

Arcades

Assuming diverse styles and functions over time, *arcades* have shaped the urban fabric and expressed cultural habits, forms of social interaction, economic structures and trade relationships. In the 19th century, arcades were glass- and iron-covered shopping streets that epitomised the experience of the modern bourgeois city, urban renewal and transformation. As lively spaces of conviviality and entertainment, 19th-century arcades were the forerunners of department stores.

Arcades were also a literary trope, demonstrating that writing and cities are inseparable (Moore, 2016). Perhaps the best example is German philosopher Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, which analyses how arcades revolutionised Parisian life at economic, social and cultural levels in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This long and complex essay illustrates how the city can be written and questioned, and it has become a major reference point for any attempt to write urban spaces. In his introduction to his own Portuguese translation of the work, Benjamin scholar João Barrento considers the arcades as a paradigm of the city. They were the space where new forms of trade, architectural changes brought about by the use of glass and iron, and developments in photography and optics, among others, took place. The arcades thus represented a microcosm of the city, and of 19th-century civilisation and culture.

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