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***Brooklyn Revisited:
An Illustrated View from the Street 1970 to the Present¹***

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Urban ethnographers must understand that while we look at things using close-up lenses, most policy-makers, on the other hand, employ wide-angle lens to describe what is going on at that very same street level. In this essay the authors attempt to provide a contrast between those views in the context of the radically changed public perception of the New York City Borough of Brooklyn. When the authors began their sociological research (and social activism) in the late Twentieth Century, the neighborhoods in which they were active suffered from the spread of middle-class (white) flight and urban blight. Today, in the first two decades of the Twenty-first, the fortunes of these same areas have been reversed, but longer-term residents face new 'problems' in the form of gentrification and displacement. It is suggested here that a view from the street can provide a better sociological understanding of the bigger picture.

Keywords: Urban ethnography, policy-making, neighborhood, gentrification, Brooklyn.

Brooklyn's Image Then and Now

The image of Brooklyn as a whole, as well as its most well-known individual neighborhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Flatbush, and Coney Island, has always been a powerful independent force in creating and maintaining its concrete reality. Forty years ago these place names were stigmatized. Today, in 2015, Brooklyn and these areas are by all accounts in the popular media decidedly 'in' places. The Borough of Brooklyn currently occupies an elevated status as a gem in the crown of New York City as a Global City, and it is fast becoming a popular tourist destination in its own right. By almost every measure the 'Borough of churches' has moved far beyond 'renaissance' and 'revival' to enjoy a hard-earned, successfully promoted, chic and hip image that is presented to the rest of the world. As opposed to the 'bad old days' in the 1960s and 1970s the major challenges likely to confront local community and political leaders in the Twenty-first Century arise from such 'problems' as the rising cost of housing resulting from upscale gentrification by which investors compete for any available development space. A few decades ago the problems were exactly the opposite. No one at that time could have ever imagined a hip travel guide, *Lonely Planet*, would name Brooklyn as one of the top world destinations for 2007 (Kuntzman 2007). In 2015 the travel guide giant Fodor's advertised the first guidebook devoted only to the borough with this as its teaser:

Brooklyn is the most talked about, trendsetting destination in the world. Fodor's Brooklyn, the first comprehensive guidebook to New York City's most exciting borough, is unlike any we've ever published. Written and illustrated by locals, it's infused with authentic Brooklyn flavor throughout—making it the go-to guide for locals and visitors alike. (<http://www.fodors.com/brooklyn/> 10/6/14 12:07 pm).

¹ A version of this paper was presented at The Commission on Urban Anthropology's Annual Conference, 'The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities', held at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY), on June 19, 2015. It is published here with their permission.

The Bad Old Days

As did the rest of New York City, Brooklyn barely survived the Great Depression and then prospered during World War II, but by the 1950s the size of Brooklyn's population and its enviable position as a national and international industrial center had peaked. The borough's decline began slowly and then accelerated, as business and industry looked elsewhere to invest. For many the bottoming out in Brooklyn was in 1957, when after winning the World Series for the first time only two years earlier the Brooklyn Dodgers left for Los Angeles. The loss of the beloved 'bums', the closing of the premier borough daily newspaper, the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and the closure of the Brooklyn Navy Yard were the most visible symbols of Brooklyn's decline that continued into the next three decades.

In *The New York Times* Gay Talese announced: 'Ebbetts Field goes on the scrap pile' (1960)

'Iron Ball Begins Demolishing Dodger Home and Raises clouds of Nostalgia - 1,317-family middle income HOUSING PROJECT IS DUE ceremony catching the spirit of the old Brooklyn... About 200 spectators, a brass band and some former Brooklyn Dodger players gathered to watch a two-ton iron ball hammer against this arena where, between 1913 and 1957, baseball was played in a manner never before imagined or recommended'.

At the end ...

'Then the big crane headed with the speed of Ernie Lombardi into centerfield. When it reached the 376-foot mark, the workman swung back on this iron ball painted white to resemble a baseball. It came spinning toward the wall and, after a few shots, there was a hole the size of Hugh Casey. It will take ten weeks to destroy Ebbetts Field'.

Many years later Corey Kilgannon wrote of the end of the *Brooklyn Eagle* as a metaphor for the beleaguered borough: 'Folded But Not Forgotten, Brooklyn's Leading Daily'. When the paper finally folded — six months before the Dodgers finally won a World Series in 1955 — newspapers were on the decline in New York, Mr Hills recalled:

'It occurred to me I was working in a dying industry', he said. 'We heard there were guys with Ph.D.s working as copy boys at *The New York Times*, so it was discouraging. I went into P.R.'

They pored over the last edition of *The Eagle*, from January 28, 1955. Its front-page lead headline was 'Landlady Beaten to Death'. The story, about a 58-year-old Borough Park woman, began: 'Her skull and face bones battered and crushed by repeatedly brutal blows'. Another story was titled 'Tot Survives 11-Story Tumble'. There was a publisher's note informing readers of the folding of *The Eagle*, calling it 'the last voice that is purely Brooklyn'. 'All the other Brooklyn newspapers fell by the wayside years ago', the note read. 'The borough seems doomed to be cast in Manhattan's shadow.' (Kilgannon 2005)

The devastating impacts of deindustrialization and disinvestment during the period were compounded by mortgage and insurance red-lining which further undermined local housing markets, and contributed to the rapid destabilization of many residential neighborhoods, especially those peopled by minority groups. Manufacturing and blue collar jobs that once supported Brooklyn's solid working and middle class families slowly escaped powerful local unions and fled to the American South, and abroad. One prime example was the closing of The U.S. Army Terminal in Bay Ridge and Sunset Park in 1961 with the loss of 40,000 well-paying jobs. Along with economic problems such as lower wages and unemployment came increased poverty, crime and accelerated middle class flight into the next decade and beyond.

The nadir of The Big Apple coincided with the Mayoralty of Abraham Beame and the New York City Fiscal Crisis which forced a virtual bankruptcy on the once proud, now demoralized citizenry. The headline October 29, 1975 of the *New York Daily News* 'FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD, Vows He'll Veto any Bailout'. This Presidential announcement was shortly followed by the New York State takeover of the City's financial affairs by the Municipal Assistance Corporation, which lasted until 2008. The financial future of the city looked so bleak that Mayor Beame's Housing and Development Administrator, Robert Starr, suggested that, rather than cutting city-wide services, a 'Planned Shrinkage' policy be tried. The neighborhoods to be cut off from city services to save money were populated primarily by Non-Whites in The Bronx and Brooklyn. According to Joseph P. Fried (1976) in many Brooklyn neighborhoods increasing urban blight was correlated with the inflow of minorities, especially African Americans. One source of hostility to these new invaders are more racially militant blacks. Today complaints about gentrification and displacement but it had a parallel in the 1960s and 1970s. An interesting analysis and description of the 'negro removal' process is provided by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward:

'Other federal programs, such as urban renewal, were turned against blacks; renewal projects were undertaken in most big cities to deal with the black invasion through 'slum clearance', by reclaiming land taken by the expanding ghettos and restoring it to 'higher economic' use (i.e., to uses that would keep whites, and businesses in the central city)....

...seventy percent of the families thus uprooted were black.... But with local blacks becoming more disorderly and more demanding in the early 1960s, local government began to make some concessions. Urban renewal provides one example. By the 1960s, black protests were mounting against 'Negro Removal' in the guise of 'slum clearance'. (1971: 241-42)

What we currently refer to as 'displacement' was also taking place at the time, although in much more limited way, in the 1970s. According to a report of the National Urban Coalition in 1978, if you are elderly poor, or working class and live in an area undergoing rehabilitation, or in a suddenly fashionable neighborhood, you are a prime candidate for displacement by well-to-do suburbanites longing for the city life they left behind. The Coalition's study of forty-four cities showed that over half of the rehabilitated neighborhoods

had higher minority populations before rehabilitation began. ('Study Finds Suburbanites Displacing Poor in Cities', *New York Times*, August 2, 1978).

Many of the most respected urbanologists of the time strongly criticized these misnomered 'urban renewal', and related programs.²

We had hoped at the time of our most extensive community involvement in Brooklyn neighborhoods, essentially 'under siege', that our academic work would also provide the basis for a better understanding of the tenacity of some urban neighborhood residents to preserve and protect their communities, and conversely the willingness of others to destroy them. This was particularly important then given the well-publicized predictions of the inevitable physical and social deterioration of virtually all of the Nation's cities. This expectation at first was limited to Northeastern 'Rust Belt' metropolises, but expanded into all urban areas of the country including the 'Sun Belt'. At the time, the consensus on the point of eventual or even inevitable urban decay was so wide in scholarly circles that common-sense definitions of the time, inner city, transitional and decaying neighborhoods had become synonymous terms.

A powerful statement demonstrating this taken-for-granted notion of urban decay and hopelessness was given in 1967 by Eleanor Wolf and Charles Lebeaux. But it is just as relevant today. Not only did they see the inevitable devastation of inner cities, but suggested strategies for combating it as well.

By now everyone is aware of those changes in the population of the central city which have combined with a number of other factors to create the current concern about American urban life. In the pages that follow we will examine two kinds of responses to the so-called 'crisis of the city'. First, we will consider the efforts to halt, reverse, or otherwise exercise some control over the population trends of the city so that it will not become overwhelmingly the abode of disadvantaged people. We might describe these as efforts to affect the spatial distribution of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Second, we will examine some of the present trends in our efforts to improve the situation of the poor, especially those efforts usually categorized under the heading of social welfare programs, but including education (1967: 99).

It is not difficult to understand how this widely accepted vision of the then present state of affairs, and the broad consensus among experts on the bleak future American cities was instrumental in the self-fulfilling prophecy of urban decay. As might be expected, a primary element of this pessimistic formula was the equation of nonwhite habitation with urban deterioration. Independent of racial bias and stereotyping, however, was the reality that during the period central city crime, poverty, and arson rates soared. It was also punctuated by urban riots in many major cities such as New York and Los Angeles.³

Although the situation has radically improved since we began our intensive sociological research and social activism four decades ago, this is how Krase described the urban scene in

² See, for example, Frieden and Morris (1968), Gans (1968), Greer (1965), Lupo et al. (1971), Norwood (1974), Piven and Cloward (1971) and Bellush and Hausknecht (1971).

³ See Banfield (1974), Bellush and David eds (1974), Connery (1968), Conot (1967), Grodzins (1958), Hayden (1967) and Oppenheimer (1969). On riots see National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) and Skolnick (1969).

1982:

‘The inner recesses of many older American cities are at present remorselessly tormented places. When we observe the actions of those empowered to maintain the wellbeing of our urban areas, we see that the methods they employ are like radical surgery, without the use of anesthesia. Over the past few decades whole sections of cities have been obliterated by “urban renewal” without much regard for the once living human landscape. Other areas have simply been cauterized by epidemics of arson and neglect. Still others are allowed to fester in anticipation of future treatment, as, for example, the ‘planned shrinkage’ practiced in New York. To some degree the “Anti-Urban Bias” in American middle-class culture helps to explain the triage biases of urban planners, developers and other urban experts toward their city and neighborhood patients. Even the current “gentrification” or “displacement” processes that occur are not exceptions to this general rule of symbolic warfare. The middle and upper-middle class gentry who take over select inner city areas may be thought of as the troops that occupy the territory after it has been scorched and purged of undesirables.’ (1982: 2)

Brooklyn Then

Brooklyn, long known as the fourth largest city in the U.S., is a city of changing neighborhoods. First settled by the Canarsie Indians and developing into a multilingual colony inhabited by both natives and Europeans. In a relatively short historical time Brooklyn became the home of many immigrant groups, old and new and of various social classes and religions. The numerous neighborhoods of Brooklyn were often segregated by these differences, but as a whole, Brooklyn remained a culturally diverse city. Post World War II migration patterns marked the beginning of challenges for Brooklyn. The development of highways and bridges, such as the Verrazano Narrows Bridge leading to Staten Island and access to New Jersey, the Long Island Expressway and the Belt Parkway, all leading to suburbs, assisted in accelerating white flight in Brooklyn. Thus, racial segregation increased as well as social class segregation accompanied by the movement of middle class blacks away from poor blacks (Miller, Seiden-Miller and Karp 1979). Along with Brooklyn’s declining population and economic base, some neighborhoods like Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, and Bushwick became national symbols of poverty and urban decline. Many newer, black and Puerto Rican migrants to Brooklyn had missed the economic boom, which had greatly contributed to the upward mobility earlier migrants.

By the late 1970s, the future of Brooklyn was unclear. On the one hand, a ‘neighborhood movement’ was underway nationally, and in Brooklyn took the form of grassroots efforts focused on quality of life issues such as upgrading parks and public housing as well as installing stop signs, traffic lights and improving street lighting.

A broad spectrum of civic, business and political forces were working with increased vigor to reverse the decline. They joined together in a number of coalitions and succeeded in helping to eventually reverse the borough’s fortunes. By the power of their own will and

inspired leadership they mobilized resources and a stream of public and private investment began to at first trickle and then flow to Brooklyn. Seldom noticed is their contribution to the economic, cultural, and civic flowering of modern Brooklyn that accelerated in the 1990s and continues to this day. Without them, there would be no Brooklyn to resurrect.

By neighbors working together on local issues, and through citizen action, there was an attempt to integrate residents from racially segregated neighborhoods. On the other hand, racial conflict, racial steering, blockbusting, panic selling, and racial and social class change were also in progress. A demographic projection of Brooklyn by the year 2000 (Salins 1974) asserted that there would be a growing middle class, black community moving southward from central Brooklyn, whites would occupy brownstone neighborhoods, and poor neighborhoods of color would be located along the northeast from the East River to the Belt Parkway. Salins wrote,

‘As Bedford-Stuyvesant and similar nearby brownstone neighborhoods are “rescued” from their present slum status, the pressure will have to be taken up by Bushwick and parts of Williamsburgh and Green Point to the north, parts of Crown Heights to the south and Brownsville and East New York to the east. This means that these areas, which are badly deteriorated and socially unwholesome today, have little hope of getting any better over the next three decades.’ (1974: 18)

In support of Salins and around the same time as the publication of his article, the Sociology Department at Brooklyn College offered a Senior Seminar on ‘Brooklyn Neighborhoods’. Although various neighborhoods were studied, the consensus was that if racial transition was not already underway, it would soon begin. There was general agreement with Salins. Canarsie was one neighborhood to demonstrate this thinking. The now classic study of Canarsie (Rieder 1985) made evident the struggles and stages of neighborhood change and racial transition, and which can be analyzed through Burgess’ ecological model of invasion-succession (Park and Burgess 1925 [1967]). Moreover, what became clear was the contribution of unscrupulous realtors to neighborhood change. In some places they resisted change through racial steering (Pearce 1979), while in others they used fear tactics and engaged in ‘block busting’ thereby inducing ‘panic selling’ by homeowners.

Salins was not entirely correct, especially about Greenpoint. A small Latino/a community was already in residence by the 1970s and since then, the neighborhood has gentrified becoming whiter and relatively more middle class. A similar demographic shift has also occurred in parts of Williamsburg. Lacking an up close, on the ground perspective, Salins could not know that resident homeowners in Greenpoint and parts of Williamsburg were deliberately participating in informal strategies to resist the growth of neighbors of color (DeSena 2005). For Greenpoint and parts of Williamsburg, these tactics were successful and maintained largely white, working class communities.

We, the authors of this paper, both are public scholars or perhaps more aptly called ‘activist scholars’ who have comprehensively been studying these neighborhoods since the late 1970s. Throughout that time, our mixed methodologies have featured participant

observations and a variety of interviewing styles. In analyzing the processes of neighborhood change over an extended time, our methodology is also autoethnographic, since we often reflect on the many years in the field that allows for a long-term perspective on current trends.

DeSena's research on Greenpoint-Williamsburg began as an undergraduate sociology major at Brooklyn College in the 1960s and then expanded into a doctoral dissertation. While in graduate school she was employed by a local community organization and participated as an activist while writing grant proposals and serving as a liaison with government agencies. In these roles, she had a firmly grounded view of community issues, obstacles and political machinations. This was the solid foundation for her career as a participant observer involved in scholarly research on Greenpoint-Williamsburg (2005, 2006, 2009, 2012).

At the start of DeSena's career, Brooklyn's reputation was not positive. In an episode of the popular television program *The Honeymooners* Norton declares, 'I live in Brooklyn USA the garden spot of the world'. That ideal, homey image portrayed in the program had drastically changed in the public mind by the late 1970s. Brooklyn was then widely perceived as spiraling downward, and the suburbs, or suburban like areas of the city, attracted middle and working class whites. In fact for Greenpoint-Williamsburg residents, neighborhoods in nearby Queens were more desirable residential locations. It became accepted local lore that success was indicated by moving to and, even better, owning a home in Maspeth, or Middle Village.

The unique, but contiguous, Greenpoint and Williamsburg areas contained several working class and poor neighborhoods. Williamsburg was relatively poorer with more residents of color and more public housing developments. Both neighborhoods are also waterfront communities nestled along the East River. By the late 1970s, the bustling factories that once lined the river, or were situated nearby, became victims of disinvestment and deindustrialization leaving behind only empty buildings. The waterfront and its surrounding area became a desolate post-industrial ghost town. Stores, shops, and bars catering to the legions of factory workers closed. It became a frightening experience to walk through the surrounding streets. The now famous Bedford Avenue subway train station was dark and empty. The rats literally outnumbered the people waiting for the L train. Williamsburg's Northside had few remaining businesses and retail establishments, and absolutely no banks. The liquor store cashier was encased in a bulletproof glass cage and served customers through a small opening. Residents had to travel to Greenpoint for services. The Southside gained a well-deserved reputation as a high crime area; in part because of drug dealing and the violence that accompanies it. Those in the know did not risk walking over the Williamsburg Bridge, fearing they would become another crime victim. By the 1980s, these neighborhoods, in a relatively unknown corner of Brooklyn had earned their gritty, decaying, and dangerous reputations.

Brooklyn Now

In contrast, today, the East River waterfront has been rezoned and a new community of mostly luxury high-rise developments, with some affordable units, has risen in Williamsburg. These towers include upscale stores and restaurants at street level. Greenpoint's waterfront

development is in an earlier stage of development. A commuter Ferry service already exists with stops in DUMBO, Long Island City, and Manhattan. Trendy, boutique hotels, clothing stores, and bars have taken root near the waterfront as well as on the other commercial streets within these neighborhoods. The previous small stores and businesses have been replaced by these and other corporate chains. Many older small businesses have been forced to close because of dramatic rent increases. The cost of living, in terms of food, housing and other services, has substantially increased pricing out the working class and poor. Even modest row houses are selling for millions of dollars. Gut renovations of older residential properties are common and luxury condominium and co-op developments sprout from any available single lot or assembled parcels of land. The old ethnic flavor of these neighborhoods has diminished. It is now more upscale, mainstream, multi-ethnic, selling artisanal products. Williamsburg in particular is known internationally for its youth (hipster) culture and as a host to artistic and musical events. This transformation has not obliterated Williamsburg's Latino and Hasidic Jewish communities where publically supported housing still dominates, but these lower-income ethnic neighborhoods have been newly branded as 'North Brooklyn'.

Krase's research on Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens began as an accident. As a Research Assistant to Ronald D. Corwin in New York University's 'Greenwich Village Project' (Krase and Corwin 1968, 1969) he became intrigued with how local groups became recognized by public and private authorities as legitimate representatives of neighborhood residents. At the time he was living in a racially changing middle and working class area at the southern edge of Crown Heights that abutted the northern edge of Flatbush. It was very different from Greenpoint and Williamsburg in that it was virtually devoid of industry. Close to two large urban parks, the area was dominated by solid one and two family homes and many once-luxurious pre-war apartment buildings. The problem for this community was that as it changed from predominately white to predominately black, owners of real estate found it almost impossible to obtain mortgage and improvement loans as well as insurance. Unscrupulous agencies also saturated the area with inflammatory pamphlets and phone calls encouraging people to sell before it was 'too late'.

Although there was already one long-time neighborhood organization in the area at the time, it was concerned only with maintaining its one-family only zoning status. A few less formal tenant organizations were also active in some large apartment buildings but their main concern was preventing blacks from moving in, even as landlords, complaining of rent controls and high borrowing costs, increasingly neglected maintenance and security. As a renter in the neighborhood at the time, and an Instructor at Brooklyn College (where DeSena was a student) Krase was asked to advise the Board of Directors of a new local organization, the Prospect-Lefferts-Gardens Association, about how to deal with increasingly visible signs of blight. This organization also had a decidedly pro-integration agenda. In current jargon it would be called 'Multicultural'. Krase spent many years as an officer of this and other local groups helping them to organize block and tenant organizations. He also tried to knit them together into effective activist groups in order to attract the attention of elected officials, and obtain grants from public as well as private agencies. After moved to another area in 1985,

Krase maintained his ties with local groups via Brooklyn College and committee service to Community District 9 which serves Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Like Greenpoint and Williamsburg, the major challenges facing the residents of Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens today are very different from the 1970s and 1980s. Ironically, the success of those who fought against neighborhood decline seems to have been the culprit. These, mostly black, neighbors and activists have preserved their valuable housing stock that is near large parks and cultural centers. The area also has several easy public transportation connections to Manhattan. Over time the neighborhood has increasingly been attracting the attention of young middle and upper middle class, mostly white, families and singles. Many of these new gentrifiers have been priced out of the rental and housing markets in the more highly even ‘super’ gentrified sections of Brooklyn like Williamsburg.

During the 12 years of the Bloomberg New York City Mayoralty, and since, residential construction has grown both in terms of numbers and height. This is especially true of the northern Brooklyn waterfront. After 9/11 many feared the decline of the central city (Manhattan) due to fear of further terror attacks, but Gotham has more than recovered.

Today, the city’s popularity is making it hard for many long-time residents to keep up with the rent. And Bloomberg himself appears to have played a major role in that transformation. Real estate developers say the biggest reason they built bigger and taller was because Mayor Bloomberg projected the sense that the city had a future, and that the future looked bright (at least to them and the people able to afford the 360-degree views from atop their towers; Schuerman 2013).

For Bloomberg’s first deputy mayor for economic development Dan Doctoroff ‘Growth is good’ while at the same time admitting ‘... that making the city more attractive has also made it less affordable. That was why, he said, the Bloomberg administration crafted an affordable housing program early on’, though he added, ‘It’s not a perfect answer’ (Schuerman 2013). This was confirmed by a 2009 study by the Center for an Urban Future which showed that tens of thousands of middle-class New Yorkers left due to the high cost of living (CFUF 2009).of

In 2005 New York citywide zoning revisions were issued by the Planning Commission that compounded the problem. These changes, sometimes referred to as ‘up-zoning’, impacted heavily on Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens, and even more so on Greenpoint and Williamsburg. The new zoning rules allowed for residential construction in areas once restricted to commercial and industrial activities. These new uses are seen as a direct threat to the character and social fabric of many neighborhoods. They have also made the availability of affordable housing even less by attracting high-rise high-density residential development close to neighboring parks in Crown Heights, and in North Brooklyn, along the extensive waterfront with exciting views of the Manhattan skyline.

Several new groups have been created and joined with existing organizations to fight this new ‘blight’. These new developments have also exacerbated racial and class divisions in the areas. Property owners seeking to sell, landlords, and newer people with less sentimental attachment to the old neighborhood see positives in development and gentrification. The more vulnerable, especially renters, fear increases and eventual eviction if the residential upscaling

continues. Still others with social conscience are concerned for the vulnerable, or fear the loss of their ethnically and economically diverse communities. Still others, such as African American groups see new developments as part of a process of ethnic cleansing.

In the same way that Salins attempted to predict 2000, there are presently projections for 2030 (http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/projections_report.pdf). Brooklyn is expected to continue to be the most populated borough approaching its historical high. However, the school-age population is expected to decline somewhat. Brooklyn will continue to have the largest elderly population in the city reaching a new high in 2030. These data suggest that the current boom in Brooklyn will continue, but perhaps suggesting a changing environment to meet the needs of its population. Krase and DeSena will be among the elders.

When we presented this paper in 2015 the word ‘Brooklyn’ was no longer synonymous with negative terms connoting the failure of America’s urban policies.

Instead Brooklyn was ‘in’. It was ‘hot’. It had ceased being another sad example of failed urban policies, but instead it was an exciting ‘brand’. Exactly how and why this turnaround happened is beyond our ken but we can offer a few insights into the phenomenal transformation. As noted by Vance Packard (1972), the United States has always been a residentially mobile nation. The difference today is that instead of fleeing cities like New York, they are flocking to it.

The disinvestment, capital flight, that facilitated the white flight and urban blight period during which higher status, predominantly white residents, replaced by lower status, predominately nonwhite residents, has by all appearances been reversed. Today there is an acceleration of flows of reinvestment capital resulting in gentrification by which lower status, predominately nonwhite residents, replaced by higher status, predominately white residents in virtually the same neighborhoods. This reversal of fortune might be explained by Jane Jacobs thesis in *The Economy of Cities* (1969). There she posited that investors would wait until the low point of real estate prices before taking advantage of the opportunity for investment (see also Jacobs 1961).

Political economic theorizing mimics the classical ecological process of urban development and decay with notions of the in- and outflows of capital. Burgess’ zonal model of Chicago can easily be modified for other major global cities. The key to understanding the pattern of concentric zones is the value of the center for different kinds of activities. When the center has a positive value people and activates compete to be close to the hub. The most successful competitors will wind up near the center and the least will be distributed further away. If the value of the center becomes negative the distribution of winners and losers is reversed.

Globalization and neoliberal policies have also been essential for Brooklyn becoming an integral part of New York City’s as a ‘Luxury City’. New York has long provided both tourists and social scientists with a complex mosaic of social worlds. Globalization has also attenuated the historical disparities and residential class divisions. The neoliberal critiques of Harvey (2007), and Brenner, Peck and Nik (2010) show that the organization of spaces and their embedded social practices are dominated by those who control social and economic

capital. As to the consequences of making the city more competitive in the global economy Harvey asked:

‘But, competitive for what? One of the first things Michael Bloomberg did was to say “... We only want corporations that can afford to be here”. He didn’t say that about people, but, in fact, that policy carries over to people. There is an out migration from New York City of low-income people, particularly Hispanics. They’re moving to small towns in Pennsylvania and upper New York State because they can’t afford to live in New York City anymore.’ (Harvey 2007: 10).

According to Greenberg, the Bloomberg administration sought to ‘brand’ New York as a ‘Luxury City’ by attracting finance, information technologies, biotechnology, and media industries (2010: 29–30). The goal was to ‘... build a physical city that appealed to these global elites, by attracting high-end retailers, hotels, stadiums, and residential towers...’ (2010: 31). Instead of a dream neoliberal city: ‘The scale and pace of market-rate, “luxury” real estate development under Bloomberg, alongside regressive tax policies that favor businesses and “workers that can move”, ... Successive waves of gentrification and increases in the cost of living have pushed out mixed use, working class districts — from Harlem to Willets Point to downtown Brooklyn’ (2010: 39. See also Mollenkopf and Castells 1991).

Perhaps the epitome of newfound admiration was a feature in *The New York Times* ‘Styles Section’ in which Brooklyn’s equally imaginary and legendary qualities such as the ill-defined ‘authenticity’ of Williamsburg and Bedford Stuyvesant had been illustriously commodified. In ‘The Brooklyn Brand Goes Global’ (2014) Abby Ellindec wrote:

‘To urban planners and dwellers around the world, Brooklyn represents renaissance and success, said Jay Gronlund, founder of the Pathfinder Group, a branding company in Manhattan. “Other cities like Paris are saying, ‘We want to do something like what Brooklyn did and establish ourselves as a mecca for young people’,” he said. The world has become so much smaller and global, and these younger people are very aware of what’s happening in London or Paris or Berlin — they’re aware of what’s happening in Brooklyn. It’s become a benchmark or role model for other similar places in other cities’.

Post Script

This modest presentation is really a rather brief précis to a much larger work in which we are constantly engaged as activists as well as scholars. In a larger work to come we are ‘revisiting’ these two more and less well known Brooklyn neighborhoods: Crown Heights/Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, and Greenpoint/Williamsburg. As already noted, we have been personally active in them for almost half a century and about which we have extensively published (DeSena 2005; Krase 1982, Krase and LaCerra 1992). Here, we have tried to provide a picture of New York City as a whole as well as Brooklyn ‘Then’ (1970-80) during their worst years, and the post-2000 ‘Now’. We tried to demonstrate how these iconic neighborhoods struggled during a tumultuous period, while paying close attention to the persistently contentious issues of race and social class. Since our perspective is taken essentially from the

street level as opposed to looking down from the proverbial ivory tower, it will also be necessary to discuss the different approaches we employed in our urban neighborhood researches and analyses. At the time of our initial studies we both were, for want of better words, ‘community organizers’ in reluctantly changing neighborhoods.

We end our essay here with a few recent observations and related images of the changing neighborhood conditions in Greenpoint and Prospect Lefferts Gardens. In Greenpoint, DeSena had a recent conversation with Doris who is a life-long white working class resident of the area. With her husband and two children she was living in a rental apartment in a house owned by one of her in-laws. Now, however they are facing eviction because the owner is selling the house. As to her residential crisis she remarked:

‘I’ll have to leave Greenpoint. I looked at an apartment, \$1950 for four tiny rooms. I was told to go to Bushwick. I’m not living in Bushwick! My father in-law has apartments, but they have rented to those people for years. A friend of mine is also being evicted for the sale of her house.’

The two images below are visual examples of impact of the economic and political forces at work in what Doris might see as the destruction of her neighborhood.



Fig. 1 - *Apartments for Rent, 2015* — Photo by Judith N. DeSena

These notices of apartments for rent in the window of a local Greenpoint real estate agency are indicative of the rising cost of rental housing in the area.



Fig. 2 - *Variety Store Going Out of Business, 2015* — Photo by Judith N. DeSena

Convenience retail stores that served Greenpoint's working class community are rapidly closing due to increasingly high commercial rents as the area rapidly gentrifies.

In Crown Heights, a new organization, the Movement to Protect the People (MTOPP) came on the local scene in 2014. Led by a fiery middle-class African American woman in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, MTOPP fought the development activists felt would decrease affordable housing for the less affluent and people of color in general. During the summer of 2015, Krase joined a tour given to an activist urban planner they had engaged to create a more just plan for their neighborhood. The following are two images from that tour.



Fig.3 - *Construction Site in Area Rezoning for Residential Development, 2015*
Photo by Jerome Krase.

Low-rise commercial buildings along Empire Boulevard, which bisects Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens, are being demolished to make way for what locals feel will be high-rise luxury residential and mixed-use structures. This development site is a short distance from low-rise residential housing primarily middle and working class African American and Afro-Caribbean families.



Fig. 4 - *Typical Residences One Street Away from Empire Boulevard, 2015*
Photo by Jerome Krase.

These well-kept substantial low-rise homes on a quiet residential street are less than fifty yards away from the re-zoned properties on Empire Boulevard. It is not difficult to understand why homeowners and renters on this street are some of the most vocal opponents to New York City's plans to transform the neighborhood.

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Designing Brazil's New Middle Class: Economic science and welfare policies in the making of a social category¹

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Brazil holds an increasingly strategic position in the geopolitical landscape of the globalized world, from its leading role amongst Latin-American politics to its efforts to become the sixth largest world economy by nominal GDP. Yet, the 2008 crisis consolidated an inward-oriented approach towards consumption that yielded effects in the political arena, redesigning citizenship. An emerging new middle class is now heralded as the outcome of several social and welfare programmes; of economic stability (through controlling inflation, expanding the formal labour market and increasing minimal wage); and of sprawling consumption-oriented policies. In this paper, I am interested in how intellectual economies — produced and deployed to make sense of local processes — are rooted into larger, global instances of legitimation. I examine the multiple experiments of trial and error that economists, sociologists, journalists, public policy makers and urban planners deploy to recast Brazil's recent shift to a 'middle class country'. I discuss the underlying political efforts towards internationalization arguing that those local arenas of debate feed into broader circuits of knowledge that redefine economic and social data, thus allowing the scientific flow of expertise and practices of classification that lead to convergent globalized arguments about emerging middle classes across the developing world. I look at the performativity of science as a political economy of the present, reconnecting econometrics, statistics and mathematical models to their embedded, on-the-ground, reality. This implies tracing the connections of scientists and scientific ideas to their globalized modes of production, institutions and inventiveness.

Keywords: new middle classes; economic science; welfare policies; Brazil.

Introduction

Over the past three years, I have conducted fieldwork among low-income and first-time homeowners in the southern city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, as they moved from peripheral urban illegal settlements to middle-class urban environments. Early in my fieldwork, I met Dona Hilda, a ninety-four years-old woman who was then yearning to become a beneficiary of the country's public housing system — the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* programme. She participated in the monthly meetings of a tenant's association and always sat on the front row, eagerly listening and observing her surroundings. One day I dared to approach her before the meeting began. After condensing her life story in a couple of sentences — as she was used to interactions with politicians, businessmen and local leaders — she shifted her look and said, staring deep into my eyes: 'But I still have that *letter*'.

Dona Hilda showed me an old piece of paper stamped with her name and a couple of loose words, reading: 'Compra de imóveis — preterido' (Purchase of a house — turned down). The document was more than 20 years old and dated from 1988 — the same year Brazil hailed its most recent constitution. Issued by the Municipal Housing Department, the piece of paper held an observation written in small, inconspicuous letters: 'Information will

¹ I am thankful to professor João Biehl for his thorough reading and always spot-on advice. This article also benefits from conversations and discussions held during the Annual Conference of the Commission on Urban Anthropology on *The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy Local Impacts and Opportunities* that took place at the Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY), U.S.A., on 18-20 June 2015. The Conference was co-organized by Jerome Krase, Judith DeSena and Patricia Antoniello. I am also grateful for the comments and suggestions of the Editors and the anonymous reviewers of *Urbanities*.

be given under the presentation of this card'. Stemming from outside the ordinary, that uncanny document linked Dona Hilda — and millions of other low-income people alike — to the times and spaces of Brazil's state bureaucracy. She was thereafter registered in a social database where the needy were supposed to appear both as a number in an endless waitlist for benefits that rarely find their way to people and as a citizen, if only to stand outside the limits of governance of a precarious state trying to retrieve welfare and redeem civil rights after the end of dictatorship in 1984.

More than 20 years later, new technologies were conceived which superseded Dona Hilda's old-fashioned handwritten card. Yet, she kept it safe and when *Minha Casa Minha Vida* was released, she turned it in to the authorities: 'I mean, this letter is almost 20 years old. I never threw it away, why would I do it now? And it was because of this letter that *my part was liberated (minha parte foi liberada)! I became enrolled!*' As a beneficiary of state welfare policies — such as *Bolsa Família* and *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* — Dona Hilda was required to obtain a document called Social Identification Number (NIS) and to have her socioeconomic profile included in a classification device known as *Cadastro Único* (Unified Registry).

In my ethnography, I look into the design and implementation of a state housing policy, exploring the intersecting domains that flourish from exchanges between experts, politicians, city planners, social collectives and public housing beneficiaries. I pay attention to people's efforts to connect to the policy, as they move across scales of time, power and space. As Pardo and Prato (2011) put it, there is a crisis of legitimacy arising from the disconnections between practices of governance and the expectations of citizens that transcends the scope of socially oriented policies and activist citizens. Nonetheless, looking into day-to-day practices, I see people trying to adjust to state expectations, fabricating their own paths for inclusion and citizenship and facing the harsh realities of scarce public resources and the ambivalences of public-private initiatives. Ultimately, it is this life plasticity that gives us a human and concrete sense of the design of policies, the reach of the state and the encroachment of novel markets.

Throughout the last decade, the outbreak of welfare programmes, along with economic stability and the sprawl of consumption-oriented policies, heralded a vibrant national debate on the emergence of a 'new middle class'. People such as Dona Hilda, yearning to be embraced by social policies, suddenly were recast as part of a growing segment of the population with access to Brazil's consumer society and comprehensive state services. By and large, economists across the country are deeply invested in the reconceptualization of poverty thresholds, laying bare the juncture of expert knowledge and practices of governance.

In this paper, I am interested in yet another dimension of what, when dealing with scale-making, Anna Tsing (2005) calls 'zones of awkward engagement'. I draw on two different moments in Brazil's intellectual and economic history to show how economists come to play an increasingly prominent role in the design of public policies and the assessment of the country's development. Looking into the struggle over numbers that accompanies Brazil's recent socioeconomic transformations, I delve into what renders them persuasive (Callon 1998) and legitimate as an account of middle-classness.

Processes of middle-class formation are at the core of an anthropological literature concerned with the merging effects of citizenship and consumption in the shaping of modern lifestyles. Historical accounts have focused on the establishment of a new Brazilian identity through the consolidation of a developmentalist national state ideology. Conversely, ethnographies carried out in the midst of economic instability have documented the assembling of a consumer society and the role of consumption as a marker of middle-class identities (O'Dougherty 2002). In a similar vein, Brazilian anthropologists have charted the formation of individualistic lifestyles rooted in middle-class claims and cosmopolitan consumption (Velho 1987).

While the study of class boundaries remains relevant to a broader understanding of identities and practices of social distinction through consumption, more recent analyses have shifted to the emergence of global middle classes as moral vectors articulating economic and political larger forces (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty 2012). Rather than assuming that middle-class is a given category of self-identification, my work examines the technologies — both political and scientific — that cast certain populations as such, as well as the aspirations that they unleash on the ground. As we unpack the shifting styles of consumption, motivations for citizen action, relations of labour and belong to the city fabric that crystalize in people's travails, class reveals itself as a category in the making that accounts for both state projects and personal longings.

Policymakers rely increasingly on a self-determined sense of entrepreneurship and thriving enshrined by an activist citizen disposition; in the process, middle-class becomes the hidden moral language that conveys the longings for such aspirations. As a consequence, disputes over poverty thresholds and competing definitions of inequality turn into figures of thought: performing precise statistical methodologies, they set sharp limits for inclusion and exclusion, and integration and dissidence in relation to an overarching national project of development and mobility. Therefore, fleshing out the globalized connections that traverse the economists' expertise allows for a better understanding of how contemporary boundaries between state and markets come to be envisioned and enacted over the lives of persons such as Dona Hilda.

Performing Brazil's 'New Middle Class'

Dona Hilda became the central piece of a political, economic and social machinery that far outreached the local configurations of housing programmes. Throughout the 2000s, Brazil has experience a decrease in the social inequality rates as the result of social policies, economic stability, minimum wage increase and expansion of internal markets. The strengthening of the country's economy, in high demand for manual labour deployed in infrastructural projects, concocted new flows of immigration and converted Brazil into a regional leading force (Da Silva 2013).

Marcelo Neri was the first leading economist to pioneer a number of innovative techniques and statistics to herald the emergence of a so called 'Classe C' — identified as the income band in the centre of the social pyramid. Neri divided Brazil's society in five different

classes (A, B, C, D and E), using the statistical notion of the ‘median’ to encompass calculations of labour income, education and ownership of specific goods.

Drawing from these variables, he suggests that in recent years the majority of the population entered the intermediate Classe C, which applies to some 53 per cent of the country earning from 500 to 2,000 dollars per month (Neri 2008, Pochmann 2012). Economists claim that this constitutes a group of income — that is, an economic class — for it has the greatest level of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Neri 2011: 14-15). Neri deployed the same mathematical model in retrospective, finding that during the 2000s some 40 million people were pulled out of misery and poverty (terms identified, respectively, with the lower groups). Making the case for an upward economic mobility, Neri gave this process a sense of novelty that could be conveyed by the expression, ‘new’ middle class.

‘The *Classe C* is the closest image of Brazil’s average society’, writes Neri (2008: 29). By suggesting this, he believes that a closer look into the diversity of the Classe C’s can lead to a better view of what the country has become in recent years. New statistical technologies aimed at assessing the bulging middle-classes in developing countries are a relatively common trend among self-nominated social economists (Ravallion 2009). Yet, what seems rather unique in Neri’s case is the way his ideas penetrated the federal government, who in 2012 developed new official criteria to measure Brazil’s social stratification. At that time, Brazil was adopting measures intended to expand inward consumption, stimulating cost and tax reductions in the production of certain goods, such as household appliances. Low-income market development proved to be a reliable shield against crisis insofar as it provided material evidence on how to gauge the outcomes of long-term economic stability, low unemployment and continuous minimum wage increases. In this scenario, Neri’s research bestowed a scientific endorsement upon the government’s heralding the end of endemic poverty. In 2012, during a celebration speech of Project ‘Brazil without Misery’,² President Dilma Rousseff vividly recommended Neri’s book to everyone ‘interested in understanding the country’s recent changes’. Adding on what seemed to be the beginning of a fruitful partnership, she said, ‘It is because of his studies and analyses that we improve our social policies. He is a great collaborator of the federal government’.

In the following years, Marcelo Neri was named Minister of the Secretary of Strategic Affairs.³ Under him, the government entertained a project called ‘Voices of the New Middle Class’ — a result of seminars gathering experts, social scientists, heads of market research

² ‘Brazil without Misery’ is a multi-billion dollar social assistance programme aimed at eradicate extreme poverty from Brazil by expanding the country’s aid programmes to reach the nation’s poorest. The programme expands a cash transfer benefit programme started in 2003 by the *Bolsa Família*, which provided families with cash benefits in exchange for keeping their children in school and following a simple health and vaccination programme.

³ The Secretary of Strategic Affairs (SAE) responds directly to the Presidency and its main role is to undertake the conception of projects and to structure public policies for various Ministries. It was created in 2008 and is intended to provide the government with ‘strategic’ information on policy implementation.

institutes and politicians aimed at designing public policies geared at securing the Classe C and its achievements. A new official system of social classification emerged from these seminars. Drawing on Neri's idea of *per capita* domestic income and combining it with a statistical calculation of vulnerability, a new hierarchy was created including the poor (ranging from US\$ 0 to US\$ 62); the vulnerable (ranging from US\$ 62 to 112); the low-middle class (ranging from US\$ 112 to 170); the middle-middle class (ranging from US\$ 170 to US\$ 247); the upper-middle class (ranging from US\$ 247 to US\$ 392); and the upper-class (from US\$ 392 upwards).

Marcelo Neri's project did not appeal to the majority of Brazilian sociologists, whose critique focuses on the misemployment of the concept of social class (Souza 2009, 2010; Scalon and Salata 2012; Xavier Sobrinho 2011). Likewise, scholars aligned to the leftist Worker's Party (PT) disagreed with the government's overall deflection from poverty to middle-class — arguing instead for a more political-inspired, leftist notion of 'worker class' (Pochmann 2012; 2014; Chauí 2013).

Moving from intellectual to political quandaries, a middle-class language as an image of Brazil's society lays bare the neoliberal arrangements of market, science and government, while speaking to internationalized debates on development and social inclusion. In this sense, the efforts of the intellectual elite to consolidate this language resemble Bourdieu's argument on taxonomic struggles and symbolic power (1991). According to Bourdieu, certain social groups reproduce themselves into power by seeking to establish their worldview as more legitimate than others. As middle-class turns into a hegemonic concept framing upward mobility, economic rationality becomes the suitable political narrative to tell the story of a modern country under construction.

Globalized Nodes of Science-making

Marcelo Neri does certainly not stand alone as an economist collaborating with state efforts and policies, nor was he the first to do so. In 1973, the economist Carlos Langoni published *Income Distribution and Economic Development of Brazil*. This was the first account using modern statistical technologies to assess the country's inequalities from an economic standpoint. Langoni argues that the nature of Brazil's economic development between 1960 and 1970 increased income distribution disparities, placing the country among the most unequal nations in the world. His conclusion is that education, crucial in determining individual income, is 'still' the foremost variable in the achievement of status and influence and their transmission across generations, (Langoni 1973: 209).

Langoni earned his PhD in 1970 from the University of Chicago. He was a student of Theodore Schultz, a Nobel Prize winner in 1979 who first deployed human capital theory to understand economic development. His idea was that education makes people productive and that good healthcare keeps the education investment productive. His contribution would inspire considerable work in international development in the 1980s, motivating investments in vocational and technical education by international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. 'I was so impressed by the classes of professor Schultz', Langoni revealed in an interview, several years later. 'When it was about

time to write the dissertation, I decided to use his ideas applied to Brazil. I calculated the country's rate of return on investments in education' (my translation, Cariello 2012: 7).

Langoni's claim for objectivity was deeply rooted in a geopolitics of knowledge that not only connected Brazil to broader theoretical disputes emerging at the core of North American academia, but also predicated on national struggles over data availability and state accountability. Economist Antonio Delfim Netto authored the foreword to Langoni's groundbreaking book and was a crucial figure in Brazil's military dictatorship governments during the 1960s and 1970s. One of his most known proverbs — 'The cake must first grow in order to be distributed' — encapsulated a state philosophy concerned with industrial and economic growth in spite of social equity and had a lingering impact over Langoni's theorizing. Treasury Minister Delfim Netto was the head of a scientific and political network gathering the country's most preeminent economists of the time around the scientific production of national statistics.

Under the military government, statistics turned into a strategic area for the control of the country's image and for the country's galvanizing move towards development, remaining essentially a veiled enterprise surrounded by rumours. In 1970, Langoni and a few other economists were summoned by minister Delfim Netto for a conversation about Brazil's income distribution. According to Langoni's recollection, the minister was concerned about a recently published article by the North American economist Albert Fishlow (1972). Besides recognizing that Brazil had turned into a more unequal country, Fishlow suggested this was due to state policies of wage crackdown enacted through repression of union mobilizations and skyrocketing inflation. Delfim Netto wanted to commission a young global economist to produce a competing account of Brazil's conjuncture. As a consequence, Langoni gained privileged access to the detailed database of 1970's population census. Delfim Netto made sure that a technician was specially assigned to assist Langoni in performing statistic measurements using punch cards at a central computer located inside the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro — where some of these economists graduated and found institutional support to teach and develop their research projects.

The political and economic context of Langoni's research had lingering consequences for the coming generations of Brazilian economists enrolled in governmental scientific institutions. On the one hand, it enshrined decades of socio-economic analyses that hinged upon the Gini Coefficient as a persuasive and internationalized technology of measurement mirroring the country's distributional health. On the other hand, it established a permanent state of uncertainty about the production of national statistics in political regimes that were trying to achieve democratic status. Slipping forth into contemporary quandaries of middle-classness, struggles over data and its production turn progressively into a debate about the meaning of reality itself. Dealing with reliable data became, therefore, a matter of grappling with available collections of statistics that speak to a political terrain safeguarded by state ideologies.

A World of Policies

As economic experts moved toward a more social and comprehensive approach in the design of welfare policies, the systems of knowledge they created had to rely on a conceptual collaboration with the targets of intervention. Technologies of governance reveal their effectiveness in relation to people's efforts to connect to the policy and to deploy new categories of identification. By looking into this daily work for citizenship, we are better prepared to grapple with the ambivalent realities of the policies, documenting how scientific devices come to bear alongside new forms of narration and upward mobility.

Housing policies in particular operate at the juncture of people's longings for a better life and the desire of planners and state representatives to model a better city. Under *Minha Casa Minha Vida*, housing projects are usually part of an overarching architectural scheme that can be easily transferred to different settings, eliciting a circulation of structural forms, facilities and overall space design. As anthropologist Teresa Caldeira (2001) illustrates, fortified closed condominiums are a model common among traditional upper-middle class citizens seeking safety and isolation in Brazil's big cities; now, they are being scaled-up and deployed as political projects to govern, secure and rescue people from poverty.

As I talked to various architects and public planners, I learned that the built environment was intended to trigger a purified and disciplined community life that purportedly could improve the moral condition of the poor as they were resettled to urbanized, middle-class spaces. Attempts to evaluate the kind of life made possible by such condominiums largely accounted for how these housing projects entered public debate, but they were also central to the way in which people engaged in those projects.

In one such condominium in Southern Brazil, I found Seu Ivo resting under a tree, near the common parking lot, watching kids play with stones and drinking mate tea. The problem, he told me, was that families were not thoroughly prepared to move to this environment. Campaigns were much needed to educate people (*trabalho de conscientização*), enabling them to appreciate the apartments they received. After interrupting a kid's attempts to climb on a car, he carried on saying, 'I often find myself in a position where I need to educate other people's children. There is a cultural clash (*choque cultural*) happening here. People come from places where everything was liberated, where there were no rules'. After a while, he concluded, 'It all happens as in drug dealing. *They attack by giving people stuff*. The government just gives; it gives subsidies, it gives money... But in reality, it doesn't fight the causes. Receiving is easy, but what comes next? This is the real question. The government's programmes don't work as expected. That is why Brazil is as it is.'

A couple of blocks away from where Seu Ivo was sitting, I stumbled upon a small group of residents who were arguing about the future of their new condominium. What was the place about to become? How would the lack of a broader infrastructural planning affect their attempts at building a new life? 'These units were supposed to address low-income families', reasoned a 45 year-old man, 'yet, we pay annual property taxes, monthly condominium fees, individualized water and electricity bills and apartment quota for the bank. I know people who don't even have to pay as much and live in a *bourgeois condominium* (condomínio de burguês)! Why do we even need to have surveillance cameras?' Another person followed up

saying, ‘There is no grocery store around here. Essentially, this project was poorly conceived. You know what? I think President Dilma Rousseff messed it up, wasn’t it Dilma who did this?’ A woman objected saying the federal government should not be hold accountable for the lack of infrastructure. Someone reminded us that most beneficiaries were also inscribed in *Bolsa Familia*. After a brief silence, the 45-year-old man wrapped up remarking, ‘But they give us *Bolsa Familia* just to make us pay our bills and instalments. The government is clever: it gives us money and at the same time takes it away’.

Policymakers, economic experts and public intellectuals usually see the residents of these newly constructed condominiums as too unprepared and uneducated to adapt to the broader concepts of sociability and conviviality underlying the planned architecture of the place. From this point of view, in a context where a limited number of housing benefits are unequally distributed among the urban poor, the absence of a desire leading to economic and social upward mobility is enough to render certain beneficiaries unworthy of being part of the country’s struggle for social inclusion via access to goods and services. Some people simply would not know how to use a house and how to spend wisely the government’s money to make a dignified life.

However, people’s grievances over the limits of the policy tell us another story. ‘The government gives and takes away’, was the expression I heard. In their ordinary wisdom, people were sensing a critique of how the government was operating on the ground, relying on a machinery that reached into hundreds of cities across the country, giving the poor conditional benefits mixed with market inclusion while encouraging economic growth, mass consumption and the civil construction industry. By constantly assessing their own life as beneficiaries of public housing, people enact new forms of political subjectivity and class identity. These practices serve to document the kind of life made possible by the construction of large-scale closed condominiums and neatly connect to the expectations nourished by politicians and marketers so deeply invested in proclaiming Brazil’s new middle class.

Conclusions

‘At the time we designed *Cadastro Único*, it was a highly secret enterprise’, chief economist Francisco Ferreira revealed during a conversation in his office at the World Bank in Washington D.C., in April 2015. The unified database assembling beneficiaries of welfare programmes such as *Dona Hilda* and *Seu Ivo* was carried out in 2003, during the first term of president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. At that time, Ferreira carried on, economists had to grapple with the limited efficacy of available assistance programmes such as *Fome Zero*, which would soon be converted into *Bolsa Família*, currently the country’s largest conditional cash transfer programme. Their task was to align state budgeting with the best mathematical model in order to bring the poor into view through a unified database that would support the image of a social-oriented government. At the same time, as a prominent researcher of The World Bank Group, Ferreira’s participation could not become too obvious: ‘They paid my weekly trips to Brasília, but they wouldn’t have liked to have their image associated with the design of conditional cash transfer programmes. There was a certain neoliberal image they had to stick to’.

Concerned with issues regarding inequality and poverty, Ferreira is yet another node in a globalized arena of science making. His most recent agenda stretched toward economic mobility and its most immediate consequences: ‘We already know what poverty is and how it works. Now, what is the fundamental functioning to escape it? What comes after?’ While his conceptualization differs from Neri’s model of the five economic classes, it also bears important similarities regarding income thresholds and vulnerability calculations. Moreover, Ferreira told me that international figures on Brazil’s economic development are forged in collaboration with national statistic and research institutions, thus pointing to worldwide geopolitical and scientific collaborations that nonetheless feed very asymmetrical uses and appropriations.

The close entanglement of economic expertise and state projects should not come as a surprise (Foucault 1989). Yet, it is still relevant to tease out how, in specific contexts, economists in various positions of power, time and space came to play a major role in the planning of state interventions. From controversies on income distribution that prevailed during the 1970s to present day debates on middle-classness, these are nodes in a larger picture where processes intersect (Tsing 2005). Understanding this allows us to grasp how statistical technologies, cutting-edge social-humanistic economic theories and geopolitically divided social scientists intermingle to shape long-lasting discussions on the nature of Brazil’s poverty and inequality and on its relations, through the design of public policies, to a technocratic and welfare state-in-the-making.

For 1970s economists like Carlos Langoni, education paved the way to upward mobility. Development was attainable through personal effort and middle-class came to encapsulate the moral distinctions of a growing unequal society. For contemporary economists such as Marcelo Neri and Francisco Ferreira, development happens through the promotion of social equity and middle-class stands for a renewed notion of population; here, governing the middle-class means governing the entire society. In so doing, they crystallize a view of the post-dictatorship neoliberal state as the provider of comprehensive services through a particular kind of intervention — public policies — over a specific population, the new middle-classes intended both as a result of and as agents of the country’s economic transformations.

Meanwhile, beneficiaries such as Dona Hilda and Seu Ivo find their way into the architecture of public policies by connecting to the state through a laborious work of citizenship. Recent accounts portray this restructuring of the poor’s role in Latin-American urban society as a means to egalitarian citizenship, converting ‘their violence into law talk’, and thus transforming politics and traditional forms of ‘clientelistic relations of dependency’ (Holston 2009). In my ethnography, I draw from other authors such as Pardo and Prato (2011), who investigate the opening chasms in legibility between citizens’ demands and state governance, to suggest that even though public policies in Brazil acquired the language of socially informed statistics they fail in fully taking people’s desires into consideration. Instead, by deploying new scientific theories and indicators that stress people’s resilience in escaping poverty, these policies conceal the micro-political efforts in which people engage in order to adhere to public policies and to become deserving citizens.

Documents such as Dona Hilda's letter carry the potential to illuminate what has changed and what remains constant in the chronicle of a state longing for inclusiveness and enfranchisement. They are political evidence deeply shaped by personal stories, coalescing at once state ideology, economic globalized expertise and personal social mobility. Together, compounded by middle-class rhetoric and practices of intervention over targeted citizens, they become the suitable storytelling of a society in motion and of an erratic state simultaneously striving for minimalistic interventions and grappling with the limits, reach and quality of its own welfare policies.

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The Neo-liberal Research Shredder: The Study That Never Was¹

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This article begins by describing an ethnographic study of the perceptions of African American students from urban backgrounds of their experiences at a predominantly white university in the mountains of upper East Tennessee. The results of the study suggested that international students might have similar experiences, so the researchers planned a follow up study. However, two of the three original researchers were lost to the subsequent study. One died, and the other, the Dean of Students, lost his job. The primary researcher, Talbot Rogers, then recruited his wife, Judy Arnold Rogers, who worked at the same institution, to the new study. However, the theme of ‘lost jobs’ became an ethnographic study in itself when seventeen faculty from one department, including Dr Arnold who was the senior member of the department, received notice that their contracts would not be renewed because of ‘loss of enrollment’. In the two years following that original ‘Valentine’s Day Massacre’, (it occurred on February 15, 2013), more faculty were released even as the institution hired new, younger faculty. Dr Rogers lost his job in the spring of 2015. The article turns from the study of the students to the experiences of the faculty, particularly Dr Arnold, who suddenly found themselves thrust into the world of unemployment and government services. A description of some of the experiences is given with emphasis on the fact that what happened to a group of professors who lost their jobs is not nearly as important as what happens to those people in poverty who try to jump through the hoops of government services. Unemployed professors have resources that those who live perpetually in the world of unemployment do not have. It is suggested that the ethnographic researcher has a responsibility to study and report about a serious issue which raises the question of survival for the poorest of the poor. The article concludes with a discussion of neo-liberal attitudes which caused the professors to lose their jobs — world-wide attitudes which allow bosses to treat people like widgets to be moved around in response to what the market will bear. The loss of the opportunity to proceed with research which might have had negative conclusions for an institution to consider is a significant loss. However, for the ethnographic researcher, the loss of jobs, income, and stability, and the responsibility of the government towards those who are suffering these losses has become a paramount issue suggesting many topics for study.

Keywords: African American students, unemployment, government services, ethnography, neo-liberalism.

The Neo-Liberal Research Shredder: The Study That Never Was

In the academic year 2011-2012 three researchers participated in a study (Rogers, Stevens and Greene 2013) in which six urban African American students attending university on academic scholarship at a small rural university in the mountains of East Tennessee were interviewed in an effort to get their perceptions about life in the rural environment. These students were bright students who had been recruited from big cities such as New York or Memphis to come to the university on scholarship in order to help increase the diversity in the predominantly white, rural student population.

The university enrollment is approximately 3500, including all graduate and undergraduate programs. Established in 1897, the university has a rich heritage in the region with a mission statement that stresses helping the isolated Appalachian population. Most of the students come from nearby communities in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. Most of the students, even those who live on campus, have transportation and can go home, especially on the weekends, giving the university the designation of being a ‘suitcase school’. These

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented and discussed at the Annual Conference of the Commission on Urban Anthropology on *The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities* that took place at the Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY), U.S.A., on 18-20 June 2015.

urban students came from very different background than the average student at the university.

The students who were interviewed for the study were selected because they were African American undergraduates from large urban areas who lived full time in the university dormitories. These students were attracted to the university by scholarships but were unfamiliar with the isolated rural environment. They arrived on campus without further means of transportation, probably not realizing both the distance of the university from large cities and the lack of public transportation. They knew no one in the neighboring communities, and it was highly unlikely that they would be invited to visit area families on the weekends. They did not understand the culture that they had selected for their tertiary education having been initially attracted to the beauty of the mountain area and to the academic quality of education that they would receive.

The university administration did not understand the needs of these students who had been recruited precisely because they were different. As far as the administration and faculty in general were concerned, adapting to the new environment was the responsibility of the students. After all, the students had been awarded scholarships. They had come to the University for academic, not social reasons. They were confident students with plans for good jobs or graduate school in their future. One student intended to move from the undergraduate program into the university's medical school after graduation.

Two of the three researchers were white professors at the University. The third researcher was an African American who was Dean of Students at that time. The interview protocol included questions about the students' perception about their role at the University. The Dean of Students predicted that the students would report racism, but, surprisingly the students' responses did not include significant mention of racism.

While the findings of this original study did not mention racism, the researchers concluded that there was a theme of hidden racism. The students reported boredom as their primary complaint, accompanied by a refusal of the administration to listen to them when they suggested ways to alleviate their boredom. Specifically, the students asked for weekend activities which would include intramural sports and social activities. Since these students did not have their own cars like the local students did, and there was no public transportation to take them away from the campus, they spent their weekends on a virtually empty campus. Moreover, these students lived too far away from the campus to allow for weekend trips to their urban homes. Therefore, they reported being bored in their isolation while being left on campus with the other isolated group, the international students.

At the conclusion of this study, the researchers decided that further study of the international students was warranted. However, at this point, one of the researchers died, and the Dean of Students was no longer employed by the university. Another researcher was added to the study, however, subsequently, she lost her job at the university. The remaining researcher was prepared to continue with the study. However, he also lost his job.

The study became a moot point as the two remaining researchers were thrust into their own ethnography. The first researcher found herself dealing with the hoops required when a 60 plus year old woman becomes unexpectedly unemployed. The second researcher saw

connections between his previous studies on Neo-liberalism and the fact that the results of the African American study that highlighted the students' suggestions alleviating the boredom of their university experience were ignored while the study of the international students was stopped completely. Additionally, during his last two years at the university, the administration had systematically denied funding for this professor's participation in any type of international experience in his field, minimalizing his international experiences, and stonewalling efforts to do ethnographic research comparing American systems in education to systems in other countries.

The neo-liberal theme was further apparent in the way the urban students were treated on the rural campus. The students had been brought from their urban worlds to the rural campus in order to address the need for diversity in the urban world. However, they were little more than widgets in the overall scene of campus management. The fired researchers found themselves also to be widgets in the overall scheme of university and societal management. Each of the professors had been loyal and highly regarded having received excellent student and administrative evaluations and teaching awards.

In their search for jobs and unemployment insurance, and other social services, they found themselves in a new and uncomfortable world. They could not help but to compare the difficulties they were having to those of individuals they knew who were less fortunate. In many ways, their society seemed to be constructed in a way as to discriminate against the poor and uneducated. They soon found that as unfortunate as their situation had become, they were middle class educated people who had more resources than the people commonly found applying for the social services for which they had become eligible.

The female researcher, Dr Judy Arnold, chronicled her experiences in the world of unemployment in a blog entitled 'Old White Women Can Jump' which has been identified as a self-ethnography. Portions of the blog follow:

“Those of us who were “let go” by the university qualified for unemployment. In fact, one of the profs went straight out of his Valentine's Massacre “Program Planning” meeting to the local unemployment office where he learned our names had already been turned into the state. The state knew that we were about to be unemployed before we did! The contracts of this newly unemployed group had differing ending dates, so application by LMU former employees came at different times. During the course of the end of the various contracts, the state closed local unemployment offices to save money. Therein lies some of the rub!

I am getting ahead of myself though. My full-time contract ended on May 15th, 2013. However, I was still teaching all the way through to December, 2013. Even with a full load, I was now listed as an adjunct, and I was no longer receiving benefits. I'm still getting ahead of myself. First, I had to get over the shock that I was actually unemployed and that I was eligible to apply for such a thing as unemployment. My first reaction was that there was no way I would apply for unemployment benefits. I have been employed in some form since I was sixteen years old, permanently and full-time employed from the time I was

twenty-one. How could I possibly be in the unemployment line? The soup kitchen. My conservative side said that I should not accept anything from the government; my liberal side said that I should. Both sides got together and decided that since my university had paid that money to the state for unemployment insurance, I should claim it. It was legitimately mine.

By the time I started my jump through that hoop, the local Unemployment offices were closed to save money. The only way to apply was by phone (no cell phones supposedly) or online. We quickly learned that applying and receiving unemployment was not for the faint of heart, or for the uneducated. What does a group of professors who are recently unemployed do in order to receive “their due”? One of us called their state senator. One called the Commissioner’s Office. All of us were persistent. We owned computers; cars; phones. We were not starving. None of us had dependent children at home. (I won’t go into adult dependent children here!).

Let me make something absolutely and perfectly clear. There are many people who deserve unemployment benefits who do not have the resources to apply. By resources, I don’t mean money. I hope that’s obvious. Let me give an example. I know a woman in her eighties who was fired from her hospital job after many years of service. Fellow employees heard supervisors say that the woman was just “too old” to do her job which had to do with transporting patients through the hospital. Those people urged her to file an age discrimination complaint. She had no idea what that meant, so there was no possibility of any type of complaint. However, when I spoke with her daughters months later, none of the family even began to realize that there was such a thing as unemployment benefits.

This eighty year old woman lives with her two sixty year old daughters. They have a car but only one daughter has a driver’s license. This became a moot point since there was no longer a local unemployment office. I have to ask though: What about those people without transportation. Beyond the fact that at one time they were supposed to go to the unemployment office, how do you apply for a job, go to interviews, keep a job, etc. without transportation? Public transportation and friends and family with cars cannot possibly cover all the needs of these individuals.

Anyway, when I described the process of applying for and receiving unemployment, I uncovered many cans of worms that would never be opened. First, there was no way to apply online for this family. They have never owned a computer and would not know what to do with one if they had one. There is no real possibility of any of the three women ever learning about a computer. Next, calling the state unemployment office was a task beyond these women. It takes days to get through as I learned from the beginning. In fact, it was at a visit to the local unemployment office before it closed that I learned from an unemployed Aramark worker that there were certain days and times to call when after a very

long wait, someone might get to your call. There was certainly no person around locally except for this unemployed guy who could give us any information.

At least half a day needs to be set aside to make the call. Once all of the appropriate buttons are pushed and the appropriate information is entered (a task beyond these women), a counselor might answer after hours of waiting. There was only one of the three women capable of speaking to someone on the phone. The other two, including the mother, were too scared to talk on the phone and got too nervous to talk. The daughter who could talk worked during the day (at a part time job that was keeping her on full-time hours) and was not available to make the calls and probably could not make sense of what she needed to know to talk to a counselor. In talking to this daughter myself, I found out that she did not really know the date her mother became unemployed; how long she had worked at that job; whether or not she had insurance. This woman did not know that her mother had a retirement fund and how to apply for it. Once I got her to ask about it on her mother's behalf, she learned that after what was well over thirty years of employment, her mother only had around \$7000 in the account. I suspect that the account required some type of monitoring over the years for investment and that much of what might have been in the account had been lost on the stock market, but I don't really know why the amount was so low. They thought \$7000 was a lot of money. I don't know if they ever managed to receive it.

If anyone deserved to receive unemployment benefits, this woman did. She and her daughters have worked all of their lives and worked hard at minimum wage jobs. They have been mistreated so many times by so many people in the employment world (not to mention in the social world, including their church) that they just expect that nothing is going to work out as it should. Their hard work has provided them with a condominium that they share and a car. They are not starving. However, that unemployment money would have meant everything in the world to them. When I told the mother the process involved, particularly about the fact that she would have to apply for three jobs a week in order to maintain eligibility, she just couldn't cope and ignored the whole process.

At one point, I wanted to help her and her daughters myself, but then all of the cans of worms presented themselves. I simply could not get enough information out of them to help them, and there was no way that I could have been involved with them weekly trying to go through the process of job applications and the rest of the red tape (hoops.) The daughters did not know what they were entitled to in the way of benefits on their jobs. They didn't know if they had insurance or not. They had dealt with social security and Medicaid for the mom by loading themselves in their car and going to the appropriate offices where someone helped them. There was no one to help them with the unemployment benefits. You see, these are three "old white women" who cannot jump through the hoops.

As much of a problem as the unemployment benefits were for these women, they are more fortunate than many. How many people are there in the country right now that haven't even applied for benefits that they deserve because they don't know how to apply and don't know how to get help? How many people are out there now in the country whose benefits were cut off while the Republicans and Democrats play politics with their lives? This country is in danger of creating an uneducated, unrepresented, hungry and angry poverty class that will lower the standard of living for us all. I sit in my nice house with two cats and two cars and pensions, etc. and while that unemployment money meant something to me, it means everything to many people who deserve it and are not getting it.

Will we lose children to starvation in this country before congress or someone does something about it? Will we even know that people are dying? Who has already died from hunger or lack of medication or lack of a place to live? I know that there are people out there who are suffering greatly because they can't find jobs and they have no income. Many if not most of these people want to work. I know I would like to work and have not been able to find a job. A woman my age in my profession at this time cannot find a job in my field. I have tried to get jobs outside of my field also, but I am too old to be considered – and I am female.

Let's really get back to me – use me as an example. I am getting to like the idea of retirement. However, I had intended to work much longer and was enjoying working. It seems to be generally accepted that I was good at what I do. Let's say I am/was. Let's forget me and say someone like me — like the other profs who recently lost their jobs — people that enjoyed working and would have happily put in more years in the workforce if they could — and had reasonable assurance right up to the Valentine's Massacre that they would be valued workers for as long as they would like to work because of the value of their work. What has our workforce lost by shutting these people out of work and giving them unemployment benefits when women like the ones I have described here are given a process that is so complicated that they cannot possibly understand it and are unable to claim what they deserve? And what about the people who don't have the resources that those women have. Are they on the streets? Are they living in substandard housing somewhere or in their cars? Do they have children?

I started jumping through the unemployment hoop when it was torched into a raging fire. I'm waiting to see what congress does for the unemployed. I am not waiting so much for myself though, as I am waiting for those people that I think about every day. People must be starving “out there” in a world that I do not know. The current system is starving them. I am reminded of an old Quaker woman that I used to know who when confronted with this type of problem was ready to go into immediate action. I can still hear say “But what can we do? What can we do?” Indeed what can we do? What kind of conflagration is going to occur

from all of the fires from all of the hoops that all of these people are jumping through just to survive? What can we do?

(Arnold, J. 2014, June 24. The unemployment hoop: The most fiery hoop of all. Retrieved from <http://oldwhitewomencanjump.blogspot.com/>)’

Conclusions

We live in a neoliberal world. It is safe to say that the entire population of the world has felt the effects of this polarizing philosophy. All the subjects of this paper have suffered increasingly from the effects of neoliberal policies. Job benefits have been diminished. Unemployment benefits and other benefits meant to ameliorate the effects of vocational devastation have been made difficult to obtain or abolished altogether.

The poor can literally be devastated by the loss of their jobs. After 26 weeks of unemployment payments at approximately \$275 per week, the only benefit that they have until they reach social security at age 62 is food stamps, a benefit insufficient to avoid homelessness. The women described in this ethnography worked hard all of their lives to live a semblance of a middle class life — a life that they could see others living and that they understood. Losing the opportunity to work put them in precarious circumstances that they did not understand.

The college professors in this study understood their circumstances all too well. The professors realized that they suffered from the loss of the future — financial security, job security, maintaining a position in the upper-middle class, and opportunities for advancement at all levels, and the knowledge that their services were no longer valued except as expendable merchandise.

In the neo-liberal view, education has become a business rather than an ivory tower. In businesses around the world, workers who have dedicated their lives to a company have been laid off by bosses who have less understanding of the company than the long-time employees do. Loyalty to the company is not a two-way proposition, and in education loyalty to an institution of higher learning and to the propagation of ideas seems to mean very little to the business-oriented administrators who lay off faculty at alarming rates for reasons mostly designed to protect their own jobs.

Before the second study could begin, two of the researchers lost their jobs and the third left the University. The neo-liberal chickens had come home to roost.

Benjamin Ginsberg’s book *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-administrative University and Why it Matters* (2011) examines this neo-liberal trend. The book’s cover summarizes the situation well:

‘In the past decade, universities have added layers of administrators and staffers to their payrolls every year while laying off full-time faculty in increasing numbers—ostensibly because of budget cuts. Many of the newly minted—and non-academic—administrators are career managers who downplay the importance of teaching and research, as evidenced by their tireless advocacy for a banal “life

skills” curriculum. Consequently, students are denied a more enriching educational experience—one defined by intellectual rigor. Ginsberg also reveals how the legitimate grievances of minority groups and liberal activists, which were traditionally championed by faculty members, have, in the hands of administrators, been reduced to chess pieces in a game of power politics’.

Ginsberg does believe that there are ways to reverse the trend. He believes that the system should be revamped so that the ‘real educators’ can regain their voice in curriculum policy. In essence, his answer to the Quaker woman’s query, ‘What can we do?’ is answered by his belief that institutions of higher learning can return to what they once were if the faculty is allowed to teach and research in an atmosphere of acceptance rather than an atmosphere of fear. A great many writers use the word ‘hope’ in their analysis of the future. Logic and current trends do not augur well for our society in its struggle with neoliberalism, and sometimes a blind faith that the human lot might improve independent of the facts is all the academic has left to offer. ‘Hope, in this instance, is one of the preconditions for individual and social struggle, for the ongoing practice of critical education at a wide variety of sites’ (Cote, Day and dePeuter 2007: 31).

Both researchers of this article have fought back with what limited resources are available to them. Both have continued to speak and write on this topic and both have taken legal action designed to bring the circumstances of their dismissals to court. They have been thrown out of the ring, but are not out of the fight.

*To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question
To say: ‘I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all’ - (Eliot 1917)*

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Attachments to Inhospitable Places

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Gordon Young (2013). *Teardown: Memoir of a Vanishing City*. Berkeley, California. University of California Press. Hardcover ISBN: 9780520270527 | 288 pages; Ebook ISBN: 9780520955370

and

Isabelle Anguelovski (2014). *Neighborhood as Refuge: Community Reconstruction, Place Remaking, and Environment Justice in the City..* MIT Press.

Hardcover ISBN: 9780262026925 | 296 pages; Paperback ISBN: 9780262525695 | 296 pages' Ebook ISBN: 9780262322171 | 296 pages

When I agreed to review both Gordon Young's *Teardown* and *Neighborhood as Refuge* by Isabelle Anguelovski I did not anticipate they would provide me an opportunity to compare how journalists and social scientists report on similar subjects. In this case it was depressed urban neighborhoods occupied by variously stigmatized groups. At first glance the books appeared incompatible, but a closer look revealed much about the two historically and logically related professions, as well as the life worlds of people struggling to make a home in inhospitable places. Therefore, in the review essay I will supplement conventional reviews with additional commentary.

As a teaser, if not a provocation, the 'Telling Notes from Reviews' for *Teardown* pointedly refers to the social sciences.

'Perfect for: The amateur urbanist who wants to go to Flint without actually having to leave the backyard.'

(Alexander Nazaryan *Atlantic Wire* 2013-06-12)

'While scholars and urban planners throughout the US and Europe debate strategies for revitalising former industrial cities that are 'shrinking', 'forgotten' or 'failing', Young reminds us that storytelling, including the kind of inconclusive ending we might find in a contemporary novel, sometimes reveals more than the most careful study can. Better yet, a good story shows us why we should care, even if it doesn't provide any solutions.'

(Sherry Lee Linkon *Times Higher Education* 2013-10-31)

Max Weber (1947) argued that human society is made possible when social actors can imagine themselves in the place of the others with whom they interact and thereby correctly

anticipate the others' behaviour. The job for us is not only coming to an 'understanding' (*verstehen*) of this through empirical research, but equally important, conveying our newly gained knowledge to others; for example professional peers, students and in some cases the general public. The German verbs *kennen* and *wissen* also inform us about Weber's Neo-Kantian sociological understanding (Rutgers and Shreurs 2006). *Wissen* is factual knowing while *kennen* has to do with acquaintance with and working knowledge of something.

Each of these books did the job of 'knowing' about the subject well, but they did so in different ways. Journalists like Gordon Young lean toward *kennen* and social scientists like Isabelle Anguelovski lean toward *wissen*. However both kinds of knowledge are necessary to get the best, complete, picture. At the other end of the collection of knowledge is conveying it to readers or audiences. Since journalists and social scientists have different audiences, the way that they present their knowledge also differs. These volumes remind us of these constraints in that the central subject of each is the same. The audiences can be placed along a spectrum from academic urban scholars on the one end and the general public on the other. *Refuge* clearly falls on the academic scholar side and *Teardown* on the other, but they share some territory with urban planners, politicians, activists and concerned publics in the centre. There are also questions about how useful their findings are to their readers.

Both authors claim to want to influence powerful decision makers while also providing tools for those less empowered. For example, they agree that the greening of urban spaces, environmentalism and sustainability are valuable methods for improving the urban condition, especially in depressed communities and for stigmatized groups. In this regard in *Refuge* Anguelovski draws a wider and more detailed picture providing detailed discussions of theories and methods as well as some thick description. Young's *Teardown* skimps on those aspects but better conveys to the reader what life is like on the ground in a struggling urban neighbourhood. Like ethnographers, journalists make you feel closer to the subject and the simple, jargon-free, language allows for reflection on one's own experiences.

Reading *Neighborhood as Refuge* led me to reflect on my own, similar, scholarship. As an activist scholar *Teardown* also appealed to me in a special, personal, way. Although there are many concepts, incidents and concerns that tie these books together at the intellectual level, it is the degree of 'attachment to place' that best connects the two and also to my own work.

In this regard I was especially drawn to the comments of Travis Watson from the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) who explained:

'I really feel like the sense of community. I feel like people kind of look out for each other. You see a lot of people that are helping the elderly off the bus, I feel like it's some of the little things I can kind of pick up in this community. I just like the vibe. I like just walking down the streets and kind of just talking to people. People are very real here.' (134).

On the first day of his return to Flint in search of a perfect \$3,000 house, Gordon Young, called his wife and:

‘I tried to explain how one day in Flint contrasted with the cold, superficial friendliness of San Francisco, where I sometimes felt like I could go long stretches without making a real connection with anyone besides her. I’d already been fretted over by Berniece; confronted, scrutinized and ultimately accepted by Rebecca and Nathan; embraced by Rich’s mom; and called a *muthafucka* by the birthday boy. It was all a visceral reminder that the anonymity of big-city life in San Francisco and the stereotypical laid-back character of California had their drawbacks. ...At the risk of sounding like a touchy-feely Californian, somehow Flint felt more real, like I had permanent ties here that I could never make in San Francisco.’ (12)

In my own work on similarly stigmatized inner-city Brooklyn neighbourhoods in the 1970s, local activists expressed similar sentiments of place attachment. In my case the stigma was racial.

‘The first time I was there it looked like a community, because it was a mixture and you could see the beautification, the scenery. The people seemed to be getting along fine. They were friendly. They were sitting outside and when you passed they said ‘Hello.’ You could see the families . . .’ (Krase 1982: 173, See also 1977, 1979)

In my opinion, *Neighborhood as Refuge: Community Reconstruction, Place Remaking, and Environment Justice in the City* is the kind of ‘applicable’ work in which more scholars ought to be engaged. The author, Isabelle Anguelovski, holds the position of Marie Curie Fellow and Senior Researcher at the Institute for Environmental Science and Technology at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*. In her informed estimation, environmental justice requires that ‘every person, regardless of race, income, culture, and gender has the right to a decent quality of life’ (35) in safe places ‘to live, work, play and learn.’ (219). In other words, ‘environmental justice’ is not limited to the amelioration of such physical issues as bad air and water quality, but also requires human rights and gender equality. This idea, or better ideology, to which I also ascribe, provides the foundation for this cross-national, comparative work.

Anguelovski successfully demonstrates in this well-written and carefully documented volume how a broad spectrum of academic research methods and theories can contribute to the efforts of activists in obtaining environmental justice for the poor and members of minority groups. To accomplish this imposing task she carefully describes, discusses and gives many detailed examples of people who live in depressed areas in cities on two different continents as well as an island nation, and easily by extension, throughout the world. These sites and subjects are in the Casc Antic neighbourhood of Barcelona, Spain, the Dudley neighbourhood of Roxbury in Boston, Massachusetts (U.S.A.) and in Havana, Cuba, the neighbourhood of Cayo Hueso.

Through a synthesis of her three in-depth case studies of local activists the author develops a theory of, and hopefully thereby a method for obtaining, environmental justice for those living in deprived urban neighbourhoods. It must be noted that the range of social,

economic, and political systems in which these neighbourhoods are found increases the value of her reasoning. In the course of the research a wide variety of methods and techniques were employed to compose the most comprehensive, and therefore the most useful, picture. In the field, she employed the usual tool bag of urban ethnography such as interviews with leaders, residents, community workers, nongovernmental organizations, foundations, planners and decision makers; observations, as well as participant observations. She also collected and analyzed relevant documents such as reports, newspaper articles, planning documents and other materials gathered in the course of the study to provide the most comprehensive view.

From these data, Anguelovski was able to describe in detail the work of local activists, who by her treatment in the book essentially become exemplars for emulation. Slowly, over the course of at least two decades in each of these three venues they were able to overcome substantial obstacles to improve the environmental conditions and in the process transform these otherwise stigmatized areas. They did this by working together to build (sometimes unlikely) coalitions, partnerships and networks to blend environmental justice action with community development.

‘These projects included urban farms, community gardens, farmers’ markets, parks, playgrounds, small green spaces, sports grounds, community centers, healthy homes and improved waste management that were built thanks to bottom-to-bottom networks. For over two decades, activists in Boston, Barcelona and Havana have worked to improve the environmental quality and livability of their neighborhoods through projects that have transformed socioenvironmental conditions, rebuilt, broken communities, and remade places for residents’ (219).

Although these neighbourhoods had much in common, such as low-income and minority residents located in the centre of major cities, at other levels they had many significant differences such as local, regional and national political and economic systems. The key to the success in all places were local residents who had strong allegiance to their homes and neighbours and who were willing to commit themselves to extensive activism for the sake of their neighbourhood. Why similar committed activists were successful here and not elsewhere is left unanswered such as why those who are able to leave stay behind to join or lead the struggle. Like the activists I have studied and worked with over the decades, those described in *Neighborhood as Refuge* also understood, resisted and challenged their imposed marginality. They rejected how they were defined by official and unofficial agencies that sought to determine their future. They also fought ‘... existing racist and classist stigmas and stereotypes about low-income and minority residents – especially that they live in worthless neighbourhoods and do not care about the long-term well-being and environmental quality of their place’ (27).

There is much more that can be said about *Neighborhood as Refuge: Community Reconstruction, Place Remaking, and Environment Justice in the City* by Isabelle Anguelovski. My only regret is that each of her three cases was not provided in separate volumes where so much more of her carefully assembled detail, and for urban ethnographers, the close-up descriptive work would be more fully displayed. I assume there is much more to

come from these projects and I look forward to it. I was a bit disappointed that urban ethnography and especially the work of urban anthropologists was not directly engaged. My sense is that its theoretical and methodological contributions have been subsumed by the ‘interdisciplines’ that dominate the interdisciplinary field of ‘Environmental Studies’ itself. In this regard I complete this review with the ‘telling’ quote below.

‘Researchers in sociology, planning, geography and environmental psychology have examined and theorized about place in cities. In this book I offer a glimpse into this vast and multidisciplinary scholarship and concentrate on how previous studies help us to understand the relationships among place attachment, sense of community, and participation in urban neighborhoods, especially historically disenfranchised neighborhood.’ (47)

Gordon Young, senior lecturer in the Communication Department at Santa Clara University, is also a journalist who has published *The New York Times*, *Slate*, and the *Utne Reader*. He grew up in Flint, Michigan, once celebrated as the birthplace of General Motors and now lamented as its resting place. The litany of the once proud city’s ills include the loss of half its highest population of 200,000, an official 30 per cent unemployment rate and about ten square miles of empty houses, buildings and vacant lots. He aptly summarized the situation with a quote from someone he met in a bar there: ‘This place is fucked up, man.’

Although he left his beloved hometown, he maintained a virtual connection through a blog *Flint Expatriates* for former residents like himself. The mainly first person narrative text revolves around his quixotic search for a house he could buy (for a mere 3,000 US dollars) in Flint and restore to its prior comfort, if not lost grandeur. One method was searching for ultra-cheap houses on *e-Bay*. During his three-year pilgrimage, he visits and revisits the place where he grew up and in the process finds many courageous people to be admired as well many others to be ashamed of. Arson for profit or eliminating local drug dens is contrasted with planned and spontaneous reforestation projects. Courageous urban homesteaders and pioneers find they are at the mercy of real-estate speculators, politicians and planners who have their own ideas for the future of their city. Two of these visions are shrinking the city and relatedly greening a smaller Flint to create a global model for sustainable urban environments.

These machinations and tribulations are marvellously captured in twenty-seven chapters five to ten pages in length with titles that, unlike text books, actually tell the whole story: Pink Houses and Panhandlers, Bottom-Feeders, Bourgeois Homeowners, Virtual Vehicle City, Bad Reputation, The Road to Prosperity, Bar Logic, Downward Mobility, Black and White, The Forest Primeval, The Naked Truth, The Toughest Job in Politics, Urban Homesteaders, Quitters Never Win, Burning Down the House, Emotional Rescue, Get Real, Living Large, Fading Murals, Gun Club, Bargaining with God, Psycho Killer, Winter Wonderland, Home on the Range, California Dreamin’, Thankless Task, and Joy to the World.

Ultimately, Young realizes (in my words) that he could not go home again because that home no longer existed beyond his mind. It comes on the last day of his final visit when there was a heavy snow that helped ‘to mask all the decay.’ His friend Aaron was shovelling and

remarked ‘I don’t think I could ever give this up.’ Young writes that he understood exactly what Aaron felt.

‘A part of me had never left Flint. At the same time, I couldn’t deny that there was a large dose of relief in knowing that I was about to walk away. I had a fulfilling life in San Francisco, and another part of me couldn’t wait to return. Yet again, Flint was forcing me to deal with two contradictory emotions. I should have been used to it by now. I knew I was doing the right thing, but I couldn’t help feeling that I was abandoning the place that made me who I am.’ (235)

I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Teardown: Memoir of a Vanishing City*. It is difficult if not impossible for academics to find humour even in funny situations. Unlike academics, journalists feel the need to keep their readers happy as opposed to being impressed by their eruditeness. Therefore Gordon Young had the license to find the lighter side of urban life in some of the most difficult, and dangerous places.

‘One of the most unexpected fringe benefits of Flint’s decline is that you seldom have to wait for anything. Traffic jams are rare. Service at bars and restaurants is generally brisk, given that there are few customers and the wait staff really need the money. But that pattern was broken at Advanced Ranges on Center Road, just across Flint’s eastern border in Burton. On a punishing cold afternoon, there was a forty-five minute wait. (Note to would-be Flint entrepreneurs: Guns!)’ (205)

Unlike an academic treatise, Gordon Young’s *Teardown* provides no suggestions for solving the problems of Flint but he clearly shows what doesn’t work and what can be hoped for. The book also reminded me of my own attachments to the places in which I grew up. The depressed, and depressing, condition of Flint, Michigan had many similarities to the working class neighborhoods of Brooklyn when they suffered the same disinvestment and deindustrialization. In *Self and Community in the City* (1982) I wrote about how our sense of self, and the groups to which we belong, are very much tied to the territories we inhabit and move through. *Teardown* is a study of allegiance to a place and helps us to understand the power of attachment to place, even though that sentiment is clearly irrational and potentially detrimental to our well-being.

The book contains extensive notes but not the type associated with academic studies as well as a limited but useful collection of sources and Further Reading. These limited ‘back matters’ are understandable in that the book makes no pretensions as a guide for urban social scientists to replicate or to test. I would recommend *Teardown* for a wide variety of general readers, such as those interested in a close and sympathetic view of the lives of people in struggling cities, as well as a supplement to undergraduate courses in urban sociology, anthropology and related offerings. It is also suitable for advanced courses but more a document to be analysed as primarily source material. Social scientists and many urban-focused professionals such as urban planners would also benefit from this personal memoir that in many ways mimics auto-ethnographic accounts of similar subjects and settings. If he

were a social scientist, I would describe his approach as multi-methodological as it integrates city history, observations, as well as references to printed and on-line texts.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities

Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY), U.S.A., 18-20 June 2015

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The Commission on Urban Anthropology's Annual Conference, 'The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities', was held at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY) on June 18 through 20, 2015 on its historic and verdant campus in Flatbush, Brooklyn. The meeting was sponsored by Brooklyn College (CUNY), especially its International Education Program of The City University of New York led by Senior Director of International Education & Global Engagement Alice Gail Beir, St. John's University, and the CUNY Academy of Humanities and Sciences' Feliks Gross Seminar on Visual and Urban Ethnography. The conference was most ably co-chaired by Judith N. DeSena, Sociology Department, St. John's University, Patricia Antonello, Anthropology Department, Brooklyn College CUNY, and Jerome Krase, Sociology Department, Brooklyn College CUNY. The Commission on Urban Anthropology is indebted to the generous support of William A. Tramontano, Brooklyn College Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Brooklyn College Matthew E. Moore, Associate Provost for Faculty and Administration.

The challenging theme and Call for Papers (below) for the 2015 meeting, 'The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities', was carefully composed by Italo Pardo of the University of Kent. The CFP for what was billed as a compact meeting in order to allow for intense and fruitful deliberations, attracted over forty submissions, which were reduced to less than thirty for the final program.

In today's increasingly competitive global economic scenario, urban settings encapsulate the socio-economic impact of increasingly significant international processes, regulations and flows of capital and people. Since 2008, the global financial and economic crisis has brought dramatically ahead issues that bear directly on urban research and theory. For example, in Europe, the effects of the crisis have been exacerbated by the imposition of the Maastricht parameters among most of the countries that have adopted the Euro. There and elsewhere, such as in the US, the crisis has dramatically impacted on neighborhoods, provoking catastrophic housing closures and dynamic urban movements (like Occupy Wall Street and the bloody street demonstrations in Greece).

By and large, governance has generally failed to meet constructively the challenge posed by the complexities and implications of this worldwide phenomenon, thus raising a critical problematic of both legitimacy and legitimation. The current crisis has apparently established the supremacy of economics over politics. However, while it has become

gradually clear that, cross-culturally, such supremacy and acceleration are not overarching phenomena and that their predominance cannot be taken for granted, it has also become clear that in the present climate national policies struggle to address individual and corporate interests. To complicate matters further, all too often international regulations that have a heavy impact on local communities have proved to be inspired by concepts that are ambiguous, elusive, badly defined or impossible to apply, thus compounding on the perceived weak legitimacy of governance and the law in the broader society.

On the one hand, comparative ethnographic analysis has documented in detail both how this crisis has boosted unemployment, informal employment, inequality, poverty (e.g. residential and business foreclosures, vacant unsold or unsalable real estate, homelessness, bankruptcy of individuals and businesses, the spread of suicide among private individuals and entrepreneurs, and so on)¹ and crime. On the other hand, it has brought to light how strong entrepreneurial cultures firmly rooted in the morality, and ramifications in practical life, of a strong continuous interaction between the material and the non-material are coping with this situation.²

Eschewing confusion between individuality and individualism, urban ethnographers have demonstrated the moral and cultural complexity of individual action, bringing out the social value of individual action and entrepreneurialism. More precisely, the empirical investigation of ordinary people strategies and of small- and micro-scale business initiative in different ethnographic settings has repeatedly shown that they are informed by a culture that, underreported and often officially frustrated, enjoys legitimacy at the grassroots, playing a major role beyond official employment and unemployment. Misplaced or instrumentally selective policies both encourage exclusion and are key in the widening gap between governance and the governed across the world.

Through ethnographically-based analyses, this Conference brought together between 20 and 30 scholars in order to explore these complex issues in Western and non-Western settings. Specifically, the Conference aimed to:

Discuss how legal, semi-legal and illegal activities in the field of entrepreneurialism and individual action at once draw on access to community resources, including access to credit, beyond official allocation and defy attempts of the state to monitor, regulate and extract revenue from the production, circulation and consumption of goods.

Reflect on how the difficulty in the access to credit, which affects ordinary people, individual entrepreneurs, companies and entire countries.

Ethnographically-based analysis has amply shed light on the moral set up that informs the choices of those involved in such enterprises. It has also suggested that in many cases we are not faced simply with a dual economy where the informal is complementary to the formal,

¹ See Krase and T. Shortell, 2013. Seeing New York City's Financial Crisis in the Vernacular Landscape. In Kuniko Fujita, 2013, *Cities and Crisis: New Critical Urban Theory*. London: Sage.

² On the concept of *strong continuous interaction* see Pardo, I. 1996. *Managing Existence in Naples: Morality, Action and Structure*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; especially Ch. 1.

but rather with complex interlinking and interacting sectors of one economy. In the present context it is imperative for the state to come to terms with such a reality, well beyond prohibition and repression, for criminalization has largely proved to be counterproductive and ineffectual. Credible ways must, instead, be found to encourage those who operate outside the law to bring their businesses in the realm of legality. New, simplified legislation is badly needed. It is equally imperative for political and financial institutions to develop an approach that is sophisticated and enlightened enough to match the sophistication and diversity of what goes on the ground. Empirically-based analysis has an important contribution to make to our understanding of how urban neighborhoods and micro- to small- and medium- businesses are changing as a result of the global financial crisis and that these transformations demonstrate the complex effects of economic decline.

At the opening session in Brooklyn College's Boylan Hall on Thursday, June 18, 2015 Giuliana B. Prato, University of Kent, Chair, Commission on Urban Anthropology gave the official Welcome. Representatives of the Brooklyn College Administration, William A. Tramontano, Matthew E. Moore, and Alice Gail Beir also offered their greetings to the assembled scholars. This was followed by the Keynote Presentation, 'Brooklyn Revisited: An Illustrated View from the Street 1970 to the Present', given by Judith N. DeSena, St. John's University and Jerome Krase, Brooklyn College CUNY. After the luncheon for panelists and guests the afternoon session began with the following presentations.

Panel 1: Social Action, Governance, and Capitalism

Italo Pardo, University of Kent, *'Why Can't I Sell My Wares but They Can Sell My Rubbish?': Neapolitans Coping with Economic Difficulty in a Context of Mis-governance.*

Nurdan Z. Atalay-Güneş, Mardin Artuklu University, *Outlining Economic Fields in Turkey: Financialization and Actors.*

Boonlert Visetpricha, University of Wisconsin- Madison, *"Homeless People in Manila: Their Rationality of Living on the Street and the Moral Economy of Street Life."*

Panel 2: Reflections on Locales

Kelly McNeal, William Paterson University, *Painting a Portrait of Segregated High Schools with 4.5 Kilometer Brushstrokes.*

Michel Rautenberg, Université Jean Monnet Saint-Etienne, *Local Heritage and Capitalism: Resistance or 'Small Arrangements between Friends'?*

Talbot Rogers, and Judith Arnold Rogers, Lincoln Memorial University, *In the Labyrinth of Mediocrity: The Perceptions of Urban International Students on the Nature of their Education in a Rural White University in the United States.*

Sarah Grace Rogers, University of Tennessee and Small Girls on 10th Street, *Perspectives on Gender Equity in the Public Relations Field.*

On the evening first day of the conference a Business Meeting was held for CUA Members in the conference space. After the meeting, panelists and their guests were treated to a reception and light supper in the State Lounge of the Brooklyn College Student Union Building.

As on the opening day of the meeting on Day two, a coffee service was provided to panelists and guests and then followed by paper presentations and lively discussions in Boylan Hall.

Panel 3: In and Out Migration

Robyn Andrews, Massey University, *Anglo-Indian Returnees: Financially Driven Reverse Migration to Goa*.

Zdeněk Uherek, and Veronika Beranská, Institute of Ethnology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, *Prague and Migration Groups: The Global Financial Crisis in the Czech Republic*.

Patricia Mata-Benito, Spanish University of Distance Education, Carmen Osuna, Spanish University of Distance Education, and Margarita del Olmo, Center of the National Council for Scientific Research, *Eating Pizza with my Feet on the Table: Dropping Out of School in Spain in the Context of Financial Crisis*.

Following the luncheon for panelists and guests in the Georgian Room the final panels took place.

Panel 4: Mirrors of the Global Crisis

Convenors: Carmen Rial and Alex Vailati, Federal University at Santa Catarina.

Moises Kopper, Princeton University, *The Rising Middle Classes in Developing Countries: Globalizing Science, Performing Statistics and Humanizing Numbers*.

Ana Luiza Carvalho da Rocha, and Cornelia Eckert, UFRGS, Brazil, *The Crisis in Industrial Work and Arrangements in Urban Everyday Life: Ethnography in Porto Alegre, Brazil*.

Andrea Ceriana Mayneri, Institut des Mondes Africains, Paris, *Central African and Refugee Narratives in Times of War: Beyond the 'Failed' and the 'Criminal' State*.

Comments: Setha Low, Graduate and University Center CUNY

Panel 5: Informal to Formal Economies

Roumi Deb, Amlan Kanti Ray, and Divya Avasthy, Amity University, *Legitimacy of Women Entrepreneurship: Socio-Spatial Access in the Delhi Metropolis*.

Marcello Mollica, University of Pisa, *How the Crisis Helped Informality to Re-enter the Temple: a New Sicilian Custom*.

Carolyn E. Vick, Banking and Financial Consultant, *The Post Crisis Banking Legislation/Regulation: The Impact on Access to Banking Services for the Ordinary Person*.

Nicha Tovankasame, Hiroshima University, *Negotiation for Informal Tourist-Related Businesses on the Coastal Public Space in Newly-Military Government Epoch: The Case of Phuket, Thailand.*

Following the last session, concluding remarks were made by the conference co-chairs, Judith N. DeSena, St. John's University, Patricia Antonello, and Jerome Krase, Brooklyn College, as well as by Commission on Urban Anthropology officers Giuliana Prato and Italo Pardo. It was decided at the meeting by those assembled that presenters could submit their final papers for possible inclusion in either a special issue of the CUA journal *Urbanities* or a volume of the Palgrave Urban Anthropology Series edited by Giuliana Prato and Italo Pardo. Otherwise, individual papers could be submitted as unique articles with reference to the detail of having been presented at CUA's annual meeting 'The Global Financial Crisis and the Moral Economy: Local Impacts and Opportunities' held at Brooklyn College (CUNY) June 18-20, 2015.

Following the Business Meeting, a Farewell Wine and Cheese Reception for panelists and guests was held in the Georgian Room in Boylan Hall. On the morning of Day 3, Saturday June 20, 2015, many of the conference panelists and guests were treated to a walking tour of one of Brooklyn's iconic neighborhoods. St. John's University professor, and conference co-chair, Judith N. DeSena guided the academic tourists through the still ethnically diverse but rapidly gentrifying area. DeSena has written several books on the area. She was assisted in her efforts by conference co-chair Jerome Krase who has also written extensively on Brooklyn's fascinating urban landscapes. The tour ended with a wonderful luncheon at a sidewalk café in the busy commercial center of Williamsburg's hipster culture.

Sustainable Urbanization in India: Challenges and Opportunities

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A two-day conference on *Sustainable urbanization in India: Challenges and opportunities* was organized by the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK) and held between January 15 and 16, 2015 in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay. The conference was funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

Concept note and Rationale

Within the Indian context, the conference intended to debate and discuss the effectiveness of recent urban programmes ('smart city' designs, 'rurbanization,' etc.) that are being prescribed

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and recommended within the umbrella of ‘sustainable urbanization’, the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. Within a broad space-time scale and considering the exploration of historical trajectories for particular Indian cities as an important methodology, the conference aimed to identify problems and possible measures to be followed as policy and programmatic actions that can be the guidelines for future research.

Since 2007, urban centres have become the dominant habitat for human beings making the process of urbanization one of the most significant global trends of the twenty-first century. Sustainable Urbanization is the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. It unfurls optimistic designs where cities are considered the axes for the new global change, economic forces to entire nations and central players on the world stage. With global environmental change on the planetary scale on one hand and rapid urbanization on the other, cities are recognized as seedbeds of solutions; flurry of recommendations, designs and innovations are being thought upon with sustainability as the nucleus. Since the 1990s, cities came to be looked at through the sustainability lens. The concept of ‘sustainable cities’ emerged, being derived from ‘sustainable development’ which was popularized in the Brundtland Report (1987) of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the United Nations (UN) and Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [UNESCO], 1992). The UN Sustainable City Programme in the South was launched as a vehicle for implementing Agenda 21 at the city level in order to incorporate environmental management into urban development decision-making, where the economic and environmental costs of urbanization and urban development were to be taken into account and cities were to be designed as compact, energy efficient cities, and should be self-reliant in terms of resource production and waste absorption.

There are critical perspectives questioning the effectiveness of these programmes in the global South with the central argument that sustainability is seen from a Northern viewpoint that ignores critical issues, such as the unavailability, or lack of access to infrastructures and resources. Critics include Mike Davis, Joseph Gugler, David Harvey and others who have pointed to the contradictions associated with rapid and rampant urbanization in the poorest quarters of the developing nations.

The aim of this conference was to move beyond the bi-centric approach (looking only at the differences between the ‘developed’ and the ‘developing’ world) and reflect on cities across India using polycentric methods and approaches. In spite of some common components, each and every city has its own trajectories of growth and development, vulnerability and resilience. The Indian scenario is extremely diverse and only broadly can cities be classified according to historical, geographical and demographic conjectures. Solutions laid out in official and non-official documents tend to miss out these diversities. Within this broad framework, the conference invited innovative researches across different parts of India identifying city-specific sources of unsustainability and challenges, strategies and potentials that would make the process of urban transition both sustainable and equitable.

Programme and Participation

Around 38 senior professors, faculty members and research scholars from various universities and research institutes from every part of the country (north, south, east and west) presented papers touching upon almost every component of urban sustainability. There were case studies across Indian megacities and small towns covering a wide spatial scale. Nine technical sessions (Urban Planning and Governance, Gentrification, Civic Infrastructures, Urban Inequity, Disasters and Resilience, Waste Management, Emissions and Energy Use, Urban-rural linkages and Urban Ecology and Environmentalism) were conducted by eminent chairpersons with expertise in various disciplines of social sciences including economics, sociology, urban planning, history, and so on. Professor Darshini Mahadevia, Dean of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University, Ahmedabad, gave the keynote address focusing on cities as epicentres of violence in recent times, drawing on evidence from contemporary events. The keynote address was followed by a thematic panel chaired by Professor Adriana Allen of the Development and Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL). The panel speakers were Professor O.P. Mathur, distinguished professor of urban economics, National Institute of Urban Affairs, Professor Achin Chakraborty, Director of the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata and Professor Annapurna Shaw, Public Policy and Management, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. Professor Mathur addressed the complex question of how India's urbanization and urban system are unfolding. Professor Chakraborty gave a meticulous presentation on the structural limits to equitable urbanization. Professor Shaw examined urban sustainability as policy in the Indian context and brought out the implications of the proposed policies in the context of land availability and sustainability. The session ended with the chair's comment and reflections on a wide spectrum of emerging urban policies and urbanisms — including splintering urbanism, slum urbanism and green urbanism — and their conceptual and contextual challenges, which can be addressed by an alternative narrative of untamed urbanism to some extent.

On the evening of day one, a special panel was organized on the newly published book entitled *Governance of Megacities: Fractured Thinking, Fragmented Setup* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan. The special lecture on the book by the author was followed by a discussion conducted by Professor Mahalaya Chatterjee, Director, Centre for Urban Economics, Calcutta University.

The conference ended with a discussion on further plans and next steps, followed by a vote of thanks delivered by the coordinator Jenia Mukherjee, Assistant Professor of History of Ecology and Environment at IDSK. The event received coverage in the microsite (<https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/news/peri-urban-pathways-water-justice> date of access: Sept. 1. 2015) of the Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London.

Contribution and Significance

Recent patterns and processes of urbanization have been studied by economists and experts from other disciplines of social sciences (Ahluwalia, Kanbur and Mohanty 2014). The exchanges and encounters between urbanization and environment in Indian cities have been

explored in recent times (Rademacher and Sivaramakrishnan 2013). Yet, the discussion still remains very much restricted within the boundaries of megacities and metropolitan areas, and not much is done beyond that. The conference at IDSK greatly contributed to the existing body of research on contemporary urbanization and the interactions between urbanization and environment in Indian cities, addressing the context of current formulation, popularization and debates on the theory and practice of 'sustainable urbanization' on a global scale. It also addressed debates relating to the effectiveness of recent urban programmes ('smart city' designs, 'rurbanization,' etc.) that are being prescribed and recommended under the umbrella of 'sustainable urbanization'. Faculty members and research scholars presented papers touching upon almost every issue relating to urban sustainability. Disseminating unexplored facts and findings, case studies across Indian megacities and small towns exposed the need of micro researches within macro contexts in order to come up with specific challenges and potentials in specific geographical-historical-demographic contexts.

Two publication projects are being planned including selected papers of the conference. One aims to shed light on different aspects of challenges and potentials of urban sustainability in Indian cities and towns, including availability or lack of civic infrastructures, emissions, waste, varieties of environmentalisms among multiple social actors, and so on. The other aims to read and decipher urban palimpsests to remain informed about future oriented processes and multiple urban transformations, while remaining aware of different and distinct (urban) trajectories embodied by each city across temporal scales; an entry point, that is, for an understanding the complex urban transition of India.

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COMPLETED DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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The new boundary: everyday practices of urban and domestic space in post-war Sarajevo

This dissertation presents a 'cross boundary' ethnography of Sarajevan practices of space, which have been disrupted and reshaped during the conflict and in its aftermath. The discussion explores Sarajevan practice of public and domestic space in post-war time, in two Sarajevan neighbourhoods (Grbavica and in Lukavica) belonged to the same municipality before the war, included in the Serb-controlled area during the war and now divided by the IEBL (Interentity boundary line) established at Dayton that split the Bosnian capital city into two different towns: Sarajevo and East Sarajevo. The work theoretically distinguishes between the top-down reorganization of territory caused by shifting borders and violence from the 'production of locality' (Appadurai, Ingold, Gupta, Ferguson) intended as a socio-cultural process that merits ethnographic exploration.

Mainly based on prolonged fieldwork research, this work presents an innovative approach that adopts a relational perspective between the 'two sides' of the IEBL. Methodologically, this required the author to move residences across the IEBL in the Sarajevo urban area and to carry out participant observation and interviews with inhabitants, which had been particularly affected by movements of and across military and administrative lines. This was aimed at exploring transboundary cultural dynamics and at highlighting spatial practices of inhabitants divided by the IEBL as the complex effects of change and mobility, and not simply as the expression of ethnic homogenization and segregation. This ethnographic investigation of the Sarajevans production of locality explores different kinds of mobilities (space-time, socio-economic). Furthermore, the acknowledgment of cultural displacement, in territorial as well as political and geopolitical reconfigurations, highlights normalcy and spatial practices lingering between shifting (geo)political systems. From this perspective, this research discloses the ethnic issue's many connections with pre-war socialist practices and new global dynamics.

Dr Zaira Tiziana Lofranco is currently a Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the University of Bergamo. She was awarded her PhD in anthropology and analysis of cultural transformation from the University of Naples. She joined the University of Bergamo in 2010 as postdoctoral fellow in social and cultural anthropology. From 2010 to 2013 she actively participated as an early career researcher in the EU funded networking project *Eastbordnet, Remaking Eastern Borders in Europe*. Since January 2014, she has been involved as a researcher in the FP7 *ANTICORRP* project with the specific task of producing an ethnography of corruption practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BOOK REVIEWS

Matthew Bell and Gary Armstrong (2014). *Steel and Grace: Sheffield's Olympic track and Field Medallists*. Bennion Kearney Limited.

This meticulously researched and unique contribution to the literature on the Olympic movement spans over 100 years of history to portray the lives and times of nine Olympic medallists from the City of Sheffield. The life histories and athletics travails of Harold Wilson and Archie Robertson (1908 London), Ernest Glover and William Cottrill (1912 Stockholm), Ernie Harper (1936 Berlin), John and Sheila Sherwood (1964 Tokyo, 1968 Mexico City, 1972 Munich), Sebastian Coe (1980 Moscow, 1984 Los Angeles), and Jessica Ennis-Hill (2012 London) are richly interwoven with and contextualised by the developing story of the Olympic movement itself from its modest 'amateur men only' status in 1908 to the commercial and all professional global phenomenon that we have today. There is also an unfolding critique of the British Olympic movement and the unwillingness of government for more than seven decades to follow the path of other major sporting nations by providing the necessary training and competition facilities for athletes and investment in the Olympic teams themselves to secure success.

Chapter 1 provides the background to the events on track and field internationally as well as in Sheffield. Baron de Coubertin's restoration of the Olympic principles is eloquently paraphrased by Ethelbert Talbot, a Pennsylvanian bishop, at a service at St Paul's Cathedral at the beginning of the

1908 London Games — 'Our prize is not corruptible, but incorruptible, and though only one may wear the laurel wreath, all may share the equal joy of the contest. All encouragement, therefore, be given to the exhilarating — I might also say soul-saving — interest that comes in active and fair and clean athletic sports.' How was he to know how sternly those principles would be tested in the years that were to follow.

The rise of commercialism (cigarette advertising in 1964, sponsorship on a major scale), the advent of television for the first time in 1936 and the inevitable lure of money to be made that saw amateurism become shamateurism and then full blown professionalism by the 1990s. The role of the state in the UK is critically investigated, for it was not until the governments of Major and Blair that the significance of sport (élite and for all) was recognised in any measure and its potential contribution to national pride and morale identified. Sheffield's hosting of the 1991 Universiade is used to demonstrate the dilemma facing cities who wish to host a major event. The Sheffield City Council invested £150 million in new facilities for the Games, facilities that hosted training camps for athletes attending the 2012 London Games some 20 years later, but some of which have been closed or demolished including the Don Valley Stadium, the principal site for the Universiade. The commitment to the 1991 event remains controversial to this day.

Chapter 2 traces the athletics careers of Harold Wilson (son of a nomadic joiner who finally settled in Sheffield with his large family) and Archie Robertson (son of

a Glasgow-born surgeon who settled in Harthill on the outskirts of Sheffield). Team-mates in the GB and Ireland squad for the London Games of 1908 they were an unusual pairing — Wilson of working class background and Robertson educated at a private school and of a family that boasted two servants. Interlaced with their races and fortunes is the story of the rise of athletics in Sheffield — the founding of Hallamshire Harriers (still going today) and Sheffield United Harriers, two of the first clubs in the country; the history of ‘pedestrianism’ in the city with huge crowds and prize money; and the many venues for athletics located around public houses, recognised stadia like Bramall Lane and Hillsborough and many others. Also emerging in these early years are the very different approaches of the British system with its Victorian gentlemanly ethos and the USA with regimental training methods and heavy expenditure to support their athletes. In the event Wilson, the first man to run 1500 metres in under four minutes, won silver in London and Robertson silver in the 3,200 metres steeplechase. Even the 1908 games were not without controversy — the Americans complaining about bias in the judges resulting in re-run races and hostility between the two teams.

Chapter 3 traces the athletic lives of William Cottrill (born in Woodhouse to a family of potato merchants and steeped in athletics) and Ernest Glover (born in Darnall and coal miner by trade). Both secured medals in the 1912 Stockholm games that once again illustrated the differences in preparation and athlete support. The USA and Germany hired liners to accommodate their athletes during

the Games, the British athletes were put into cheap accommodation wherever it could be found. The poor overall team performance led the Sheffield Daily Telegraph correspondent (‘Harrier’) to express his disgust at the AAA’s organisation of the British team and their failure to learn from the experience of 1908.

Chapter 4 features Ernie ‘Evergreen’ Harper. Born in Clay Cross, Derbyshire he moved to Sheffield from where he won two national cross country titles before winning silver in the 1936 Berlin marathon. A committed ‘smoker’ he refused to take fluids during races. There are vivid descriptions of Hitler’s preparations for the 1936 Games which were to demonstrate the might of the Nazi regime and racial superiority. For the public the Games were emphatically the ‘Jesse Owens Show’ despite the German media’s racist coverage. For his part Harper returned to Sheffield as a hero and moved into a new house thanks to public subscriptions in his honour.

Chapter 5 belongs to PE teachers John and Sheila Sherwood. Sheila Parkin was born in Parsons Cross, Sheffield, represented England in the 1962 Commonwealth games long jump aged 16 years. She went on to take part in three consecutive Games from 1964 to 1972, the highlight being her silver in Mexico in 1968 the year she married John. John, born in Selby, has lived for over 40 years in Sheffield and won bronze in Mexico. What is most striking about their careers is their determination to succeed despite injuries and the absence of decent training facilities and support from the hierarchy for athletes in the North. Sheila had to train on an old

cinder run up in Hillsborough in sharp contrast to the modern surfaces she would encounter at the Games. This enduring ‘fend for yourself’ attitude from the authorities provoked much criticism from athletes who were still amateurs and depended upon the goodwill of their employers for time off to compete.

Sebastian Coe, four Olympic medals (two gold and two silver), world records galore, Member of Parliament, the House of Lords and architect of the 2012 London Games, is the subject of Chapter 6. Coe ran at a time of Olympic boycotts (Moscow and Los Angeles), drug abuse and at the time when the Olympic Movement finally recognised the huge commercial potential that professional athletics offered. Coe himself straddled old and new eras but with endorsements and winnings he became the highest earning athlete of his time. Described by the authors as ‘dignified and articulate...ever the diplomat’, Coe will be remembered for his will to succeed at everything and for delivering London’s finest festival of sport.

Chapter 7 features golden girl Jessica Ennis–Hill, a millionaire by the time she won her gold medal. Born of a Jamaican immigrant to Sheffield in the 1960s and a Sheffield woman almost half his age, Jess was born in 1986. The chapter traces her early career in school athletics; the choice dilemma facing young adolescents between the unremitting training regime elite athletics required and nights out with the girls; her early successes despite her small, scrawny frame; her youthful rivalry with the more senior Kelly Sotherton; and her hugely successful partnership with coach Toni Minichiello. Jess became the face of London 2012, demonstrating the

success of the UK’s post–Major approach to elite sport. Fully funded by the lottery, she could focus on athletics full–time and fully justified that funding in her success as an athlete.

This work takes one urban setting, a city in Yorkshire, to investigate and record the development of the Games through the lives of a few Olympians who achieved glory at one or more Games. The detail of the conditions in which athletes lived, trained and competed is enriched by extracts from original local and international sources such that the reader can share the pain of failure, the glory of success and the frustrations of those competing in earlier times with the organisation of their sport. This is not a local history for its pages carry all the turbulence, intrigue and politics that accompany any major international event over time but the unfolding story is seen through the efforts of these few athletes from South Yorkshire. As such it commands a unique place in the literature of the Olympic Movement.

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Matthew Gandy (2014). *The Fabric of Space: Water, modernity, and the Urban imagination*. Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press.

The *Fabric of Space* is an important book that ought to be read by anyone interested in the future of cities. In 351 pages including an abundant body of footnotes, a rich bibliography, photos and index, professor Matthew Gandy, a geographer who was the director of the UCL urban laboratory, wrote a very convincing fresco

based on a large variety of data and academic literature, completed by novels and artistic works that provide real sensibility, density and realism to the book. Everybody interested in the past and the future of cities as well ought to read his book. The guiding principle is to highlight some main topics of the modern urban making, from the mid-nineteenth emergence of the water engineering to the present climate disorders. He focuses on six cities that have special relationships with water: Haussmann Paris, Weimar Berlin, the colonial and post-colonial Lagos, modern Mumbai, Los Angeles and its concrete river, the inundation of London.

Water is an excellent red thread to describe cities' contemporary evolution: it 'lies at the intersection of landscape and infrastructure, crossing between visible and invisible domains of urban space' (p2); it connects every home to the public technological networks. Sewers, adduction systems, floods and swamps accompany the modern transformations of cities all over the world for two centuries at least, and constitute some of the major technical issues for the following. Water allows to make a world tour of several topics of urban life and policies.

There is no general model of evolution of cities or internal consistency of these models. Water management has often been seen as a constant progress index, following the Hausmanian model of Paris. Some engineers and urban planners, in Nigeria as elsewhere, still believe it. The route to urban modernization ought to be via water infrastructures: draining of marshes in Lagos, Mumbai or London, safe water adduction and sewage disposal

system in every city, flood control in Los Angeles, Mumbai or London, water entertainment and sports in Berlin. It implies a public sphere that would be able to assume expensive public works and that is powerful enough to impose its policies. Thus, during the '40s, the British colonial administration in Lagos tried to eradicate malaria, but it has been a failure and malaria is still active. In Los Angeles, the Congress approved the construction by the Army Corps of Engineers of a fifty-one-mile-long concrete channel to canalise the river that regularly flooded the city. It is now a concrete river which depends on thirteen water departments which hardly agree on coordinated strategies on irrigation or renewal of flood defence. In London, the British government built the Thames Barrier to preserve the capital from the inundation that could come from the estuary, but more and more people, not having confidence in the gigantic dam, work to restore 'idealized ecosystem from the past' (p. 207).

Before the climate crisis, the main contrary to the evolutionist city and the engineering model is the social collapse that occurs more and more. This point is well exemplified by Global South cities: in Mumbai, 'severe disparities in public health can persist because of the array of technological, scientific and architectural innovations that enable wealthy households to insulate themselves from the environmental conditions of the poor' and 'the public health crisis facing slum dwellers does not directly endanger middle-class residents' (p.135). In Lagos, 'the relationship between disease and segregation established in the colonial era persists in terms of middle-class

intolerance (consecutive to the) “miasmatic disdain” for the olfactory proximity of the poor’ (p. 108). Dickens and Conrad remind us that, in social imagination and in reality as well, the Thames estuary was a place of abandonment and social malaise. Consequences of climate change are particularly illustrated by London. ‘There is tacit acknowledgment among many government agencies (...) that increased flood risk is inevitable’ (p. 196). Technical solution will not solve this problem, above all in a country that dramatically weakened the strategic planning role of the Environment Agency. Solution ought to be found somewhere between restoration of the traditional ecological role of the estuary, education, individual responsibility and a renewal of public policies.

Water policies have never been strictly technical. Hygiene, disease control, comfort and entertainment were used to civilize urban people and to control urban space. Water policies make it possible to better understand public policies in general, but also contestation, local autonomy and popular appropriation of the urban space. In many places water exemplifies the contested terrain of local policies, strengthened between the knowledge of engineers and the knowledge of the population. During the 1990s and until now, the question of water played a major role in the emergence of the urban political ecology and its connection with the dwellers. But ‘the intersection, between water, democratic deliberation, and the public realm has been extensively occluded’ (p.14). However, placing democracy and its practical forms in the urban development — particularly

managing water resources, combating disease as malaria or developing ecological responses to reduce the effects of global warming — constitutes probably one among the main issues of the present. In Mumbai local mobilisations organize supplying in drinking water. Nongovernmental organizations convince local authorities to have an emphasis ‘on measures such as rainwater harvesting as a rediscovery of traditional approaches to water management’ (p. 130). Social unrest over access to drinking water and health led by some nongovernmental organizations leads to ‘grassroots campaigns to extend citizenship rights to marginalized communities’ and ‘the deployment of repertoires of local knowledge has allowed some of the poorest communities in the city to become visible for the first time’ (p.130). In Los Angeles an ‘ecological urban citizenship’ emerges that initiates ‘a myriad of grassroots initiatives and new forms of public engagement with nature’ (p.149) where water is a constant feature. They origin with a grassroots organisation called the Mothers of East LA, which was created in 1984 to campaign against polluting and health-threatening industrial facilities near too poor and predominantly Latino or African American residential neighbourhoods (p. 176).

The possibility of new forms of ‘urban ecological citizenship’ (...) requires reflections on the different modalities of power within the urban arena (p. 218). But dramatic events occur even more quickly when an even long time [lags] between events and response. Models lose their practical utility, experts’ knowledge becomes inefficient, sources of power are

dispersed, ‘and we are left to contend with ideological parameters of science fiction imaginary’ (p. 220). Now, ‘water both constitutes and delimits the public realm, not necessarily as a stable or coherent social formation, but as a set of spheres of contestation and negotiation’ (p. 221). Simultaneously, inequalities are widening between suburbs and gentrified downtowns, cities concentrate richness and power to the detriment of their rural hinterlands. Private investments are unable to respond both to the huge needs in water of the population and the devastating impact of climate change. Democratic solutions that would impose themselves to the public sphere and authorities are more necessary than ever.

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Andrew Gorman–Murray and Peter Hopkins (eds) (2014). *Masculinities and place*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Andrew Gorman–Murray and Peter Hopkins have edited a timely and insightful collection to explore the geographies of masculinities. The book, consisting of 26 chapters written by more than forty authors with an Introduction by the editors, has its origin in the annual 2012 conference of the Association of American Geographers in New York. With this proviso, it is easy to see this collection largely as a fresh look at geographies of masculinities — or as referred to by the editors as critical men’s studies — by geographers, particularly cultural and human geographers. Yet, the scope and interdisciplinary nature of the many

chapters defy this characterisation. The book is divided into eighth parts, each focusing on specific aspects of masculinities (place, relationality, home, domesticity, family, care, wellbeing and work). Careful and handsome editing, an extensive index and few photographs add to the volume’s tremendous intellectual assets. The interdisciplinary and international aspects aside, as an anthropologist I was wishing for at least a nodding acknowledgement of some earlier work done by anthropologists in this field (I am thinking about the pioneering work of P. Bourdieu, S. Brandes, G. Herdt, D. Gilmore, for example, or even the classic study of male sexuality and body by B. Malinowski). Some sort of amalgamation of disciplinary conclusions is even more of an issue here since both cultural geographers and anthropologists have made key interventions into the same enterprise: to dismantle masculinity as a taken–for–granted monolithic and hegemonic social category. Nevertheless, the many excellent points brought up in this volume enable me to state that it will be regarded by specialists in the field as a useful survey of where masculinity studies stands at the moment, and where it could progress in the near future.

Gorman–Murray’s and Hopkins’ Introduction offers an overview of the issues discussed in the chapters that follow and of how far masculinity studies have come in the past decades. As they contend, ‘a key focus for geographers interested in masculinity has been about exploring the contested constructions of gender identities and how these are constructed, negotiated and contested in different localities or places...and how this changes over time’

(p. 4). Thus, the aim in this volume is to describe ‘how young men construct and contest their masculine identities and how these are informed by their own identities, such as their class, sexuality, race, and ethnicity’ (p. 4). Most of the chapters speak specifically to these topics asking relevant questions about the formation and contestation of masculine identities in both western rural and urban settings. In part 1, three chapters map these issues elegantly and in detail. Although chapters on Euro–American westernized masculine identities are more numerous, there are studies on the United States, South Africa, New Zealand, Estonia, Fiji, Canada, Australia and the UK, the various locations where masculine identities are played out and the ways in which they are negotiated offers exciting reading material. Noble and Tabar (chapter 5) focus on sexuality and displacement as key factors influencing the identities and lives of Lebanese male migrants in Australia. In the next chapter, Datta and McHwaine contend that Brazilian migrants in London negotiate migrant rights ‘manifested through everyday citizenship practices in terms of overall gendered patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the city in relation to civic participation and access to financial services’ (p. 93). Childs (Chapter 7) discusses personal experiences on ‘trapping on leather’ by reviewing the mostly gay scene of the International Mr Leather (IML) community, an annual weekend event held over Memorial Day in Chicago. He concludes that it is ‘a simultaneously a welcoming and ostracising place and privileges a hyper–masculine, hegemonic male aesthetic’ (p. 120). In a somewhat similar fashion, Chris

Gibson (Chapter 8) describes pervasive cowboy masculinities not as simply a hegemonic male identity but one ‘dependent on interpreting the cowboy figure nota as a singular stereotype, but as a palette of discourses, representations, commodifications and material cultural interactions — from which diverse, unfolding and often contradictory subject positioning emerge’ (p. 125).

Atherton (Chapter 9) observes geographies of military inculcation and domesticity by describing the ‘changing sense of “home” for army men during their military service and subsequently following demobilisation’ (p. 143). Home, domestic labour and family are subjects described throughout Parts 3–5, issues of violence (Meth) homelessness (May), home repairs (Cox), fathering and ethno–poetics (Aitken), grandfathering and ageing (Tarrant), intergenerational relations (Richardson), interior design (Gorman–Murray) and domestic foodwork (familiar to some more as cooking, in Meah) provide fascinating insights on how masculine identities have been changed, forged and negotiated.

Chapters in Part 6, present an interesting look at men in various caring relations. In Chapter 18, England and Dyck describe the interdependence of home–care triads (caregiver, recipient, and professional). The next chapter is a truly collective effort by Brown, Bettani, Knopp and Childs to debunk the myth of gay bars as unhealthy, uncaring and careless. In Chapter 20, Trelle and van Hoven introduce us to various informal and leisure male bonding activities of Estonian rural youth influencing masculinity and the ways in which ‘masculinities are performed in

different spaces' (p. 322); specifically, regular boat trips on different rivers and dancing at the local House of Culture.

Part 7 directly relates to the previous one as chapters take up health and wellbeing as related to masculinity. In Chapter 21, Wilton and Evans address the recent advancement in the field of men's health by looking at the specifics of geographies of drug and alcohol treatment. The next chapter, by Lewis, describes HIV risk and prevention among gay men in Nova Scotia, Canada. In Chapter 23, Keppel analyzes the myth of the New Zealand 'kiwi bloke', a stubbie-wearing, beer-drinking, sheep-shearing, emotionless heteronormative masculinity. Her findings suggest that New Zealand men experience emotional stress, anxiety and depression, which is why a new national mental health program is being created to cater to their needs.

The final part, Chapters 24 through 27, focuses on employment, workplace and the labour market by analyzing their importance on masculinities and masculine identities, attitudes and behaviours. McDowell, Rootham and Hardgrove (Chapter 24) examine the marginality of working-class British youth in a service-dominated economic highlighting how masculinity is marked as a disadvantaged, dangerous and a failure. In Chapter 25, Presterudstuen looks at the Fijian traditional and post-colonial capitalist modes of gendered work. In the last two chapters, Warren examines competing masculinities in the context of surfboard industry in Hawai'i, Australia and Southern California; Pini and Mayes look at the contemporary construction of hegemonic masculinity in the Australian

mining industry by revealing 'how place-related aspects of masculinity and rurality are enrolled in the process of gender identity formation' (p. 439).

Given the value and intellectual scope of *Masculinities and Place*, the shortcomings I mentioned earlier pale in comparison. For those interested in geography and masculinity studies, this text will prove invaluable, and this applies especially to graduate students. For anthropologists, I recommend it to be read in conjunction with similar ethnographically-oriented works such as for instance the volume edited by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (*Dislocating Masculinity*, 1994).

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Susannah Hagan (2015). *Ecological Urbanism: The Nature of the City*. London and New York: Routledge.

This is a book about urban design but one that goes beyond design to include anthropology, politics, governance and environment in a consolidated approach that is termed 'ecological urbanism', a term that the author agrees is not popular but gaining ground. At the outset the reader is told that ecological urbanism is about cultural practice and demands a transformation in thinking from those in charge of the urban environment; architects, planners and power holders. This concept is separated from related terms like urban ecology and sustainable cities; the former is about the green spaces in the city and the latter about maintaining some kind of equilibrium state, but

ecological urbanism is neither. It is a modified view of city planning that recognizes that those in charge of building and maintaining the city as well those living in it, must recognize that 'urban apocalypse' (p150) is to be attributed to the 'four horsemen' of urbanisation, environmental degradation, climate change and wealth being concentrated in the hands of the few. As the majority of the people in the world are moving to urban areas, not always voluntarily, the dreams of a good life are often shattered as many of them are pushed into unliveable conditions, often having to struggle to find their own solutions to survival, like building on places that should not be built on. Such unplanned growth may cause havoc on the lives of citizens as well as on the environment; a tragedy that is being manifest in climate change, urban pollution and manmade urban disasters.

This volume prioritizes the human elements and focuses on the negative aspects of planning and of governance globally; namely power, profit and the essential inequalities of urban life. Solutions may not be found in absolute terms to deal with problems of inequity and injustice, as the author realises that utopian conditions are not possible. Yet as this book tries to explain, design and technology can be used to advantage if planning and architecture incorporate 'an ethics of size, of social mix, of density and public space' (p. 8). In other words urbanism needs to situate itself within the matrix of human culture and its bio-physical environment. One cannot emphasise one at the expense of the other. The author has not talked in metaphoric terms but illustrated each of her arguments

and propositions with examples of real cities and also visions of ideal places like Lilypad.

The first section of the book deals with the definition and understanding of key concepts such as urban ecosystem, cultural ecology, landscape and environment. The second section describes three major models of city planning and design; the Garden city, the city within boundaries and the city unbound; the last being where the rural and urban are seen as shading into one another. The issues raised in this section include the role of citizens, 'civic pride' in maintaining spaces like the garden city and the gradual loss to corporate and capitalist interests that are taking over city planning. This section describes how sacrifice of cultural and human interests to the needs of capital gain and profit has played havoc with many city environments. The compact cities which represent the second model are bound around a strong centre and often the materialist connotations override the cultural and social ones as these are governed by a central power. Here questions of democracy, of control and access to resources may become paramount. In contemporary times, issues of carbon footprints and pollution may be of critical interest as are questions of density, energy and that of relation of city and suburb, both environmentally and politically. The concept of the Broadacre city brings in thinkers and planners like Patrick Geddes and Ian McHarg, whose visions were to incorporate the natural within the social. Geddes had emphasized mapping histories before planning, an innovation not attempted before. One is introduced to the concept of a

‘performative landscape’, where any place is evaluated not as empty but in terms of its cultural and ecological content.

The reader is offered several conceptual models with real examples, like Edge city and the Seed Catalogue, to deal with urban intensification and spread. The seed catalogue is an interesting concept that provides various solutions to varieties of environments like wetlands, brownfields, and so on. The next section describes ideal cities, often small ones that may be real like Auroville or fictitious like Lilypond or simply metaphoric like a future eco-city, the possibility of which remains open.

The book has based itself on a large corpus of factual data, discussing actual planners and architects, real cities as examples and also contains relevant drawings and diagrams as illustrations. It contains historical material from the times of ancient cities to the very modern ones bringing in architects, planners and social thinkers ranging from Vitruvius, Le Corbusier, Howard, Henri Levebre, De Certeau and Marx, to give theoretical depth to the understanding of city planning. The ultimate goal of this book is about power and control and its message very clear; unless there is a synchronization of the top down and the bottom up perspectives, unless there is participation of masses and heed paid to their needs, no city planning can be successful. A dysfunctional city embodies both social and environmental disasters and is ultimately economically non-viable such that even in the interest of future viability, ecological urbanism is a way out and a solution worth considering.

The practicality of wedding technology to humanism, planning to the

human element is clearly demonstrated and makes this slim volume an important resource for both analytical and for applied purposes.

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FILM AND VIDEO REVIEWS

Volveremos. Director **Ignacio Fradejas-García**. 2008. 57 minutes. B & W and Colour. Distributed by Nomadas em Acción. DVD

Who is the director of *Volveremos*? The question is not what is his name, but who is he? This is the truly valuable unsolved mystery that this Spanish documentary traces. With a precarious camera, far from the standard long-distance shooting of televised football, it raises some atypical questions about this spectacular sport.

‘Who would you be if you were not a soccer player?’ At the beginning of the film, the unknown filmmaker presents this question to the young players of the Real Oviedo FC team. It is a key question because it allows us to escape from the standard ‘Phoenix-like’ portrayals so common to current sports journalism that present epic histories of teams and players who are reborn from ashes to conquer a glorious destiny.

They would not be athletes if they could not manifest on the field the desire of their fans to rise and be reborn. If they cannot fulfil this desire, they would have to return to the limbo of everyday life and other professions as: plumbers, students, salesmen, computer repairmen... What would have they been if they had not been caught by the almost religious power of this ‘serious game’. The film relates the players’ responses to their subjectivities. In their everyday life they experience the feeling that they would not be athletes if they could not embody this myth.

We gradually discover that the camera has different communicative aims. Although every film has an audience, the

camera in *Volveremos* does not speak to a specific category: not everything is portrayed on the screen. Or perhaps is it? The answer to the urgent question behind the images remains the film’s central focus. The ‘non-professional’ camera seems to become more and more intimate and affected by players experiences. It announces a successful outcome for this football team, a rebirth that seems to have been foretold.

But the question ‘who is the director?’ remains to be answered. It seems this is what the director wants to tell us. His aim is reached only partially, but the camera is intimate enough to focus on the old — from an anthropological and philosophical point of view — question of alterity. ‘Who’ is always a confused space. The camera intersects the director’s individuality to examine collective agencies related to heteronomic epic narrations. Thus, these moving images allow a radical distancing, and propose original paths for communication. Not everything is a screen. The camerawork in *Volveremos* shows that there is something behind it. Maybe it only wants to tell us what the director’s life would be like ‘if he was not a soccer player’.

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Dell’arte della guerra (On the Art of War). Directed by **Silvia Luzi** and **Luca Bellino**. 2012. 85 minutes. Distributed by Lab 80 Film, Indieair Films, Tfilm.

Prologue. The documentary begins with a warning: ‘The historical INNOCENTI,

currently called INNSE, is about to close. The machinery will be dismantled. The buildings will be demolished'. Agitated camerawork arouses our attention, then becomes slow and blurry. Male voices begin narrating an adventure. Four former workers are occupying the factory, to fight against its dismantling. Images appear of the factory surrounded by policemen, union officials, journalists and local residents. The situation is tense. A narrator continues: 'We entered by car through the rear gate. We opened a window and climbed in silently'. Vincenzo Acerenza, Fabio Bottaferla, Luigi Esposito and Massimo Merlo are going to enter a 40-meter high crane to fight against the factory closing.

On the art of war. We are now in the ruins of an old factory with empty spaces and abandoned machines — interspersed with narration. The camera explores the inside of a dilapidated building. The story begins to unfold. The documentary advances, showing the events from various points of view. There is a perspective from the *outside*, that of the television media and the outside agents it presents. These images blend with footage captured by the filmmakers at the moment of the factory occupation. The film begins to recall the main events experienced by the principal characters — Enzo, Fabio, Luigi and Massimo — workers with thirty years on the factory floor. They begin their act of remembering by describing the support of the other workers, the mobilization of the residents of the region of INNSE, which was the only still-active factory in this industrial district of Milan and their increasing disillusionment with the union movement, over the past thirty years. The

audio-visual narration changes. We pass from initially imprecise images of faceless shapes to crisp, clear images of old working men walking in a decaying industrial area. The camera serves as a chronicler of workers' past experiences. The documentary advances both from a distance and from outside the old industrial district of INNSE, and from close-up and inside the old factory structure. Through the men's voices we enter the environment of oppression, marginality and poverty that engulf the lives of the region's workers. The factory closing reveals the intense absurdity of the senseless void it signifies for these workers, whose lives have been stolen each day by the owner. It is a war without truce, where the only end is the master's elimination. In this fight, with no deserters, workers present their detailed logistics. They discuss the art of war: the importance of surveillance in shifts, and the support of local residents, and the solidarity against the police. These issues shape the events in this workers' fortress in Milan.

Mounting an army. The documentary intensifies. The viewer realizes how little he or she knows about this history. This pre-declared war, which began fifteen months ago, is becoming more radical. The aim is to win, against the owner's interest, prevent the factory closing and save the jobs. The protagonists guide us through transformations in the contemporary Italian union movement. The worker's struggles conflict with the political agenda of the local unions, the state associations and national federations and follow other paths. At one moment the audio-visual narrative plays with the contrast of the action taking place in the *world-time*, which is always in

colour, and that of actions recalled in *lived-time* which are always in black and white. The audio-visual narrative then provides details of the efforts of the *worker's social army* and its confrontation, on the 'factory-floor' with their enemies, the owner.

Defending the territory. The narrative takes another turn. The documentary goes back in time to try to return to the events through these workers' voices. We pass through the events before this final struggle by Enzo, Fabio, Luigi and Massimo. The taking of the factory by the four workers, through its tunnels, which recalls their previous efforts to keep the plant productive without the presence of the owner. The declarations are made from inside a totally destroyed factory space, in empty warehouses strewn with rubble. There is only one bench from which the men talk about the past events. We learn about their intimate relationship with the machines they operated and tried to save. Their attachment to the factory involved a defence of the machinery and of their working-class identity.

Mounting strategy. Images appear of a large empty space circled by new real estate developments. Cranes and machinery work the land. We gradually accompany the reflections of the men about their picketing of the territory of the INNSE factory for 15 long months and the situation of abandonment and lack of care with which they were treated most of the time by authorities: 'the months seemed like years', said one of the men. This is what led to the occupation of the factory grounds. We briefly return to the televised images of the four workers shut into the crane at the factory. They are joined by

images of the filmmakers who accompany them and record the events in ethnographic time. For the characters in our story, many things were lost in the view of those 'from the outside'. But what is interesting is that, by constructing an audio-visual narration, those 'from the outside' served the proposal for a collective workers action that sought to weaken the all-powerful vision of the owner. And this, they affirm, is not a myth, but a fact!

Epilogue: After 8 days and 7 nights, Enzo, Fabio, Luigi and Massimo win the cancelation of the operation to dismantle the INNSE factory. *At the end of the summer, the factory doors reopen and the workers go back to work.* Images of celebration at the factory doors conclude the adventure of our 4 characters.

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Cast in India. Directed by **Natasha Raheja**. 2014. 26 minutes, Colour. Produced by The Program in Culture and Media, Department of Anthropology, New York University.

The film synopsis reads, 'Iconic and ubiquitous, thousands of manhole covers dot the streets of New York City. Enlivening the everyday objects around us, this short documentary is a glimpse of the working lives of the men behind the manhole covers in New York City. How

does the built infrastructure of New York City conceal the labor infrastructure on which it stands'. The film is a brilliant take on a miniscule and ignored fact that tells a very interesting story. Who could imagine that a manhole cover could take us from the streets of New York to the streets of Kolkata and then to a factory where you discover, 'Oh! So this is where it came from!' Indeed, it makes you wonder. In *Cast in India*, Natasha Raheja raises questions about disparate conditions that shape the geographies of production of everyday urban objects.

The film travels from New York to the Howrah railway station in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal State in eastern India. It also travels from bright expensive shoes to broken slippers, from dust-free streets to dust galore and through the wiring of a production and marketing network that uses cheap third world labor, to hide the filth of the developed nation.

Once you reach the factory you are introduced to laborers working in dust, smoke and dirt. Two women are seen brushing the dust from a manhole cover without masks to cover their faces. The material in every mold is compressed by the tired feet of the men. They almost look like they are dancing on each mold. The truck loads of iron ore are emptied by the hands of laborers who then tie a double padding on their head to sustain the weight of the baskets of iron that they take to the factory. The molten iron ore looks like molten lava from a volcano. The hot ore is steered to the molds by bare hands. Sparks from a blowtorch fly all around, although no eyes are protected. The workers sing folksongs of their distant lands while doing this hazardous work. They decide to

protest for higher wages, but to no avail. They earn only Rs. 7.20/-per metric ton. Laborers are seen sleeping, joking, laughing, singing and remembering their loved ones. With the shift over, they put on clean clothes to go out into this beautiful world with a wish to go to America, whose manholes are covered by the lids they literally make with their own hands.

The camera movement captures subtle expressions, providing a glimpse of the humanity of workers who would otherwise be camouflaged along with the iron, the molds and the casts. It is a very unique film with an innovative and brilliant take on the production cycle. It is a must see for policy makers, economists and sociologists to understand labor relations in the new world.

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A Media Archaeology of Boston. Directed by **Jesse Shapins and Olga Touloumi**. 2013. 120 minutes. B & W and Colour. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources. DVD

This film offers two hours of video clips, takes from films, television, documentaries and soundscapes about Boston and its metropolitan region from 1904 to 2011. The media archeology of Boston is conducted through carefully selected video and audio material beginning with a short film clip portraying Boston in 1773 (*Johnny Tremain and the Sons of Liberty*, by Robert Stevenson, 1956). It concludes by accompanying Peter, a collector, back alley browser, urban archaeologist and trash picker. In between is a collection of 28 clips, some of them complete, others

just brief selections. The archival research is impressive. The directors had assistance from the Harvard Film Archive, the New England Phonographers Union, Northeast Historic Film, WGBH's Media Library and Archives and the personal archive of Lawrence Rosenblum and others.

The film has no clear topic or chronological order, yet subtle threads link one scene with another, digging up essential issues of metropolitan Boston as seen by the authors, Jesse Shapins and Olga Touloumi. It presents landmarks that shape the image of the city; selections from televised news broadcasts of the 1970s about the Boston school desegregation busing crisis, mob violence, and the neighborhood known as the 'Combat Zone' when it was a red-light district. There are crowded Boston streets in 1906 — a brief glimpse from *Jordan Marsh Magazines*, including a reminiscence about Revere Beach. There are scenes of a run with Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone in 2004, while he presents his city and opening clips from the 1977 documentary 'Neighbors' about the South End Urban Renewal Project. It has scenes of the Boston Harbor Islands in 1969 and a presentation of how Boston was looking forward to the year 2000 in 1981. Brief blank images carry sounds of the Boston harbor, an escalator, the commotion of Union Square and the Deer Island Sewage Treatment Plant (2011).

This is not an easy to watch conventional documentary. It is an intriguing film that allows viewers to construct their own understanding of the city history through media archaeology. After viewing all the clips, you do not have a one-sided, unified image of the city and

its suburbs. I wonder how this film would be perceived by a person who does not have direct knowledge of Boston. Those interested in urban studies or the visual representation of cities will find ample and interesting material to watch if they accept the experimental dimension of the film. There are many ways of watching this film; it is up to the viewer to decide how to relate to it. I found the film interesting, surprising and thought provoking. The Boston I have learned about is not the one even a curious visitor would find, yet it presents a composite of pictures of the main trends that have transformed the city.

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The Shebabs of Yarmouk. Directed by **Axel Salvatori-Sinz**, 2013. 78 minutes. Colour, Distributed by DOCKS 66.

The Shebabs (which means youth in Arabic) are a group of 3rd generation Palestinian youths, male and female, who live at the large refugee camp of Yarmouk, in the suburbs of Damascus, Syria. Director Axel Salvatori-Sinz, who has studied anthropology, conducted 3 years of sporadic participant observation in an intimate space of the Shebabs, on the roof of an ugly building, sharing with them a love for filming and performing arts. Through the film we experience the youths' precarious lives, lack of citizenship and suffering from discrimination in their efforts to meet their basic needs for dignified work, education and quality of life. Because the protagonists are Palestinian refugees without full

citizenship in Syria, they suffer social exclusion, yet must follow strict Syrian government rules. Both young and old face conflicts caused by lacking citizenship and limited opportunities. The young males are nevertheless obliged to serve long periods of military service in the Syrian army.

The narrative of the film is based on the eternal dilemma of youth, trying to fulfil their dreams, and meet demands of family and community. From the first moments of the film we realize that this dilemma involves the difficult decision to either leave or remain in the camp. When they must decide whether to enter the army or not, we follow their discussions and poetic discourses regarding their dreams, expectations, conflicts and impasses. The director, using images from significant moments of everyday life, as well as scenes of dialog between boys and girls, youth and elderly, succeeds in reminding us of the traumas of the Palestinians' exile from their homelands, and presents their dilemmas as those of simple human beings living in the camp. Through the lives of the protagonists we discover the personal difficulties of Palestinians refugees before the Syrian revolution began in 2011.

Filming from the interior to the exterior, or from windows of surrounding buildings, and using images of the sky are the main techniques the director uses to overcome severe censorship and supervision by the Syrian intelligence service. This filming option becomes one of the main poetic devices that metaphorically expresses the need of these young people to 'fly' out from the camp.

However difficult the life of these youth might seem in the film before the revolution began, we remain speechless

before the drama of recent events, 4 years after the end of the shooting in 2011. By 2015 2/3 of the Yarmouk camp was destroyed and 90 per cent of its people no longer live there. One of the protagonists was tortured to death by the regime, because of his satirical critique against authoritarian rule. The rest have fled to various parts of the world.

It is no accident that this poetic film about the dreams and expectations of youth has impressed and captured audiences in documentary film festivals and won various awards. The film is profoundly touching as a fragmented, poetic and meaningful ethnographic attempt, but also serves as an archive of material that depicts former ways of life of the Palestinians in Syria. As a fascinating, poetic and ironic anthropological narrative, the film evokes the serious social consequences of civil war, disaster and the huge wave of Syrian refugees.

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J. M. Mondésir. Directed by **Alice Colomer-Kang**. 2012. 24 minutes. Colour. Distributed by Le Fresnoy – Studio National des Arts Contemporains.

J.M. Mondésir focuses on an account of the tragic death of Georges Mondésir, who was also known as Jean-Michel and Jimmy. Surfing between the genres of fiction and documentary, Colomer–Kang forcefully engages viewers in paradoxical *ritournelles*. To grasp better our attention and generate a specific form of subjectivity, she uses a style of repetition of the discourse about police brutality of the

inhabitants of the garden city of Butte–Rouge in Châtenay–Malabry, France while continuously playing with a multiplicity of images — some of them distorted.

What is most striking is the sense of indifference the video seems at first to embody. The contrast between the images and the audio provokes uncertainty and uneasiness. Who is watching whom and to what effect? One may even ask if there is even a point in watching the ‘spectacle’. When the film opens we hear police sirens in the background while we discover a covered corpse surrounded by a familiar crowd: police officers, medics and ‘modern’ spectators, some of whom are recording the scene on their telephones. However, the theater of the absurd does not suffer, since death does not move everyone in the same way. Close to the corpse, yet ‘so’ far, Colomer–Kang makes a point of implying that death expects nothing less than life: nearby, some adults are playing with or watching their children in the playground. We even see a girl playing with what seems to be part of the gold–tinted blanket placed on Jean–Michel’s body. Nonetheless, amid the noise lies a cherished silence that is a decisive part of the cast.

Going against what may be expected of a film dealing with one more death from police brutality, and that of an individual suffering from mental illness, *J.M. Mondésir*, creates both a sense of exteriority and interiority that questions an unknown. Yet, this unknown is increasingly ordinary, it is the effort to erase any kind of singularity with warlike methods ‘if need be’. The main question the film raises concerns basic human relations. It is an interrogation that is

perfectly depicted in a tense scene where two men who are afraid, angry and dismayed seemingly cross paths. While they both exit the screen without an expected encounter, we are left in an oppressive landscape. Despite this sense of confinement, Colomer–Kang presents surreptitiously an alternative scene with a tree. This is probably her abstract way of emphasizing that life always has potential. Hope, joy and renewal creep in.

J. M. Mondésir is an important production that can be of interest to anyone. Its seeming weakness is probably its true strength, as its sluggish pace pulls us slowly but certainly out of the ordinary and invites us to think outside the box for 24 minutes. While Colomer–Kang provides minimal information about the case, her use of theatrical devices, the overlapping and flow of images, as well as the camera’s movements, emphasize that the location does not really matter, since the central themes of the film are life and hope. What matters is for you and I to think and live as a more concrete ‘us’. Insanity percolates in all of life and in all of us. Just as it did in Jean–Michel’s life. As a celebration of life and hope, the film concludes with a gentle response to Jean–Michel’s last words ‘Je vous aime les enfants’. ‘He’s not gone! He’s not gone!’ scream the kids.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Conference

**Commission on Urban Anthropology
(CUA), International Urban Symposium
(IUS) and Centre for Social
Anthropology and Computing (CSAC)**

Purposeful Agency and Governance: A Bridgeable Gap

Venue & Date: University of Kent,
Canterbury, U.K. Wed. 15th – Fri. 17th June
2016

Convenors: Giuliana B. Prato, Italo Pardo
and Michael Fischer

With specific reference to urban settings, this Conference aims to contribute to increasing our capacity to understand important processes of agency in a worldwide context marked by a growing gap between citizenship and governance.

The Conference will stimulate reflection on the interplay between personal morality and civic responsibility, and between value and action. Anthropologists, and ethnographers more generally, have demonstrated the moral and cultural complexity of individual action and the ways in which misplaced or instrumentally selective moralities in policy and in the production and enforcement of the law encourage exclusion and widen the gap between governance and the governed across the world. They have demonstrated the impact of rules and regulations inspired by concepts that are ambiguous, elusive, biased towards those in power, or badly defined or impossible to apply, thus

compounding the perceived weak legitimacy of governance and the law in the broader society.

Ethnographic research has a unique contribution to make to our capacity to understand important processes of agency and the ways in which agency is capable of influencing the system (Philip Abrams) and encouraging good governance that takes into account the needs and expectations of agency. Anthropological analysis of diverse ethnographies has brought to light the significance in people's life and to society more broadly of a *strong continuous interaction* between the material and the non-material (Pardo). Parallel to this, new anthropological research over the past decade has focused on the properties of the 'digital society' with respect to how people experience external changes, how they organize themselves and, in turn, enact new change (Fischer).

We propose that it is important to document how governance is evolving and to understand the extent to which public policies might pose obstacles to agents' full participation in society. Entrepreneurialism — intended in the broad sense of an agent's capacity to evaluate and access the available resources — makes one example of the many ways in which people may deal with these obstacles, motivating many simply to 'work around' them by becoming or remaining a part of 'informal' areas and relations; that is, identifying 'gaps' in policy and working within the gaps.

The conference welcomes ethnographically-based contributions that identify the main gaps and obstacles related to the development of purposeful

agency and the normative changes needed to encourage, rather than frustrate, agency and good governance, intended as governance that promotes and makes the best of the local resources and styles of citizenship.

Abstracts of 250 words should be submitted by 8th January 2016 to the Convenors:

i.pardo@kent.ac.uk; g.b.prato@kent.ac.uk;
m.d.fischer@kent.ac.uk.

Abstracts must be sent as a Word Document. Proposals must also include a short (100 word) Bio including affiliation and relevant publications, as well as e-mail addresses of all author/s. Authors will be notified of acceptance of their abstract for presentation by 5th February 2016.

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a Special Volume of the Series Palgrave Studies in Urban Anthropology and in the peer-reviewed journal Urbanities.

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Panels convened under the auspices of the Commission on Urban Anthropology:

Panel 346 - *Women's reproductive illness: creating life on the plateau.*

(Convenors: Amlan Kanti Ray & Pramathes Dasmahapatra)

Panel 385 - *Changing Scenario of Urban Poor: Emerging Economic Opportunities.*

(Convenor: Sumita Chaudhuri)

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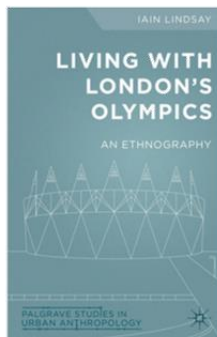
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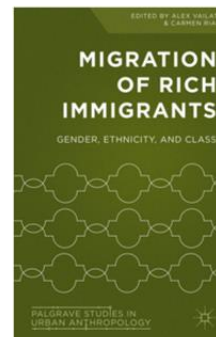
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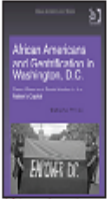


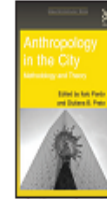





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