Afterword: Class, State, Violence

Neil Smith *City University of New York*

In 1909, William Morris Davis, Harvard physical geographer and central figure in the founding of the discipline in the United States, extolled one of his ex-students: "Why don't you take a look at cities. No-one seems to know what they are." In those days geography and anthropology, among other fields, were still in the process of separating into recognizable disciplines, and while geography and especially sociology did begin a cross-disciplinary social scientific focus on cities in subsequent decades, it took till the 1970s for anthropology to get cities in focus, with the important exception of the Copperbelt urban studies in the 1940s and 1950s. This was no simple case of backwardness but rather a question of disciplinary choice and the academic and cross-national divisions of labour being worked out between and within different fields. If geography was the premier discipline of empire in Britain, anthropology took up that role, albeit quite differently, in the U.S. where, with the exception of indigenous populations, it largely ceded the North American and European terrain, where the vast majority of urbanites then lived, to sociology. In North America, the interdisciplinary focus of the so-called Chicago School, spanning sociology, geography and human ecology, was the driving intellectual force after the 1920s. Beginning in the 1960s, that focus broadened significantly as urban issues were placed firmly on the political agenda, and despite a pervasive if highly varied anti-urbanism in many parts of the world, the "right to the city," as Lefebvre provocatively called it in 1968, is a central political and intellectual issue. This collection of essays is testimony not just to how far anthropology has come, nor just to the inextricably interdisciplinary nature of urban research today (clustered in part around ethnography as well as political economy), but also to the changed conditions, processes and forms of urban development.

Four of the five essays in this collection are from Asia and the fifth is from the Mexican border with the U.S. This is significant because it represents less a due obeisance to politically correct geographies of research than

a tacit recognition that the cutting edge of urban social change no longer lies so clearly with the Manchesters and Chicagos, the New Yorks and Parises, Londons and Berlins of the world, but rather with the extraordinary metropolises of Asia, Latin America and Africa. There, in extraordinary variety, we find the new cities of 21st-century capitalism, stretching from Lagos to Dubai, São Paolo to Shanghai, and many points in between. This urban revolution—spanning the physical and social transformation of cities internally, their role in the global political and cultural economy, and their function as crucibles of revolt—has been bound up with the most massive industrial revolution the world has seen, namely the industrialization of East, Southeast and South Asia since the 1960s. It might be tempting to rephrase this argument according to the problematic of neo-liberal urbanism and its discontents, but this nomenclature of neo-liberalism is already so generalized that despite its political utility its analytical value is increasingly blunted. And in practice, desperate calls since 2007, eventually heeded, that various national states intervene in the unfolding global financial crisis amount to a rejection of neo-liberal ideologies *from within*. Rather, it seems to me that three basic themes, all of course interrelated—and not in any way divorced from the contours of neo-liberalism—emerge from these papers. In many ways these themes mark the anthropology of the contemporary urban transition: class (co-constituted with other kinds of oppressed social difference); the state; and violence.

Although its neo-liberalization after 1978 came later than many others', China's industrial revolution has been second to none, and as Tan and Ding suggest, the resulting political, cultural and economic geography of urban expansion has played havoc with any clear distinctions between urban and rural. Previously rural outskirts have become urbanized, as one would expect, but previously marginal villages have also become urbanized in essence if not in official designation ("villages in the city"); other rural areas have become industrialized on the outskirts without being fully integrated into the metropolis while others are functionally rural yet well inside designated urban areas. A number of official land use, residential and work classifications crosscut the socio-economic and socio-geographic processes of urbanization. Working through the contradictions and chaos of such rapid change and capitalization in Quanzhou in Eastern China, this paper emphasizes the power of the state as arbiter of rural versus urban designation and its uniquely aggressive pursuit of capitalist urbanization. If China today represents neo-liberalism with a state face, this gives the lie to ideologies of state-noninterventionism that floated neo-liberalism in the first place. It is presumably only a matter of time before the Chinese state rewrites Lenin to the effect that "capitalism is the highest stage of communism." Meanwhile, violence—the violence of the state against people's daily lives and means of well-being—is also an implicit theme in this piece, and it is worth emphasizing that the rural-urban axis of Chinese industrialization has become potentially the most intense fissure of class struggle in the world today. The Chinese government conceded that in 2004, there were some 74,000 "mass incidents, or demonstrations and riots," and that special anti-terrorist police units were being established in 36 cities to deal with such revolts (French 2005).

Violence does not always come at the end of a barrel or baton, and in the context of Mumbai, Whitehead traces the way in which the capitalist real estate market disguises the violence of mass eviction as rational. But the workings of the market through the formation of a rent gap were not themselves sufficient to secure the "class cleansing" of more than 600 acres of old mill and residential land, and the state by various means, legislative and corrupt, has eagerly stepped in as the catalyst of a whole new "property-based regime of accumulation." There are echoes here of Lefebvre's suggestion that urbanization comes to supplant industrialization. Just as in China, the role of a highly powerful state is absolutely crucial in this process, not just to facilitate the economic transfer of land and property to global developers but to execute the revanchist policies that evict the area's workers and their families, and keep them evicted. The barrel and the baton are ever available. The remake of Mumbai's textile mill lands, together with adjacent and nearby chawls (working-class slums), into condos, parks, restaurants and shopping malls represents a class grab of valuable urban space. It portends a scale of gentrification—a far wider and deeper class grab of urban space than was envisaged under the quaint, early residential definitions of this process—that dwarfs anything imaginable in North America or even in Europe (Smith 2002).

The landscapes of Quanzhou and the Mumbai mill lands are palpably real in these essays, and Nonini addresses this question of space and social power very directly. Some in geography have moved to celebrate culture as the essence of politics just as many anthropologists have distanced themselves from culture as a discipline-defining concept, and have in turn refocused, in part, around questions of space and place. Nonini's revisit to Burkit Mertajam, Central Province of Wellesley, in northwest Malaysia jousts a longstanding and ongoing ethnography with a political economic analysis of the region's historical geography. Here too the story is about capital

accumulation in favour of the elite classes and yet these classes have their own ethnic divisions concerning control over and access to the state. The state and state-supported repression of an ethnic Chinese working class was matched by the reciprocal success of ethnic Chinese capitalists who both moved capital offshore, or emigrated, and weakened their connections to an ethnically defined community in favour of class coalition with the postcolonial Malay ruling class. Many travelled the "dark road" of drug smuggling and purveyance to make money and boost their class positions, etching out an ambivalent attitude toward the state and a transnational "crypto-geography." Despite the social intricacies, overall, class–ethnic violence in one place is matched by a very different if partial, ambivalent and never total class-based acceptance of "ethnic" minorities among the elite classes.

In all of these essays, there is a sense of the progressive encompassment, production and social reproduction of space by the state, and in this respect Newberry's discussion of the kampung of Yogyakarta displays clear resonance with the earlier essays. She also insists on the deeply home-made ingredients of place. The emphasis on the role of kampung as reservoirs of labour and social reproduction for the wider economy as well as a source of petty capitalist production is undoubtedly correct, and recalls sociologist Gans's much earlier analysis of *The Urban Villages* (1965) which offered a community study of the Italian American enclave in Boston's North End. Precisely because any evolutionary stage model of urban change whereby Asia simply follows some pre-established European or North American pattern of urban industrialism is a non-starter, it would have been revealing to compare the Yogjakarta kampung with Gans's community ethnography. The emphasis here on labour and its social reproduction is especially fertile—an advance on Gans—as is the insistence that the kampung enclaves are interwoven with the global economy. The in-between class position of petty commodity producers, often mobilizing family labour, is also crucial.

Yet this makes even more curious Newberry's epithetical dismissal of "standard marxian notions" of class, and the resort to a series of dubious dichotomies. It is not clear, for example, why it makes sense to declare Export Processing Zones non-urban except as a rhetorical device for marginalizing scholarship on labour and economic geography in such places. More pointedly, even though later analyses in this paper assert the intimate connection between "capitalist" and "non-capitalist" work processes and social relations, the narrative, in order to dismiss certain analyses while embracing others, posits just such a spurious diagnostic precision concerning class. Thus in volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx explicitly raises the figure of the "hybrid labourer" who is simultaneously capitalist and worker (see also Smart and Smart 2005). In fact, this paper usefully reconsiders the dilemma raised by McGee (1964, 1976) in the 1960s and 1970s, on the basis of empirical work in the same region, concerning the life, labour and significance of what he called the "proto-proletariat." McGee's language perfectly captures the class interstices of kampung and it would have been useful to match these kampung ethnographies vis-à-vis McGee's findings. In retrospect, was he too optimistic thinking that the in-between status of street hawkers and petty producers, whom he also understood as integrally linked to the global economy, would in time escape into the proletariat proper? Or have generations of migrants to the cities indeed passed into the working class while a constant rural to urban migration continually refuels the enclaves of the urban village? Amidst the stability of the kampung, what are the stories of mobility that render its real and imagined boundaries permeable? This of course connects back directly to the case of Quanzhou and indeed the other papers too.

The class and gender violence done to workers in the global economy, with the complicity of the state, is the explicit focus of Labrecque's account of the femicide recorded in Mexico, since the mid 1990s. For Labrecque, the murder of some 442 women in Ciudad Juárez between 1993 and 2005—most working class, 10% of them maquiladora workers, many abducted from the city's public spaces, their bodies turning up in dumps and wastelands—happens where transnational corporate exploitation and state disengagement intersect with a culture of misogyny and the classed and gendered danger of produced public space. Exploiting cheap labour while paying few if any local taxes, transnational corporations are drawn to the maquiladora zone for its access to workers from throughout Mexico and Central America, yet they refuse to provide even the barest minimum in social services or infrastructure for the burgeoning metropolis and its inhabitants. Both the Mexican and the U.S. state deny any responsibility for the support of largely migrant workers and vital social services, while the former benefits from remittances to the country's south and the latter gains cheap exports to the mammoth economy to the north. The result is an "urban nightmare."

The state, social violence, and class (which is gendered and raced from the start), are the social markers of neoliberal capitalism, from Ciudad Juárez to Quanzhou, Mumbai to Burkit Mertajam and Yogyakarta. If an updated Dickensian indictment of capitalist squalor will be written for the latest convulsion of global industrial urbanism, it

might well be set in one of these places (cf. Mehta 2004). Equally, there are myriad other cities, towns and regions that would yield commensurate stories however different in detail. The major question may well be whether "northern" intellectuals are receptive to the global message these stories have to tell. It is challenging enough to have New York, London and Tokyo displaced as the models of the global city, but a sober recognition of the sources and complicity of state, class and violence in the world's largest (and not so large) cities flies somewhat tangentially to contemporary poststructuralist sensibilities.

The power of discourse analysis is very real, but insofar as it differs from the critique of ideology, it focuses on the mechanisms, strategies and technologies of power more than the rooted social interests that generate both these mechanisms and discourses of power. It is comparatively easy to deconstruct the silences, omissions, and volitions that render maps, for example, such powerful political instruments. It may be quite transparent what is going on when Soviet Cold War maps shuffle towns around while U.S. Geological Survey maps of the same era may simply omit, rename or white-out military facilities. The making of maps involves multiple layers of irreducibly political choices, and so as Nonini suggests here, as regards a transport planning map for Malaysia's Central Province of Wellesley, "the image, like the word, preceded the deed" (the making of the map). To leave the question here, however, suggests the supremacy of "the image" and "the word," which invites a certain idealism insofar as image and word are certainly connected to social practice but are not themselves granted a specific social origin. They might seem to appear de novo. In the making of maps, of course, the power of image and word are not unhinged from social interest, either of the cartographer or of the state or the corporate organization sponsoring the making of the map. The raison d'être of the critique of ideology is not just to point out, as discourse analysis so ably does, the silences and volitions in word and image—the *mechanisms* of power—but to illuminate these discursive productions as emanating, in however complex ways, from explicit social interests.

This is less an academic attenuation than a practical insistence. With the global financial meltdown in 2008, the intensification of class exploitation, race and gender oppression, national protectionism, and outright social, political and economic violence will only increase. Whatever new mechanisms of power are invented along the way, the most pressing question will be to render transparent the connections between these new mechanisms and the specific social interests they variously advance and disguise, and the forms of social struggle and revolt that are also likely to intensify. This is simultaneously a theoretical and ethnographic quest (cf. Narotzky and Smith 2006). With its simultaneous commitment to ethnography and social theoretical analysis, recognizing too the importance of political economy, urban anthropology is propitiously placed to dissect and reconstruct the kinds of urban transformations that will come with a post-neoliberal world. It is impossible to predict what that world will look like but it will certainly involve a sophisticated theoretical trafficking between global and other scales—not just the global urban nexus but the importance too of nation states and neighbourhoods, and indeed households.

To respond to William Morris Davis's 1909 exhortation, therefore, it seems necessary that we always "take a look at cities" afresh because cities are changing in the crucible of global national and local change and because our ideas are always anxiously catching up with "what cities are." These essays are valuable contributions to that task.

Neil Smith, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016, U.S.A. E-mail: nsmith@gc.cuny.edu.

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