

ANTIPODE

Introduction: Grammars of Urban Injustice

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Introduction

While long a preoccupation among scholars of law and social and political philosophy, the theme of social justice is generally considered to have been brought centrally into geographical debate with David Harvey's 1973 book *Social Justice and the City*. Reasoning that "principles of social justice had some relevance for the application of spatial and geographical principles to urban and regional planning" (Harvey 1973: 9), and taking inspiration from his deepening engagement with Marxism (Harvey 2000), Harvey aimed to transcend the notion of distributive justice dominant among liberal formulations (Rawls 1971) in favour of a revolutionary socialist conception underlining the relations *between* production *and* distribution in bourgeois society and questioning the social power of money as the only measure of value (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996). This involved "a move from a predisposition to regard social justice as a matter of eternal justice and morality to regard it as something contingent upon the social processes operating in society as a whole" (Harvey 1973: 15). In thereby relating what had hitherto been a relatively abstract approach to morality and ethics so closely to the production of place, and locating his analysis in his adopted city of Baltimore, *Social Justice* is considered a "path-breaking exploration of urban land use, the problem of ghetto formation, and the circulation of surplus value within urban economies" (Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1996: 2). And if his 1969 *Explanation in Geography* had – by his own admission – been shy to confront a 'real world' where political temperatures had begun simmering over the social wreckage unfolding in cities across the United States vis-à-vis deindustrialization and the displacements trailed by 'urban renewal', then *Social Justice* captured the mood, inspiring radical investigations into the uneven urban geography of housing, jobs, wealth and poverty, social services, violence, racism, and community action to name a few.

The theoretical and conceptual perspectives through which urban geographers understand processes of injustice and justice may have shifted and diversified over the decades since Harvey's foundational intervention, but the imperative to expose how processes of urban injustice entrench inequality and immiserate much of urban life has certainly intensified. Debates on, for example, the gating, splintering, gentrifying, and militarizing of cities, or on processes of land grab, informalization, revanchism, punitive urbanism, accumulation-by-dispossession, or that erode the nature of 'public' space and sociality (e.g. Baviskar 2003; Graham 2009; Harvey 2008; Kohn 2004; Murray 2013; Smith 1996; Wacquant 2009), have all armed us with important tools through which we might reflect upon conceptualizing and engaging a more *Just City* (Fainstein 2010; Soja 2010): one designed for the good of people rather than the profits of rapacious rentiers

and distanced investors (Brenner et al, 2009). The six papers comprising this collection all resoundingly echo this rich heritage of deploying explanatory concepts that reveal the processes through which urban injustices are produced. However, as we shall see, they also submit important notes of caution about what our conceptions of injustice conceal, and, moreover, argue that they are handled with a care to their limits and operation alongside other, perhaps more just, forms of urbanism.

The collection is the product of a conference entitled *The Grammars of Urban Injustice* held at Durham University in May 2011, and it seeks to prompt critical reflection on the ways in which we organize and deploy our critical thinking and languages to elucidate and assess urban injustice and justice. At a time of intensifying urban inequality globally following the cynical opportunism of the political Right in the wake of the financial crisis and Great Recession, such critical reflection on the strengths and limits of those grammars as well as the continued generation of new and reimagined grammars could not be more pressing. Our grammars are key influences on the ways in which we think about, write about, and act in the world: it is just as important that they are questioned, reconsidered where necessary, and even cast aside where irrelevant, as it is that they are deployed at all. Our aim in this collection has been to critically reflect not just on the terms we use to describe, explain and contest injustice, but the ways of thinking that give rise to those terms. By using 'grammar', we are focusing in on these modes of reasoning and discourse that lead to a particular language of urban (in)justice. In a sense, perhaps grammar can be viewed as the infrastructure through which conceptual vocabularies are structured; and this includes not just our theoretical debates but the voices we encounter as urban researchers, especially – as this collection shows – the voices of social movements. Grammars, importantly, emerge as both concepts and forms of practice: indeed they are much about praxis as they are about debate over the merit of particular scholarly terms.

One primary aim in the workshop and special issue has been to show appreciation of the range of rich conceptual grammars of urban *injustice* while insisting that they are used in more precise ways and in relation to other processes that might exceed or trouble them. We also aimed to critically reflect on how the practice of urban geography actually generates grammars of urban *justice*. Not that the task of critical urban geographers should be limited to producing and debating concepts of urban *injustice*. While those concepts, of course, cast forth possibilities for alternatives as much as they explain the obscene inequalities of the urban present, that is not the same task as actively generating or redeploying *grammars of justice*. The papers here by Justus Uitermark and Walter Nicholls, and by Kurt Iveson, turn to the vocabularies of social movements for insight, inspiration and cautionary tales of how we might develop these grammars. And a critical lesson these papers have taken from social movements – and this resonates somewhat with May and Cloke's reflections – is their endeavor to articulate universal visions of justice through the hard work of forging and maintaining solidarities across difference. Notably, the two papers also look to historical analysis to demonstrate their arguments: indeed this appears to be a tendency cutting across the whole collection. This historical focus seems important to us. For it permits analysis of the emergence and indeed path dependency of grammars of justice. In a parallel way to how the other papers historically outline the emergence of a grammar of urban *injustice*

– the ways in which, for instance, a punitive language of homelessness was produced through a grammar of how the city should be governed and its different inhabitants valued or not – Uitermark and Nicholls and Iveson examine the grammar that gives rise to a language of universalist justice. They also show how difficult it can be to maintain that hard won grammar and the actors and processes over time and space that can begin to dismantle it, for instance through the co-option of the state.

From *Social Justice and the City* to a Punitive Urbanism

As intimated above, the intervening four decades since Harvey's path-breaking book have witnessed significant mutations in the academic and intellectual inquiry of justice and injustice in urban geography and also in the very fabric of cities themselves. In terms of inquiry, perhaps most notable has been a concern among many critical scholars that in focusing so squarely on capitalist relations of production, the perspectives of Harvey and other influential radical Marxists are deemed incapable of appreciating the 'intersectionality' of everyday experiences of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age and other forms of oppression and injustice (Fincher and Iveson 2012). There has also been growing appreciation of how the lived experiences of exploitation, domination, and other injustices are as much about *recognition* as material distribution, as pioneered in the work of Iris Marion Young (1990)¹: a 'politics of difference' where transformative struggles to gain voice, mobility, identity or sexual liberation intertwine with those relating to land tenure, housing, employment, or a living wage. Fincher and Iveson (2012: 233) reveal how the writings of Young and others have also influenced theory and practice in urban planning over the last two decades, with social justice and injustice being seen to "reside in the *processes* by which urban voices were heard and taken into account in decision-making". Citing Sandercock (2003), they contend that urban planning increasingly sees:

...questions of 'who gets what, where?' [being] embellished with further questions about 'who can do what, where?' which are focused on [the] social and cultural rights of diverse groups of urban inhabitants, as well as economic outcomes (Fincher and Iveson 2012: 234).

Here, then, the grammars through which we plot urban injustice were pivoting less exclusively around the undoubtedly key concerns of class – a term that for some has become less of a focus – and more around other concepts such as difference and injustice itself.

It is thereby important to appreciate how the points of reference for grammars of urban injustice have expanded both in terms of the social axes of difference and the spaces that they refer to. Those very landscapes now confronting planners and scholars of urban studies also vary dramatically from the early 1970s. Often influenced by 'common sense' neoliberal reason (Keil 2002; Peck 2010), city governments across the urban world have presided over spectacular shifts in land-use, not least a semi-privatization of downtown, a gentrification of inner city neighbourhoods, a fostering of 'creative' and 'financialized' quarters, and a designation of low tax zones. However, such endeavours to conjure new circulations of surplus value (cf. Harvey 1982) are intricately intertwined with intense struggles to maintain essential services amid deep fiscal retrenchment, sharpening socio-spatial inequality, rising levels of homelessness, and high anxiety over

crime and violence, often felt more acutely among women, seniors, and racialized minorities (Graham and Marvin 2001; Wilson 2004; Watson 2009; Dorling 2010). There has been no shortage of concepts and metaphors with which to encapsulate these urban geographies and their implications for injustice. Particularly influential has been Mike Davis's (1990) expose of Los Angeles as a *Carceral* or *Fortress City* featuring a 'spatial apartheid' between rich and poor accentuated through a mushrooming of exclusive gated compounds, and his revelations about how urban design, architecture, and the LA police apparatus were being intricately assembled to enclose newly privatized 'public' spaces while effecting a brutalizing governmentality of the city's poor, especially homeless people.

As a grammar of injustice, and not just a set of terms for analysis, Davis's pioneering investigation opened new ways of seeing and thinking about analogous moments of economic and social injustice in other cities in the global north and south: a notable example being Teresa Caldeira's (2000) stunning portrayal of São Paulo as an intensely segregated *City of Walls* offering immeasurably divergent experiences of substantive citizenship. Others have been investigating the ownership of and control over land and property, highlighting how – armed with powers of 'eminent domain' – urban elites and state-orchestrated growth coalitions engage in accumulation-by-dispossession thereby displacing numerous people and communities, whether through gentrification, slum redevelopment, or in preparation for flagship events like the 2008 Beijing Olympics or the 2014 World Cup in Brazil (Blomley 2004; Slater 2006; Harvey 2008; McFarlane 2008; Ghertner 2012). Amid all this, the astonishing potency of law, and in turn, the analytical indispensability of legal geography becomes crucial (Blomley et al 2000). The sub-title of Don Mitchell's 2003 book, *Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, reveals his deep-seated concern about how, as part of their feverish exertions to hawk their 'revitalized' landscapes to potential investors, convention brokers, and tourists, many urban political regimes across the US have outlawed the very presence of homeless people from downtown streets. Mitchell posits further how such public space zoning and anti-homeless legislation designed to literally *banish* homeless people (Beckett and Herbert 2010) may be indicative of an emerging *post-justice city* (Mitchell 2001): one premised upon "a changing conception of citizenship which, contrary to the hard-won inclusions in the public sphere that marked the civil rights, women's and other movements in past decades, now seeks to re-establish exclusionary citizenship as just and good" (Mitchell 2003: 181-2).

Revealing similarly impassioned outrage at the systemic dispossession and merciless treatment of New York City's most vulnerable, Neil Smith (1996) introduced the concept *Revanchist City*.² It was used initially to delineate the increasingly harsh policing deployed by New York Police Department when patrolling a series of anti-gentrification protests and the ensuing eviction of protestors and homeless people from Tompkins Square Park in 1991, and, further, how this 'social cleansing' enabled a stretching of the gentrification frontier across Manhattan's Lower East Side. However, for Smith, the gentrification-homelessness arc of revanchism widened when in 1994 a newly elected Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, facing a £3.1 billion budget deficit, vowed to cut public services – especially welfare services to the city's poor, the construction of public housing, and

the public university system – while also instigating the now infamous Zero Tolerance Policing. It is in this context that:

Revanchism blends revenge with reaction. It represents a reaction against the basic assumption of liberal urban policy, namely that government bears some responsibility for ensuring a decent minimum level of daily life for everyone. That political assumption is now largely replaced by a vendetta against the most oppressed – workers and ‘welfare mothers’, immigrants and gays, people of color and homeless people, squatters, anyone who demonstrates in public (Smith 1998: 1).

This, too, is a grammar of urban injustice. More than just a vocabulary, Smith provided a way of thinking about urbanism that has had a truly global purchase. The debate on Urban Revanchism has circulated beyond New York, not least in disclosing the export of Zero Tolerance policing which constitutes a key reference point in the grammar of injustice (MacLeod 2002; Swanson 2007). This was also part of a wider grammar focusing on punitive forms of urbanism.

Some scholars have drawn on key ideas of Davis, Mitchell, Smith and others such as Loïc Wacquant (2009) to introduce the ‘punitive neoliberal city’ (Herbert and Brown 2006) and a ‘punitive urbanism’ (Dikeç 2006; Cochrane 2007; MacLeod and Johnstone 2012) as placeholders that serve both to encapsulate ways in which the orchestrators and defenders of a neoliberal urbanism punish and take revenge upon marginal urban groups, whether through incarceration or ‘interdictory’ architectures and technologies (Flusty 2001), and to connect processes of political economic transformation with forms of state aggression, outright violence and public intolerance: all of which can reframe the normative orders of policing and the legitimacy of who comes to represent ‘the public’ (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2009; Minton, 2009). In turn, when allied to what has seemingly been a deepening political authority and wider geographical reach of neoliberal reason – undoubtedly discredited but seemingly still dominant (Keil 2009; Peck et al 2010; Jessop 2010) – urban policy strategies appear to be directly or indirectly instilling mappings and spatial practices that enable the relatively well-heeled to evade the negative externalities of poverty and associated ‘risky spaces’ (Atkinson 2008) while also foreclosing scope for meaningful agonistic political engagement (Swyngedouw 2009). As a grammar of urban injustice, this focus on punitive urbanism continues to morph. In particular, it is necessary to reflect on whether punitive policing, reactionary political strategies, and a post-political landscape have been intensifying since the onset of the Great Recession after 2008 (Swyngedouw 2011; Peck 2012).

Nonetheless, certain contributions have surfaced to question the explanatory purchase and widespread applicability of these punitive and revanchist grammars of urban injustice. Some have interrogated the epistemological value of seemingly hyperbolic language such as ‘revanchism’ and an ostensible optical reluctance to appreciate the potentially emancipatory interstices of everyday urban life (Lees 2004; Judd 2005; DeVerteuil, 2006; Iveson 2007; Cloke et al 2010). Others have focused more on the scope for re-establishing and extending rights to the contemporary city (Purcell 2008; Mayer 2012). The six papers in this part-special issue significantly advance this research conversation. Each critically assesses the adequacy of certain vocabularies

that have been developed to describe and analyze various forms and expressions of urban injustice. And in doing so, they dissect the specificity and analytical value of key concepts and perspectives, while also, to some extent, endeavoring to multiply the vocabulary through which critical scholars think and write about injustices, and, indeed, how they might reflect upon contemplating, campaigning for, and actively constructing *Just Cities* (Fainstein 2010; Iveson 2011; Marcuse et al 2009; Soja 2010).

Questioning the ‘Punitive Trope’: Compassionate Urbanisms

The first two papers by Geoff DeVerteuil and Jon May and Paul Cloke offer sympathetic yet critical appraisals of what DeVerteuil labels the ‘punitive trope’ in recent debate on urban injustice. Drawing inspiration from Merrifield’s (2000) insightful essay on Leftist ‘dystopian urbanists’ and their seemingly perverse allure for reporting in lurid detail the most desperate of social conditions, DeVerteuil contends that, for all its qualities in acquainting us with scandalous instances of dispossession and of visibly poor and homeless people in particular, much high profile research has been narrowly focused on some of the most ‘spectacular logics of punitive’ and ‘social control’ measures – such as homeless sweeps and the closure of public spaces – and largely within US cities. He argues, further, that in drawing on these selective geographies while also engaging at times in highly emotive metaphors and rhetoric³, much research informed by the punitive trope makes it hard to uncover the geography of more ambiguous, if not indeed supportive, institutional infrastructures often working in ‘the shadow’ (Wolch 1990) of the official state apparatus, and which come to assume responsibility for vulnerable groups on the ground. In looking to overcome this purportedly ‘one-sided’ perspective and offer a more ‘expansive and tempered’ grammar, DeVerteuil develops upon an emerging literature which confronts an “assertion of all-encompassing punitiveness” (e.g. DeVerteuil et al 2009; Cloke et al 2010) with a view to appreciate the *co-existence* – or *co-dependence* – of compassionate policies and institutional supports that run alongside those of a more recognizably punitive disposition. Here, we are encouraged to think about what our grammars of urban injustice, as ways of thinking about urbanism, actively *prevent* us from seeing and examining. Again, the challenge here is not so much with the terms themselves, but the dominant modes of thought – their grammar – that inflects how we think about urbanism and change.

In prising open this conceptual space, DeVerteuil draws on his extensive work on the voluntary sector, revealing its role as a tripartite site of ‘abeyance/punitiveness, care/support, and sustenance’. His paper provides two case studies. The first concerns the geography of harm reduction and safe injection sites (SISs) designed to reduce the most immediate dangers and vulnerabilities related to alcohol or drug addiction. DeVerteuil finds a significant global incidence of such sites to address health-related concerns, with a conspicuous presence in Europe (e.g. Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Zurich) as well as Australia and Canada: the SIS in Vancouver epitomizing a “more public, tolerant city, resist[ing] the more punitive and controlling logics of urban injustice” (DeVerteuil 2014: 9). Indeed, in such a context it is reasonable for DeVerteuil (ibid) to ask “what can constitute a more obstinate converse to punitive and/or controlling logics than policies that allow the safe injection of an illegal narcotic by a highly stigmatized and despised group?” And, interestingly, the discernible lack of SISs in American cities lends support to his earlier contention about the peculiarly US expression of a punitive

urbanism. The second case maps variations in voluntary sector care facilities in the inner areas of London, Los Angeles and Sydney. It reveals a fascinatingly inconstant geography whereby a range of homeless drop-in centres, soup runs, and street-based outreach organizations skilfully balance duties of care, compassion and sustenance to their clients while negotiating a local-state instructed decree to maintain abeyance: one such case involved a soup run originally located adjacent to King's Cross Station in London during the early 2009s but since rezoned to a marginal site following major upgrade in King's Cross site and facilities. It is in this sense that DeVerteuil's paper offers a conceptual route to relationally connect the punitive and the supportive.

An analogous critique of the supposedly ineluctable force of neoliberalism and appeal of a revanchist narrative is advanced by May and Cloke. They employ Gibson-Graham's (2006) notion of 'reading for difference' – a process aiming "to identify important strands of understanding that have been obscured or undervalued by previous interpretative orthodoxies" (May and Cloke 2014: 3) – to reconsider the geographies of homelessness in the UK. For inspiration, they draw on Murphy's (2009) account of managing homeless people in a putatively 'post-revanchist' San Francisco, where – as with many cities that have long been experiencing gentrification and downtown renovation – defense of the revitalized and pacified San Francisco has eventually become less hostile and reactionary; and with its *Care Not Cash* program introduced by Mayor Newsom in 2004, a more liberal, compassionate arm now operates alongside the strong-arm anti-homeless laws launched during the revanchist era. For May and Cloke, this 'messy middle ground' appears to parallel the raft of homeless policies introduced by the 1997-2010 New Labour government in the United Kingdom. Spearheaded by the *Homelessness Action Programme*, this government's ostensibly laudable endeavors to tackle homelessness and 'social exclusion' saw funding being channeled into a range of third sector organizations offering accommodation, drop-in services, food and soup runs (thereby, in turn, exerting a deeper governmental monitoring of and control over such organizations) while simultaneously funding a policing and legal infrastructure designed to tackle 'anti-social behavior' via a populist, arguably intensely punitive, grammar that often vilified homeless people and other vulnerable communities. But rather than seeing these two policies in contradistinction, May and Cloke deem it more constructive to hold in tension the necessary connections between the two.

They also note the significant toil of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in providing homeless services and a wider geography of care and compassion, and indeed in motivating a different kind of grammar of urban injustice. Recognizing how the work of FBOs can often be treated with suspicion among left-leaning researchers and practitioners – perhaps easily dismissed as 'moral selving' or 'proselytizing' – May and Cloke uncover interesting trends towards a 'postsecular rapprochement' between religious and secular interests in several fields of care, welfare and indeed protest (Cloke 2011). They reveal how, while many services are organized by FBOs, often with a specifically Christian ethos, most have also widened the opportunity for volunteers not necessarily motivated by religious faith. This thereby results in "a coming-together of citizens who might previously have been divided by differences in theological, political or moral principles" (Cloke and Beaumont 2013), but who are inspired by a 'crossover narrative' (Habermas 2008) or even a faith of *praxis* motivated by "a more general desire

‘to get stuck in and do something’ about social injustice” (May and Cloke 2014: 18). A quintessential characteristic of this is the “fusion between left-leaning secular idealism and religious hope whereby mutual action entertains a vision for what is currently invisible and seemingly impossible” (ibid): crucially, the authors conclude that the ethics and actions informing this postsecular praxis run counter to the punitive trope and quite appreciably, perhaps offering a more progressive response to problems of homelessness, and indeed a more hopeful lens and optimistic grammar with which to interpret urban (in)justice. Perhaps too it offers an example of what Barnett (2011) – in the spirit of Harvey – distinguishes as normative concepts of justice that derive from ‘worldly’ and ‘shared intuitions of injustice’ (as opposed to those derived philosophically and proposed epistemologically; see also Fincher and Iveson 2012), and which can:

open [...] radical perspectives to traditions of ethical thought which might appear less self-consciously ‘political’, but which are relevant here precisely because they develop a sense that the *feeling for justice* has sources other than a fully worked-out model of justice (Barnett 2011: 248).

Loretta Lees turns the focus toward housing and the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, inner South London. Completed in 1977, Aylesbury was then the largest public sector housing estate in Europe. But the period since – particularly following Mrs Thatcher’s governments ‘right-to-buy’ policy – has witnessed council housing shifting in status, many estates being downgraded, lacking investment, and subjected to ‘territorial stigma’ (MacLeod and Johnstone 2012; Slater 2013; Wacquant 2007). It is a context which helps us understand how, by the mid-1990s, Aylesbury was enduring serious social distress. Lees reveals how the estate was catapulted on to the political stage when Prime Minister Tony Blair visited shortly after his inauguration: a moment used symbolically to launch New Labour’s policies to address ‘social exclusion’, while in the process Blair described Aylesbury’s residents as Britain’s ‘poorest’, ‘playing little role in the formal economy’ and overly ‘dependent on benefits’. New Labour’s flagship *New Deal for Communities* (NDC) was swiftly introduced as part of the ‘regeneration’ of Aylesbury, and to lever in an additional £400m toward a proposed transfer of housing stock from local council to housing association tenure. However, against the grain of New Labour’s political vision, the Aylesbury community voted to keep the estate council owned and run: a move described as a significant defeat for privatization and potential gentrification. Lees then proceeds to disclose how a range of politically choreographed and media-led revanchist discourses were cranked up to stigmatize Aylesbury as a ‘sink estate’ rife with gang violence; a process fervently resisted by many local people only too aware that policies for stock transfer alongside those to simulate a ‘socially mixed’ community represented significant steps towards state-led gentrification: steps which betrayed a brazen disregard for the class, ethnic and age mix already present on Aylesbury. She further draws on Watt’s (2009) work examining how the contrast between disinvested local authority housing stock in certain parts of inner London and the potentially valuable land it resides on – near The City, Westminster and the restored South Bank – has fostered a ‘state-induced rent gap’.

Lees also unveils an interesting urban politics in the plans to ‘regenerate’ Aylesbury. One notable selling point of New Labour’s ‘deal’ for Aylesbury was that residents would

have a significant voice in determining their own futures. A decade after Blair's visit, the Aylesbury NDC and Southwark Council employed *Urban Initiatives*, an urban planning and design company, to develop a masterplan for a 20 year regeneration project. Urban Initiatives itself claimed to have created "a plan with real community buy-in and ownership" (London Calling 2010: 12; in Lees 2014), with Aylesbury hailed as a "prototype in tenant-led democracy" (ibid). Lees, however, unmask a quite different perspective from residents, not least those active in local initiatives, many of whom were either ignored or conveniently side-lined in the whole consultation process. The governance of Aylesbury took a further novel turn in 2010 as *The Creation Trust* – a charity and local voluntary sector organization working as advocate for tenants and residents – took over from the Aylesbury NDC. But with many ex-NDC staff making up *Creation Trust*, Lees contends that the Southwark Council/Creation Trust axis is building a 'simulated' consensus-based mode of engagement and participation which succeeds in stifling much meaningful debate and suturing dissenting voices: in effect fostering a post-political governmentality (Mouffe 2005; Swyngedouw 2009) that indeed sounds a distant echo of top-down 'slum clearances' in the UK during the mid-twentieth century, with the important caveat that early 21st century renewal is designed for wealthier residents. In forwarding this claim, Lees is nonetheless keen to underline that, in spite of the concerted endeavours to foster this neoliberal post-political landscape in Aylesbury, the hard work of organizing and local political struggle are very much alive, with much resistance to gentrification being waged alongside campaigns to keep council housing. In this sense, Lees's paper also offers an important contribution questioning the logics of a postpolitical narrative (Leitner 2012; Darling 2013). Lees encourages us to think about both the ongoing value of gentrification perspectives as a way of thinking about injustice and urbanism while also being alert to what that way of thinking may encourage us to miss – for example, the forms of struggle that often already present and that open up alternative grammars of urbanism.

Tom Slater's paper strikes a different chord to the preceding three, in that rather than reveal the limits of grammars of urban injustice, he is concerned to demonstrate how seemingly compassionate elite discourses can enable the hegemony of selective definitions of urban social 'problems' and 'solutions'. In particular he examines the tireless work of politicians and think tanks to construct political grammars that enable certain vulnerable people and communities to become vilified as 'scroungers' enjoying the fruits of a 'dependency culture' provided by an over-bloated welfare system deemed to 'maintain' rather than 'challenge' poverty (Duncan-Smith 2010). His paper focuses on the role played by the *Centre for Social Justice* (CSJ), a think tank established in 2004 by the former leader of the Conservative Party, Iain Duncan-Smith, and crusading to "see a reversal of social breakdown in the UK": the motivation had been Duncan-Smith's visit to Easterhouse, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Glasgow, while still Tory Party leader in 2002. CSJ published regular reports, with the 2006 *Breakdown Britain* invited by new Conservative leader, David Cameron, to contemplate how an incoming Conservative government would tackle the country's "most acute social problems". 'Objective' evidence pointed toward the overwhelming significance of 'family breakdown' in generating poverty: but Slater questions this 'objectivity', identifying how questions were rigged to arrive at the issue of 'family breakdown', and defines this as an instance of "decision-based evidence-making". With its key messages echoing the hectoring

tones of Charles Murray's 'underclass' thesis, not least via references to 'illegitimate' children and 'lack of sound male role models', Slater is unsurprised to learn that in 2007 Duncan-Smith and the CJS researchers traveled across to the United States to learn from Lawrence Mead and other architects of US welfare reform.

Following the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition in May 2010 and with Cameron now Prime Minister, Duncan Smith suddenly found himself with the Work and Pensions brief, and introducing a White Paper on welfare reform, *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works*. In the wake of an earlier reduction of £11 billion from the benefits budget, the level of conditionality and strict sanctions imposed on millions of vulnerable people prompts Slater to interpret Duncan-Smith's reforms as an "expansion of the punitive elements of the state in respect of those living at the bottom of the class structure": a process in effect *Punishing the Poor* (cf. Wacquant 2009). Slater draws on the concept of 'agnotology' – literally the production of ignorance and pioneered by Robert Proctor – as a way of critically dissecting the 'common sense' claims of the CSJ vis-à-vis welfare reform and also how the White Paper then telescopes upon 'broken families' as the demonic source of all society's ills. For Slater, when viewed through the lens of agnotology, the CSJ publications succeed in: 1) deflecting public consideration away from non-individualized 'structural' factors in the economy and society, such as the seriously low availability of jobs, not least in some inner urban spaces and particularly when allied to the major austerity-induced incisions being waged on local government and public sector jobs; 2) reducing and simplifying complex processes (such as lack of jobs) into 'easily digestible behavioural catchphrases'; and 3) ignoring or seeking to eradicate alternative approaches to poverty reduction. Slater further notes how the current UK government's approach to welfare reform also wilfully ignores how many not in formal employment actually work extraordinarily hard to care for family and friends: and approvingly quotes one such alternative source who claims that "building social policy on the basis of a tiny minority being 'scroungers' or 'lazy' is expensive illiberal folly" (Standing 2010). Slater's critique of the UK Government's virulent approach to ordinary people in distress prompts us to reflect on recapturing concerns about the *production of value in society* at the heart of David Harvey's early work.

The Grammar of Urban Solidarity

The papers by Justus Uitermark and Walter Nicholls, and by Kurt Iveson, turn towards social movements to locate clues not just for understanding processes of urban injustice, but for generating discourses and processes of urban justice. Uitermark and Nicholls focus on histories of activist organization, specifically of immigrant workers in Paris and Amsterdam, and deploy a post-political perspective to describe the processes that have eroded activism and transformed it – generally making it less able to articulate a universalist language of justice – over time. It is interesting here that while DeVerteuil, May and Cloke, and Lees all worry over the reductive tendencies of dominant concepts for analyzing urban injustice such as revanchism, here we find that reductive slogans become important, perhaps vital, in articulating struggle and forming alliances. Alongside their description of the work of organizational processes of integration, reciprocity, adjustment, and institutionalization, Uitermark and Nicholls point to the importance of particular notions to connect different struggles, enabling "activists in different times and locations to identify and connect with one another". They mention

notions like “international solidarity”, “social justice”, or “the right to the city” as providing some “overarching political imaginaries to weave disparate struggles together”. For example, immigrant rights activists and squatters in Paris during the 1980s developed strong relations, drawing squatters directly into battles for immigrant rights and immigrant rights activists into battles for the de-commodification of housing (Péchu 2004). Similarly, in Amsterdam in the 1970s and 1980s, squats became hotbeds of radical anti-fascism, environmentalism, anti-imperialism and so on – while different clusters specialized in one issue or another, they were tied together in networks. Again in Paris slogans like “French and immigrant workers, same boss, same combat”, became important in generating a shared set of connections across difference. These alliances and slogans are key parts of grammars of urban justice, particularly as they encounter different strands of critical theory and debate.

Iveson, too, discusses the work of particular notions also working alongside important and often intensive processes of organization, to help weave solidarity across difference and facilitate a universalist vision of urban justice. His paper focusses on the green ban movement that emerged in Sydney during the 1970s – an alliance of construction workers, resident activists, and progressive professionals – that enacted a radical right to the city, blocked a range of unjust and destructive ‘developments’ and proposed alternative development plans. He identifies how that the notion of ‘the people’ was crucial to their action. This notion emerged from, and facilitated, the hard work of making and holding alliances across particular struggles (e.g. in the workplace) to a range of other issues: and here this sometimes led to conflict in existing alliances, (e.g. the hostility of unions who felt the ‘income’ focus was being watered down). The construction of the idea of ‘the people’ was important in maintaining alliances, but the process of maintaining this was always a difficult one and there were always questions of legitimacy that would reappear over time. Iveson examines the rights and also the authority invested in ‘the people’ by green ban activists, and traces the work of political subjectification through which ‘the people’ was constructed.

‘The people’ was not invoked as a simple majority or as a universal subject whose unity glossed over differences. Rather, in acting as/for ‘the people’, green ban activists produced a political subject able to challenge the claims of elected politicians, bureaucrats and developers to represent the interests of the city. The movement put forward arguments for alternative urban plans, as well for workers’ rights and the rights of other groups affected by related issues (e.g. around quality of life). Iveson concludes with reflections on the implications of this construction of ‘the people’ for urban politics today. We might see this notion as reductionist, Iveson states, but it was nonetheless able to achieve connection and progress. Again, here we have a line of defence of a certain kind of reductionism in the languages that emerge from grammars of organising and envisioning urban change. ‘The people’ was, for a while at least, a strategic essentialism that propelled a disparate movement for different sorts of urban justice. But Iveson’s key point here is not to argue for ‘the people’ as a notion *per se*, which has its own troubling uses, but for the process through which the diversity of groups in the green bans developed alliances – solidarity across difference – through that category. In this sense, his paper draws attention to the importance of the grammars of urban justice

– the long process of forging alliances across difference that can produce a language that helps bind those alliances – rather than the language per se.

The story of what happened to these alliances is quite different in the two papers, and both offer important lessons for those interested in how grammars of urban justice might be maintained and draw inspiration from the past. For Uitermark and Nicholls, the alliances of Paris and Amsterdam were eroded through what they call processes of ‘spatio-temporal segmentation’ of urban civil society, achieved through two principal mechanisms: *temporal delimitation* and *territorial encapsulation*. By temporal delimitation, they mean that activists, intellectuals and associations focus on problems that can be solved in the nearby future instead of self-consciously engaging in historical struggles for equality. For example, constant auditing and application procedures reinforce the caging of civil associations, with government officials extending their disciplinary reach into their daily activities and micropractices, and narrowing the scope of movements. By territorial encapsulation, they mean channeling of activists, intellectuals, and associations into delimited territories. Their attention turns towards specialized local administrative units rather than the central state, let alone the world system. For some movements in Amsterdam for instance, to survive at all meant having to re-brand as ‘neighborhood organizations’. There are parallels here to the large literature on the co-option of civil society groups in the global South. For example, Joshi and Moore (2000: 26) have argued that the proliferation of NGOs since the 1980s has co-opted alternative voices through the funding of and the ‘pulling-in’ of radical groups to ‘accommodative’ discourses with conservative agendas. The challenge, as Uitermark and Nicholls usefully frame it, is to develop and maintain languages of urban justice – such as solidarity, justice, and rights to the city – through the work of grammars of urban justice, i.e. of forming alliances and visions that cut across differences in order to “articulate universal aspirations for equality and freedom”.

The end of the green ban movement in Sydney was a rather different story. It ended in 1974 due to the successful attempt by the Master Builders Association to have the union involved in the movement – the New South Wales branch of the Builders Labourer’s Federation – de-registered for militant industrial action. The consequences were that the union would no longer be recognised or regulated by the industrial courts, strikes were no longer possible, and green ban activists were expelled from the union. Without strikes and the support of a union, the green ban movement could not maintain. Iveson draws out an important lesson from this around the role of particular power bases to enable the maintenance of organisation and visions of urban justice: “This is a salutary lesson indeed for contemporary efforts to build urban alliances that can effectively tackle injustice – not that the withdrawal of labour as such is crucial for politics, but that sources of power must be identified and acted upon if collective identifications and alliances are to be sustained”. And yet, as he shows, the legacies of the green ban movement live on: in the stories of battles on, in stimulating legislative reform, and through its example, which lives on in the city in different ways, of forging alliances across groups that sought to put ‘the people’ before profit. In this sense, the grammar of the movement – its organisation across difference and vision for universal justice in an unequal capitalist city that gave rise to a language of the people – has maintained, even if its specific enactment has receded from view.

The stories of urban solidarity in these two papers offer compelling connections to other research on urban solidarities. One contrast here is the focus of solidarity, specifically ‘the city’, and its relation to ‘urbanism’ more generally. For example, Andy Merrifield (2012: 279) argues that the stakes for social movements, such as *Occupy*, are not the city *per se*, but a “contemporary planetary urban society” that both enables these forms of protest through online and offline connections, and that orientates itself to the world by foregrounding “citizens in front of the whole wide world”. Here, the grammar of urban justice is not just in the work of forging connections across issues and spaces in a city – although, to be sure, *Occupy* had its own territorial geographies that mattered a great deal to its existence – but in forging imaginary and practical connections across more distanced spaces. This is a grammar of urban justice with a global sense of place (Massey 1991).

In contrast, and here we return once again to Harvey, it is interesting that in the closing discussions of *Rebel Cities* (Harvey 2012) Harvey turns to examples of revolutionary urbanism that are *city-based* in character (El Alto in Bolivia in the early 2000s, for instance). He shows how particular cities – in this case El Alto – can become key sites in protesting against the might of neoliberal states. What made El Alto important in the struggle was not just the alliances forged between well-organized neighborhood organizations, sector-based movements (e.g. informal street traders), and more conventional unions (of which the schoolteachers union was particularly significant), but also the city’s popular culture articulated through a shared sense of identity, solidarity, and political radicalism (expressed not least in festivals). Here, popular culture too critically informs the emergence and maintenance of a grammar of urban justice. Harvey takes El Alto, amongst other examples, as sites that might inspire movements elsewhere, and that might also enter into global networks of revolutionary cities: “imagine”, writes Harvey (2012: 153), “a league of socialist cities much as the Hanseatic League of old became the network that nourished the powers of merchant capitalism”. It is in this context that Harvey sees the ‘right to the city’ as a “way-station” toward “a broader revolutionary movement” (2012: xviii). In this intriguing move, we shift from the grammar of organizing and envisioning within a city, or even in global networks like *Occupy*, to one in which *cities themselves* enter into the constitutive tissue of grammars of urban justice.

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Endnotes

¹ Harvey not least was to become influenced by Young's writings (Harvey 1992).

² *Revanche* is literally the French for revenge. And the original Revanchists comprised a bourgeois political movement that mobilized in France during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, incensed by the perceived liberalism of the Second Republic and fearful of a proletarian uprising akin to the Paris Commune of 1870-71. They thereby sought to reassert a sense of traditional decency against the incivility of the mob, workers, and foreigners: this was "a right-wing movement built on populist nationalism and devoted to a vengeful and reactionary retaking of the country" (Smith, 1996: 45).

³ Dennis Judd (2005) makes an interesting point when recounting how one of his students had begun a seminar paper with the claim that "hyperbole may have become the principal methodology of today's urban scholarship."