sometimes obsessively ordered performances for the *conditions* for sleep (let alone sleep itself) to be achieved. The *simultaneous* and *conjoined* preparation of the body, environment and atmosphere for sleep may occupy upwards of an hour (and often a highly frustrating one) of an individual's daily life as they struggle – perhaps ironically – to come to terms with their body's (in)ability to relax and drift off to sleep.

Second, an attention to sleepy, sleeping and sleep-hopeful bodies should remind us once again that bodies are multi-sensuous, open to being 'touched' and affected in ways which exceed neat representational, subject-centred and cognitive realms (and schema) (Thrift, 2000; Anderson, 2006). To the multi-sensuous, more-than-representational insights gleaned from everyday life, we might quite simply adjoin those of every-night life – where, for instance, textures, materials, other bodies, sights and sounds can play tricks on us, or an itchy leg is elevated from slight annoyance to *the most annoying thing in the world*.

Third, the sleeping body opens up a whole realm of unique ethical problems for researchers that research on the geographies of sleep may allow us to broach. These problems range from the conjoined

socialization and individuation of sleeping bodily comportment, to the dressing of the body for sleep (in different circumstances), to the accidents that happen during the night (from bed-wetting to death). What should we do about these overlooked, but perhaps mildly uncomfortable, potentially ethically challenging, but always fundamentally significant problems? Essentially, our challenge regarding the doing of embodied, sleepy geographies (which we think is worthwhile) is one of the *ethics* of doing *any* sleepy geographies. In turn, this challenge emerges from our initial discussion of the debate in the pages of *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* and, potentially, challenges the ethics of any geographical research. We do not wish to take up here the debate about relevance and usefulness: on the other hand, we do not raise this discussion in order to somehow 'save' sleepy geographies from becoming the metaphorical exemplar of banality and uncritical research. We began the paper as we did in order to make a specific – ethical – point about sleepy geographies, and about geography in general, which should act as a warning (but also an opportunity) for anyone thinking of researching sleepy geographies, as follows.

To be clear: we are advocates of sleepy geographies in a number of guises. Yet we cannot help worrying about the *intrusiveness* of social research into domains once held to be sacred or private, such as sleep. There are compelling political reasons for opening out certain domestic practices for the world to see, where they involve oppression or abuse. At the same time, we wonder when, where, and if ever the colonization of everyday/every-night life by social research might stop: what are the boundaries of acceptable research? We are not concerned with usefulness or relevance here, rather, whether we ever stop to think if we *should* intrude into the imagination (Warnock, 1980), into spiritual institutions and practices (Holloway, 2003), into children's bedrooms (Steele and Brown, 1995), into the intense and gritty

details of people's lives (Horton and Kraftl, 2006), into women's saunas (Bain and Nash, 2006), into *sleep*, laid bare for all to see. We choose these particular examples not because we do not think the authors have considered these questions, and certainly not because we think they are unethical pieces of research or theorizing, but because the issues they cover *also* require us to ask the question: in the search for more knowledge, *is no realm of our lives sacred, to be left untouched, unexplained, a mystery?* Where do we draw the line? Do we care?

We do not yet have the relevant tool-kit to answer these questions – questions which, moreover, University research ethics committees do not always have the power or the time to debate, and if they do, the content of those debates is rarely reported. So, whether the above represent a set of rhetorical questions or not (and we think not), these questions also pose direct challenges – and hence a fourth problem – to *researchers* wishing to explore sleepy geographies. Reflexively, we might wish to consider what happens to us, as researchers, for whatever reasons, when we feel sleepy, when tiredness compromises our work, or when – heaven and professional conduct forbid – we fall asleep on the job. Similarly, as highlighted in the previous point, we might wish to consider the ethical and practical implications of *doing* sleep research: the potential ridicule that might accompany (we think salient) geographies of hotels or mattresses; or, the potential ramifications of participatory sleeping research, or observation (say, of children). Geographers attentive to sleep may indeed be compelled to keep strange bedfellows – yet herein lie significant every-night bodily (and social) phenomena that require an attention to reflexivity as much as the embodied banality of our everyday lives.

Finally, sleep poses a challenge in two respects to recent non-representational geographies. First and simply, geographies of sleep could provoke a much-needed riposte to the ironic preoccupation with *wakeful*

action and vitality which characterizes much (especially empirical) non-representational and embodied geographies (see Lorimer, 2005, for a summary). Second, geographies of sleep may provide a point of (empirical) articulation for broad questions raised by the state of *vulnerability* (Harrison, 2007). Harrison argues that vulnerability – and indeed, associated states such as sleep, sleepiness, exhaustion and tiredness – has been subordinated by both phenomenologists (such as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger) and some non-representational geographers, in favour of intentional action, meaning and comprehension (Harrison, 2007). Instead, following Levinas, Harrison demonstrates that indolence, fatigue, vulnerability and susceptibility are absolutely necessary in the human subject's formation of competency and purposive action. In simple scientific terms, many have commented that sleep itself fulfils a somehow (there is still little agreement as to the precise process) restorative and productive function with regard to memory, cognition and data processing (Hobson, 1995; Coren, 1996; for a review, see Williams, 2005). By extension, though, Harrison argues (*vide* Levinas) that vulnerability is not the opposite or side-effect of the wakeful actions which are almost exclusively the focus for human geographers (non-representational or not). Rather, fatigue and inaction are inherent within any action, may occur *before* action, and are – perhaps – the pre-condition for action. It would be a difficult move to assert that inaction is somehow *predisposed* to action (functionally, this would allow inaction a kind of unavoidable, inevitable and latent action), or, by extension, that sleep is somehow predisposed to wakefulness. For Harrison though, this allows us – ethically – to free sensuality from the individuated subject, stalling the persistent elision of action with the sensuous (opening out our second point about embodiment, above), and to follow the sites where power and knowledge – and the will to act – break down. In terms

of sleepy geographies, however, we might also attend – in a relatively straightforward manner – to the invocation of spaces which are not merely geared to action; and where, perhaps in reverse to Harrison's argument, *all the action is geared to inaction, and, every fibre of the body, every waking thought, is geared to the production of the non-conscious*. We would argue that sleepy geographies provide the (perhaps ideal) sites at which to empirically and conceptually attend to the interrelation of action and inaction that Harrison opens out, and should allow us to re-appraise our current preoccupation with all things bodily, pre-cognitive, pre-rational and non-representational. But to state this is to imply a methodological caveat, whose circumvention lies only in much further work: that is (beyond scientific measurement of brain activity and bodily functioning), of *how* to research bodies that are in-active rather than in-action – bodies which rarely move, speak or react – in any meaningful way.

IV Concluding reflections

In this paper, we have outlined reasons why we believe sleepy geographies are not only fundamental to 'filling a gap' in contemporary geographical research, but to extending and challenging many of the 'everyday' geographies that preoccupy our research agendas. The cultures, economies and practices of sleep are (in)active agents in the construction of multifarious spaces and spatialities. In this paper, we have indicated *some* of what we believe to be the most significant of these spaces – from hotels to internet discussion boards, from kindergartens to the bed itself. Additionally, we have briefly attended to the methodological, ethical and theoretical implications of sleepy geographies, neither wishing to set out an 'agenda' for research, nor to rehearse well-worn debates, nor to prematurely theorize what should be an exciting area for future research.

We have sought to promote a sense of the ways in which sleep matters (or should matter) to human geographers. Sleep and

the practices that surround it – such as going to sleep and waking up – are crucial but overlooked components of diverse human geographies. Sleep and sleeping do not merely (re)present a ‘gap’ in our waking lives, nor a metaphorical device for ironic critique. They constitute a serious array of discourses and practices that are *productive* of, and implicated in, geographies that require pressing critical attention. Without wishing to be proscriptive, we argue that sleep poses three challenges to human geographers. The first is simply the acknowledgment of sleep, sleepiness and sleeping practices within and beyond the current domains of human geographical research. Addressing this challenge has been the immediate task of this paper. Second, we have suggested several potential lines of research for ‘sleepy geographies’, to which we think geographers could (and should) be able to attend, following familiar disciplinary methodologies. In our opinion, the key areas of sleep in relation to geographies of consumption, of health, of difference and of embodiment have the potential to both complement and extend extant (wakeful) geographical research in those areas. Third, despite the previous point, we have begun to argue that sleep (and attendant somatic states such as vulnerability, tiredness and exhaustion) might also pose significant challenges to the ontological and epistemological bases of contemporary human geography; not least of these is the problem of how to attend to, analyse and represent the somatic state of being asleep – of being withdrawn from the (conscious) world of voluntary action.

In this paper, we have indicated that there exist many theoretical, methodological and ethical challenges to undertaking sleepy geographies. Yet these challenges and pitfalls have by no means yet been evaded or overcome by geographers of wakefulness (in which category we might include all human geographers). Sleepy geographies offer new ways in which to examine these problematic issues, whilst allowing geographers to attend

to the third of our lives about which we know so little, but which affects us so much.

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Notes

1. The term ‘every-night life’ was coined by Williams (2005).
2. Although appealing to popular assumptions as to what sleep is (and we assume a fair degree of universality for the purposes of this paper), we employ the terms ‘sleep’, ‘sleeping’ and ‘sleepiness’ as catch-all terms for a very wide variety of human bodily states, experiences and practices which are characterized by semi- or non-conscious resting.
3. Reasons for this recent upsurge in these particular disciplines (*vis-à-vis* geography) might include: sociologists’ and anthropologists’ specific concerns with cultural practices and everyday life; a recognition of the importance of sleep in cultural practices and everyday lives; and the tendency of these disciplines to employ research methods requiring significant closeness to human subjects.
4. Many popular debates about sleep are overshadowed by an assumption that sleep equates to dreaming, and that accounts of dreaming exhaust the possibilities of sleep. For this reason – and owing to the large and well-known body of extant work on dreaming – we seek to focus this paper elsewhere (on sleep).
5. Source: <http://www.visitbritain.com/corporate/factsfigures/index.aspx> (last accessed 23 June 2006).
6. http://www.spiritofnature.co.uk/acatalog/baby_bedding.html (last accessed 23 June 2006).
7. For examples, see: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/> (last accessed 23 June 2006); <http://www.babycenter.com/baby/babysleep/index#babybedBkmk> (last accessed 26 June 2006).
8. For examples of work in children’s geographies, see Matthews and Limb (1999) and Holloway and Valentine (2000).

9. <http://www.babycenter.com/general/baby/babysleep/7913.html> (last accessed 26 June 2006).

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