

SEEKING SPATIAL JUSTICE

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more than eight hundred "green" and unionized jobs were created, bus ridership increased by 12 percent, and many rapid bus lanes were added to major surface streets. There are probably no other metropolitan areas in the country where bus services have improved more significantly over the past fifteen years.

On May 1, 2006, the BRU and L/CSC helped organize the "Great American Boycott" or in Spanish, El Gran Paro/Estadounidense (the Great American Strike), when perhaps as many as two million people marched peacefully for immigrant rights and against the rising national tide of anti-immigrant feeling. Even after the consent decree came to an end on October 29, 2006, the strategic coalition has, if anything, broadened and intensified its efforts in protesting against environmental racism, police mistreatment of minorities, all new plans for rail construction, proposed bus fare increases, and larger issues such as the war in Iraq. As indicated on its current Web page, the Strategy Center and its allied groups have been promoting extensions of the BRU model to other cities, such as Atlanta, protesting vigorously against recent regressive shifts in MTA policy, and expanding their publication and multimedia programs. In 2009, the Strategy Center published a map-rich *Clean Air Economic Justice Plan*, presenting a new bus-centered model for urban transportation, environmental justice, and economic development that would build on federal funds arising from the Obama government's economic stimulus package.

There is a great deal to learn from the accomplishments of the strategic coalition behind the BRU decision and its continuing struggles. For social movement activists and progressive scholars everywhere, it stands out as an exemplary model of successful urban insurgency in the search for racial, environmental, and spatial justice. With some degree of strategic optimism, one can see the possibility that the BRU along with the other resurgent coalitions that have been developing in Los Angeles over the past two decades can become effective springboards for a much larger movement seeking to erase injustices wherever they may be found. All that follows in *Seeking Spatial Justice* is aimed at encouraging this possibility.

Introduction

Questions of justice cannot be seen independently from the urban condition, not only because most of the world's population lives in cities, but above all because the city condenses the manifold tensions and contradictions that infuse modern life.

—Erik Swyngedouw, *Divided Cities*, 2006

Just as none of us is beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

—Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993

THE BUS RIDERS UNION CASE provides an evocative beginning for a wide-ranging exploration of spatial justice as a theoretical concept, a focal point for empirical analysis, and a target for social and political action. Guiding the exploration from the start is the idea that justice, however it might be defined, has a consequential geography, a spatial expression that is more than just a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped. As suggested in the above quotations, the geography, or "spatiality," of justice (I will use the two terms interchangeably) is an integral and formative component of justice itself, a vital part of how justice and injustice are socially constructed and evolve over time. Viewed in this way, seeking spatial justice becomes

fundamentally, almost inescapably, a *struggle over geography*, to use the phrasing of Edward Said.

This definitive struggle over geography can be best understood from an assertive spatial perspective, one that emphasizes what can be described as the explanatory power of the consequential geographies of justice. Stated differently, these consequential geographies are not just the outcome of social and political processes, they are also a dynamic force affecting these processes in significant ways. As I hope to demonstrate, an assertive and explanatory spatial perspective helps us make better theoretical and practical sense of how social justice is created, maintained, and brought into question as a target for democratic social action.

This forceful approach is more than just a claim that "space matters," as geographers like me have been arguing for decades. It arises more ambitiously from a deeply held belief that whatever your interests may be, they can be significantly advanced by adopting a critical spatial perspective. Spatial thinking in this sense cannot only enrich our understanding of almost any subject but has the added potential to extend our practical knowledge into more effective actions aimed at changing the world for the better. Reaching this potential for innovative theoretical and empirical discovery as well as successful practical application defines the particular promise and premise of *Seeking Spatial Justice*.

Putting into the foreground such an assertive spatial perspective deserves further explanation, for to a public as well as to an academic audience, emphasizing the affective or explanatory power of space is relatively unfamiliar and for some quite controversial. Most social scientists not surprisingly emphasize a sociological and historical rather than geographical perspective. Primary attention is given to social processes and social consciousness as they develop over time in comparison to what might be called spatial processes, spatial consciousness, and spatial development. Indeed, to most readers, I suspect, attaching *spatial* to the words processes, consciousness, development, and, more specifically, justice, democracy, and human rights may seem quite jarring. Rather than being seen as a significant force shaping social action (and hence influencing the search for social justice), the spatial dimension has traditionally been treated as a kind of fixed background, a physically formed environment that, to be sure, has some influence on our lives but remains external to the social world and to efforts to make the world more socially just.

geography perspective
often not discussed
in social science

For at least the past century, thinking about the interrelated historical and social aspects of our lives has tended to be much more important and widely practiced than emphasizing a pertinent critical spatial perspective. Thinking historically somehow has been made to feel more intellectually stimulating than thinking spatially or geographically. There may be no justifiable reason for privileging history over geography or, in more abstract terms, time over space, but such privileging persists in mainstream social science and philosophy as well as in more radical or socialist theory and practice. It also powerfully shapes the popular imagination.

In recent years, however, the way we interpret the relation between the social, the historical, and the spatial aspects of our lives has begun to change in significant ways. A new and different approach to thinking about space and spatiality has been emerging in conjunction with what some have described as a spatial turn affecting nearly all the human sciences. As discussed in chapter 1, the spatial turn is still in its early stages, but enough has happened to suggest that a rebalancing is beginning to occur between social, historical, and spatial perspectives, with no one of the three ways of looking at and interpreting the world inherently privileged over the others.

The main impetus for this resurgence and diffusion of spatial thinking and spatial theory came initially from critical human geographers but has been carried forward in recent years by scholars from many different disciplines, ranging from archaeology, art, and anthropology to law, theology, and economics. While the privileging of the historical and the social still persists, perhaps never before in the past 150 years has a critical spatial perspective been so widespread and influential. As the effects of consequential geographies become more widely understood, many different concepts and subject matter that had hitherto been rarely seen from a critical spatial perspective, such as social capital and social justice, are being significantly spatialized in terms of both causes and effects.

Driving this transdisciplinary diffusion of spatial thinking have been two fundamental ideas that have already been touched on. The first is the promising possibility that applying an assertive spatial perspective, using approaches that have been relatively neglected in the past, can open up new sources of insight and innovative practical and theoretical

applications. Complementing this expectation is the idea that there exists a mutually influential and formative relation between the social and the spatial dimensions of human life, each shaping the other in similar ways. In this notion of a *socio-spatial dialectic*, as I called it some time ago, the spatiality of whatever subject you are looking at is viewed as shaping social relations and societal development just as much as social processes configure and give meaning to the human geographies or spatialities in which we live. Taken together, these two ideas help to understand what is meant by consequential geographies, an assertive spatial perspective, and the explanatory power of spatial thinking.

There continues to be significant resistance to this emphatically spatial approach, and not just from those who consider a sociological or historical perspective to be superior and unchallengeable. Many geographers, for example, see the so-called spatial turn as little more than a passing fad promoting in other disciplines a superficial spatial perspective lacking the rigor and depth of their own well-developed and long-established ways of thinking and writing about space. Some of these critical geographers may claim they accept the basic idea of a socio-spatial dialectic, but nearly all tend nonetheless in their writings to give greater stress to how social processes such as class formation, social stratification, or racist or masculinist practices shape geographies than to how geographies actively affect these social processes and forms.

This persistent asymmetry between social and spatial explanation reflects in part a long-standing disciplinary precaution among geographers against giving too much causal power to the spatiality of social life for fear of falling into the simplistic environmental determinism that plagued geographical thinking in the past. Thinking in this overly cautious way, however, misses too much, making almost invisible the political and other forces emanating from the geographies we have created and in which we live out our lives. In this more cautious spatial perspective, space tends to be seen as little more than a receptacle. Things happen to it and in it, helping us to explain the formation of more- or less-just human geographies but blocking from view how space is actively involved in generating and sustaining inequality, injustice, economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and discrimination.

Arising out of these disciplinary entanglements and controversies has been a peculiar bias against actually using the specific term *spatial*

justice. Up to the turn of the twentieth century, for example, there was only one short journal article, one pamphlet, and not a single book published with the specific words in the title. It has even been difficult to find the phrase *spatial justice* used in any twentieth-century text, even when the subject has to do with the relation between justice and geography or social justice and the city. When the question of justice is addressed from a spatial perspective, other terms are typically used, such as territorial justice, environmental justice, the urbanization of justice, or simply the geography of social justice.

To emphasize the consequential spatiality of social justice and its connections to related notions of democracy and human rights, I pay particular attention to the explicit use of the term *spatial justice* in all that follows. Highlighting the socio-spatial dialectic, I also adopt from the start the view that the spatiality of (in)justice (combining justice and injustice in one word) affects society and social life just as much as social processes shape the spatiality or specific geography of (in)justice. Given the persistent constraints to thinking in this way, I return in each of the first three chapters to clarify further what is meant by an assertive spatial perspective and to explore the new spatial consciousness that has been emerging over the past ten years from its more widespread application. I apologize in advance to those readers who, whether in agreement or not, find these arguments repetitively familiar and perhaps unnecessarily elaborated. For all readers, however, my objective is clear: to stimulate new ways of thinking about and acting to change the unjust geographies in which we live.

Before moving on, a few additional points of clarification need to be made. It is important to stress that seeking spatial justice is not meant to be a substitute for or alternative to the search for social, economic, or environmental justice. It is intended instead as a means of amplifying and extending these concepts into new areas of understanding and political practice. Calling it spatial justice is not meant to imply that justice is determined only by its spatiality, but neither should spatial justice be seen as just one of many different components or aspects of social justice to be comparatively gauged for their relative strength. This relativist view misses the point of the socio-spatial dialectic, that not only does the social comprise the spatial, it is also comprised by it. In the view taken here, everything that is social (justice included) is simultaneously and

inherently spatial, just as everything spatial, at least with regard to the human world, is simultaneously and inherently socialized.

I will not provide a simplified "cookbook" definition of spatial justice but allow its meaning to evolve and expand chapter by chapter from its initial description as what arises from the application of a critical spatial perspective to what is more familiarly known as social justice. I also want to make clear that exploring the spatiality of justice and its expressions in struggles over geography is not just an academic exercise but has more ambitious political and practical objectives. Seeing justice spatially aims above all at enhancing our general understanding of justice as a vital attribute and aspiration in all societies. It seeks to promote more progressive and participatory forms of democratic politics and social activism, and to provide new ideas about how to mobilize and maintain cohesive coalitions and regional confederations of grassroots and justice-oriented social movements.

Reflecting the introductory comments of Erik Swyngedouw, urbanization and the urban condition will figure centrally in *Seeking Spatial Justice*. It should be emphasized, however, that the impressive impact of urbanization is not confined to the formal administrative boundaries of the city. The urbanization process and along with it what can be called the urbanization of (in)justice are generated primarily in and from dense urban agglomerations, but in the present age of accelerating globalization the urban condition has extended its influence to all areas: rural, suburban, metropolitan, exurban, even wilderness, parkland, desert, tundra, and rain forest. In this sense, the whole world has been or is being urbanized to some degree, making the search for spatial justice relevant at many different geographical scales, from the most global to the most local, and everywhere in between.

This broader view of the urbanization process links the search for spatial justice to struggles over what has been called the *right to the city*, a politically charged idea about human rights in an urban context that was originally developed more than forty years ago by Henri Lefebvre, perhaps the twentieth century's most creative urban spatial theorist and philosopher. Lefebvre's original concept was packed with powerful ideas about the consequential geography of urban life and the need for those most negatively affected by the urban condition to take greater control over the social production of urbanized space. Fighting for the right to

the city seen in this way, as a demand for greater control over how the spaces in which we live are socially produced wherever we may be located, becomes virtually synonymous with seeking spatial justice.

In recent years, the right to the city idea has been politically revived in global, national, regional, and urban social movements, stimulating a mutually reinforcing convergence between these two versions of the struggle over geography: for spatial justice and for democratic rights to urbanized space. This convergence is addressed in several different ways. In chapter 2, it enters into the discussion of the urbanization and globalization of (in)justice as they are empirically expressed at various geographical scales. In chapter 3, the right to the city idea is treated in more detail as part of the development of a spatial theory of justice. Particular attention is given to the original ideas of Lefebvre and the evolving, more contemporary reconceptualizations of David Harvey, perhaps Lefebvre's closest rival as a leading urban spatial theorist. Seeking spatial justice in terms of the right to the city is returned to in chapter 4, which deals with the resurgence of innovative forms of coalition building in Los Angeles over the past forty years. At the end of the last chapter, the struggles for spatial justice and the right to the city are briefly reexamined in light of the current financial crisis.

I approach the active search for spatial justice and more democratic rights to the city with a sense of strategic optimism, and I hope that a similar feeling will affect those who read what I have to say. Such optimism comes partially from necessity, for there is an urgent need to find some sources of hope in a world of eroding civil liberties and degraded participatory democracy. Strategic pathways for reclaiming and maintaining an active and successful democratic politics, the foundation for achieving justice and reducing oppression and exploitation of all kinds, must be found and kept radically open to new and innovative ideas. This is especially important as the world economy plunges into serious financial crisis and deepening recession, as was the case at the time this introduction was written.

A few words are needed regarding the specific term *justice*, for it too has been experiencing a revival of sorts as a mobilizing force and strategic objective in contemporary politics. From the global to the local and at every geographical scale in between, variations on the stirring demand for jobs with justice, peace with justice, development with justice are

pressuring governments to deal more effectively with worsening problems of economic inequality, intercultural conflict, political polarization, and environmental degradation. We hear more and more about the need for environmental justice, justice for workers, for youth, for all who feel the negative effects of social and spatial discrimination based on race, class, gender, sexual preference, and many other axes of unacceptable inequality. Renewed attention, it seems, is being given to both parts of the concept of spatial justice.

The literature on justice and democracy is enormous, and I do not intend to delve as deeply into it as I do with the spatial and geographical literature. Some key works on the theory of justice are discussed briefly, but the main emphasis is on how justice is being used politically and strategically in social movements of all kinds. My aim is to reach out to an audience of actual and potential activists by adding a challenging and politically useful spatial perspective to these justice debates and to the strategies and tactics of the diverse organizations aimed at achieving greater justice and more egalitarian democracy.

STOP HERE

Seeking Spatial Justice is divided into six chapters, followed by an extensive notes and references section containing full bibliographic references and further commentary. Chapter 1 presents brief synopses of such topics as why and how spatial thinking as well as the search for justice in the broadest sense have been receiving increasing attention in the contemporary world, and why and how Los Angeles has emerged as an influential center for strategically spatial labor-community coalition building and for the practical application of spatial theory. As another kind of preview, the first chapter concludes with a discussion of how the specific term *spatial justice* has begun to be referred to and used over the past ten years, after more than a century of almost complete neglect. Chapter 2 outlines and illustrates the comprehensive scope and scale of spatial justice. It is intentionally eclectic and wide-ranging, a kind of tasting menu presenting concrete empirical examples of the many different ways unjust geographies are produced and responded to by political actors of various kinds.

Spatial (in)justice is situated and contextualized in three overlapping and interactive levels of geographical resolution. The first results from the external creation of unjust geographies through boundary making and the political organization of space. Examples range from

South African apartheid and other forms of colonial control to more subtle efforts at spatial manipulation such as electoral district gerrymandering and the privileging of private property rights under the law. At a more local scale, unjust geographies arise endogenously or internally from the distributional inequalities created through discriminatory decision making by individuals, firms, and institutions. In such cases as exclusionary zoning, the siting of toxic facilities, and restrictive forms of racial segregation, discriminatory geographies have been challenged in the courts and become the focus for a rich literature on law and space. How race, space, and the law interact is discussed, along with a brief look at the environmental justice movement. The third scale of geographical resolution is more regional, or mesogeographical, and is rooted in the injustices associated with geographically uneven development and what is described as the globalization of injustice. Geographically uneven development is given particular attention as a general process underlying the formation of spatial injustice at the meso, or "middle," scale, between the urban and the global. Seeking spatial justice is expanded here to include regional coalition building, the search for regional democracy, and the development of new action strategies such as community-based regionalism.

Following this illustrative exploration of concretely produced unjust geographies, chapter 3 turns more specifically to theorizing spatial justice and tracing how the concept has evolved over time and in the relevant literature. Building a spatial theory of justice begins with a theoretical look at theory itself, as a means of distinguishing between normative, positive, and critical perspectives. This is followed by an excursion into the highly abstract realm of ontology, aimed at rebalancing how we think about the existential spatiality, historicity, and sociality of life. I encourage even those readers averse to such abstract discussions to persevere, for I believe that such ontological rethinking is necessary to comprehend the power and meaning of a critical spatial perspective and to understand the new spatial consciousness that has been emerging in recent years.

The chapter continues with a critical assessment of how justice has been theorized in itself, highlighting the work of John Rawls and Iris Marion Young. This is followed by a discussion of how the theory of justice was given a spatial dimension through three intersecting streams of

not just about expressions of military power but also about ideas, about our images and imaginings. Said's writings on culture and imperialism, the politics of dispossession, and the profound imprint of colonial and postcolonial geographies supply one of the richest sources for conceptualizing how spatial injustice is socially produced through the intrusive process of organizing specifically political geographies.

Among the leading cultural critics and postcolonial thinkers of the twentieth century, Said stands out for his exceptionally creative and insightful applications of a critical spatial perspective, weaving into his historical, anticolonial, and autobiographical narratives a brilliantly conceived and incisive geography. In exposing the "imaginative geographies" associated with Eurocentric orientalism, Said brings into focus the powerful spatial strategies of territorial dispossession, military occupation, cultural domination, economic exploitation, and reactive popular resistance that have permeated East-West relations and defined the colonial condition everywhere in the world. As he writes, "Imperialism and the culture associated with it affirm both the primacy of geography and an ideology about control of territory."

Said develops his concept of imaginative geographies drawing on Michel Foucault, who played a major role in the formation of Said's (and many other scholars') critical spatial imagination. Foucault's probing inquiries into the microgeographies of power and social control, both as a mode of dominating and governing political subjects and as a pathway for enabling and encouraging political resistance and action, inspired Said's personal, political, and explicitly spatial approach to analyzing the starkly ambivalent relations between the colonizer and the colonized. As Said argues, it is impossible to conceive of colonialism and imperialism without significant attention to the material forms and imaginative processes associated with the acquisition, subordination, and intrusive political organization of space. This holds true just as forcefully for the social production of (in)justice.

For Said, colonizing power and the imaginative geographies of Eurocentric orientalism, the cultural construction of the colonized "other" as subordinate and inferior beings, are expressed poetically and politically in defined and regulated spaces. These colonizing spaces of social control include the classroom, courthouse, prison, railway station, marketplace, hospital, boulevard, place of worship, even the private

household and home, practically every place used in everyday life. The spaces of social control extend on to a larger scale as well in geopolitical arrangements, the drawing of administrative boundaries, and the politics that arise over the location of public buildings and the allocation of land. The resulting real and imagined geographies, the material, symbolic, and hierarchically organized spaces of colonial occupation along with the processes that produce them, contextualize enclosure, exclusion, domination, disciplinary control.

Said's contributions expand on and explain how the political organization of space, through its material manifestations as well as representational imagery, produces oppressive and unjust geographies. Following Foucault and giving hope to the postcolonial condition, Said also recognizes that these unjust geographies of political power can also be enabling, creating the foundations for resistance and potential emancipation. It is important to remember this double-sidedness, how the spatiality of (in)justice can be both intensely oppressive and potentially liberating, as we move on to other examples.

START HERE

Gerrymandering

A much more innocent but easier to grasp example of how the political organization of space produces and reproduces spatial (in)justice has to do with the drawing of boundaries defining electoral districts in a representative democracy. Electoral districts are socially constructed and easily manipulated spaces whose effects can range from fair and just to the highly discriminatory and unjust. The ideal solution to drawing fair and democratic boundaries would be a set of roughly equal-sized, compact, and contiguous districts that reflect the overall distribution and demographic makeup of the population and assure that every individual vote counts much the same as any other, the familiar one person-one vote principle. But when there is electoral competition, as there is likely to be in every democratic election, hierarchical differences in political power enter the picture to create distortions and deviations from the ideal condition, some of which will be expressed in purposeful manipulations of the political organization of space.

Perhaps the best-known example of such undemocratic distortions in the political organization of space is gerrymandering, illustrated in the well-known map of a congressional district signed into law by Elbridge

Gerry, governor of Massachusetts from 1810 to 1812. Designed to favor the Republican Party versus the Federalists, the district as depicted in a newspaper cartoon resembled a wriggling salamander-like (hence Gerry-mander) monster with a dragon's head and extended arms and legs. A series of Supreme Court decisions in 1842, 1962, and 1985 ruled that such spatial strategies of drawing electoral district boundaries were unconstitutional and unfair (unjust in our terms) when they favored one individual or one political party over another. This did not stop such maneuvering; it just became more sophisticated and deceptive, especially with the creation of computer programs capable of designing district geographies to maximize any purposeful (spatial) advantage.

Three microtechnologies of empowerment, to use a heavy Foucauldian phrase, have been identified—and used—in drawing spatially unjust congressional constituency boundaries. The excess vote, or “packing,” strategy concentrates the voting power of oppositional parties (or certain racial groups) in just a few districts. A wasted vote, or “cracking,” strategy dilutes the vote of the opposition by distributing it across all constituencies. Stacking the vote is still another form of gerrymandering, creating bizarrely shaped districts to favor one party or group over the other. All are unconstitutional and democratically unfair, but actual examples are constantly under examination in the courts, and perhaps will always continue to be, for the ideal solution may be impossible to reach. There will always be some degree of unfairness and injustice embedded in electoral geographies, and these injustices are usually intensified the more culturally and politically heterogeneous the voting population.

As is often the case in the political organization of space, there is a complicated double-sidedness to electoral geographies. Boundaries can be redrawn to serve both positive and negative purposes, giving greater or lesser representation to certain population groups on a kind of sliding scale of inequality. Sometimes positive and negative objectives are combined in a tenuous balance, making it even more difficult to decide whether the results are spatially just. Take, for example, the recent efforts of the state of Texas to allow the state legislature to redraw and gerrymander districts as often as they would like to favor one political party over another, as long as they maintain the equitable voting rights of racial and ethnic minorities. Although seemingly unconstitutional and undemocratic, the practice was upheld for the most part by the

conservative U.S. Supreme Court majority in June 2006 based primarily on the absence of increased racial and ethnic bias.

South African Apartheid

Standing at another extreme in the process of creating unjust geographies is apartheid, the system of spatial or territorial control associated with the formerly racist regime of the Republic of South Africa and now a symbolic reference to all forms of cultural domination and oppression arising from spatial strategies of segregation and boundary making. The story of apartheid revolves paradigmatically around struggles over geography. Through legislation, ideological rationalization, and violent political action, the political organization of space in South Africa was reshaped starting in 1948 into a hierarchy of territorially segregated and tightly bounded areas that persisted up to the remarkably peaceful breakdown of the system of domination in the mid-1990s.

Apartheid as it was expressed at the national level involved the creation of separate administrative regions for the dominant white elite, mostly in the best-developed areas, and the assignment of the majority African population to peripheral reservations, or “homelands,” which functioned economically as enclosed labor reserves. A finer grain of spatial discrimination at the local scale within white-controlled cities partitioned urban space down to the street level, displacing and spatially dispossessing long-established African, Coloured (mixed race), and Asian residents when deemed necessary for achieving racial-spatial purity. Ideologically rationalized as separate but equal, the South African “bad-lands,” to use Dikec’s term for the Parisian *banlieues*, rigidly confined daily life and urban, regional, and national politics in multiscalar strait-jackets of spatial control.

The lasting effects of the apartheid system are vividly expressed in contemporary urban landscapes of the independent and African-led Republic of South Africa. In Johannesburg today, residential spaces in the wealthy and formerly entirely white suburbs, now sprinkled with a Black elite, are still fortified with high walls and guarded entranceways running continuously block after block, street after street, like a massive agglomeration of residential citadels signaling obsessive protection against a perceived threat of invasion. At the opposite end of the economic spectrum, Soweto, a name derived from the exclusionary South West Township designed to contain the African population, lives on as a

displaced city—within-the city, marginalized yet central, suburban in some senses yet densely urbanized in others, creatively surviving in its poverty and isolation, both inside and outside Johannesburg. There is nothing other city I know, although nearly every major world city today has its growing citadel—ghetto metro-polarities.

This socially produced geography of institutionalized racial segregation that was apartheid pushed to an extraordinary level spatial strategies and processes that were commonly used in colonial situations as a means of population control and assuring disproportionate economic advantage for the colonizers versus the colonized. This was not only a matter of divide and rule in an abstract and theoretical sense, it was a sophisticated strategy specifically designed to produce beneficial geographies for the hegemonic few while creating spatial structures of disadvantage for the rest. Even the voracious demands of capitalism adjusted to this colonial geography, and powerful though they may have been, they were probably not the primary force shaping the spatiality of social life in South Africa and most other colonies as well.

The imposition of these powerful colonial geographies, rationalized through ideological variants of orientalism that dehumanized the colonial "other," was an integral part of what critical scholars called the development of "underdevelopment." Seen from a critical spatial perspective, underdevelopment processes actively involve the creation of discriminatory urban and regional built environments and a restrictive political organization of space that fix in place a persistent geography of dependent development, cultural domination, and efficient economic exploitation. This has been at the heart of the relations between the First World and the Third World, the core and the periphery, since the beginnings of colonialism. Even after independence, these concretely embedded and imaginatively maintained unjust geographies of underdevelopment and colonial control linger on as stubborn continuities, almost impossible to erase entirely, virtually defining what has come to be called the postcolonial condition.

Occupying Palestine

Colonial and postcolonial geographies of control and domination continue to be produced today, perhaps nowhere as vividly and deliberately

as in Israeli-occupied Palestine. Reflecting the volatile and violent current events in the wider region, the Arab-Israeli borderlands have become an unusually fertile and ideologically charged contemporary milieu for creative research on oppressive geographies and the production of spatial injustice. One of the best of these contemporary researchers is Eyal Weizman, an architect, designer, and critical spatial analyst. In *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (2007) and other writings, he shows how the Israeli military has literally and figuratively penetrated into the built environment, bulldozing "overground tunnels" into the existing walls and through the living rooms of Palestinian homes and settlements while at the same time building new walls and barricades to keep people apart, what Yiftachel and Yacobi (2005) call "creeping apartheid."

Demonstrating that this battle over space and territory is not just about soldiers and guns but also about ideas and imagery, Weizman has filmed Israeli military officers at their leisure discussing the latest philosophical writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as other specialists in urban and spatial theory, including Edward Said, to enhance their ultrasophisticated and technologically advanced strategies of social and spatial control in territories that are nominally Palestinian. Disturbingly obvious here is the realization that spatial theories and spatial strategies can be used both to reinforce oppression and control as well as to stimulate resistance and enhance the search for spatial justice.

Observing these spatial tactics and strategies makes one realize that the occupied territories would essentially remain under the control of the Israeli military even with the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Almost invisible microgeographies of power, surveillance, and control, as well as the intentionally overt construction of barrier walls and guarded settlements, infuse the spaces in and around the state of Israel with an array of multilayered injustices more subtle and sophisticated in their colonizing effect and spatially organized system of control than ever achieved by apartheid. One lesson is clear: once spatial injustice is inscribed into the built environment, it is difficult to erase.

These borderlands strategies and their spatially unjust effects echo around the world wherever boundaries separate contrasting and/or comparative cultures and nation-states. An especially cruel and violent example has emerged in recent years along the fluid boundary between the United

States and Mexico, where drug cartels have carved out "plazas" of territorial control and superhighway-like corridors in and under the twinned border cities to channel the flow of drugs. Here the insidious geography is maintained through the murder of thousands of individuals connected either to public authorities or to the cartels themselves.

As with all these inflections of what Michel Foucault described as the intersection of space, knowledge, and power, it is important to remember that the inscription of oppressive geographies can also create potential spaces of resistance and enablement, as occurred in the unexpectedly nonviolent struggles against South African apartheid. And it is equally important to recognize that opening up these spaces of hope hinges on the development of a critical spatial consciousness as a motivating and mobilizing political force. Without such spatial awareness, the creation and maintenance of unfair geographies are likely to remain invisible and unchallenged.

Security-Obsessed Urbanism

The findings of such spatially informed scholars as Said, Dikec, and Weizman can be extended into many other contemporary debates, especially with regard to the geographies of political control and the relations of power embedded in the political organization of the restructured modern metropolis. Particularly noteworthy is the rampant expansion of what Mike Davis in *City of Quartz* (1990) described as security-obsessed urbanism, a defensive fortressing of urban life and urban space built on a psychogeography (he calls it an ecology) of fear and aimed at protecting residents and property against real or imagined threats of invasion.

The rich have always lived behind protective walls of various kinds, physical as well as institutional and psychological. However, over the past thirty years and in many ways linked to the uneven effects of globalization and economic restructuring, fortressing the urban and suburban built environments has spread almost everywhere. Not only are residences becoming increasingly gated, guarded, and wrapped in advanced security, surveillance, and alarm systems, so too are many other activities, land uses, and everyday objects in the urban environment, from shopping malls and libraries to razor-wire protected refuse bins and spiked park benches designed to stave off incursions of the homeless and hungry.

Microtechnologies of social and spatial control infest everyday life and pile up to produce a tightly meshed and prisonlike geography punctuated by protective enclosures and overseen by ubiquitous watchful eyes.

The best known of these defensive enclosures is the gated community, a fortified housing compound often protected by armed guards and various visible and invisible indications that trespassers will be shot. These security-obsessed islands can be found in many cities around the world but have become especially numerous in the United States. Some of the earliest gated communities were established on the Palos Verdes peninsula south of Los Angeles, where today whole municipalities exist comprised entirely of these insulated enclosures. Are these gated communities spatially unjust? Or are they extreme expressions of democratic individualism and freedom of choice? Perhaps the main problems arise from answering yes to both questions.

The gated and guarded community, however, is only the tip of a much larger iceberg of change in the political geography of the city, at least in the United States. Driven both by fear and voluntary preference, growing numbers of people, predominantly from the upper quintile of the income ladder (called by some the fortunate fifth), are in many ways withdrawing from urban public life and civil society to live in insular "privatopias," as the political scientist Evan Mackenzie called them in his 1994 book. This trend has created a growing number of privatized residential governments embedded in and often disconnected from the larger public realm. This centrifugal movement away from the city and urban responsibilities is very different from the back-to-the-city movement and the so-called gentrification process in its lack of commitment to urban living.

What we are seeing in all these pervasive and privatizing reconfigurations of urban life is another form of spatial colonization, less overtly dominated by the state but not entirely different from the blunt institutional expressions of territorial power associated with apartheid or the more technologically advanced spatial tactics of the Israeli military in controlling occupied Palestine. Fear of potential invasion and violence by what the more powerful perceive as threatening "others" drives all these processes of spatial control. This almost endemic and security-obsessed sense of fear has been reaching a fever pitch over the past thirty years of profound urban restructuring, hastening the fortressing of urban space and the drenching of the city with surveillance cameras.

The globalization of capital, labor, and culture, along with the formation of a New Economy and the accompanying explosion of transnational and intranational migration flows, has resulted in the concentration of the richest and the poorest populations of the world in around five hundred megacity regions of more than one million inhabitants. Although it is again impossible to prove conclusively, it is probably safe to say that those city regions with the largest concentrations of the urban population, especially when they differ in culture and ethnicity from domestic populations, are where security-obsessed urbanism and its associated cartography are most advanced. In this sense, the more localized "City of Quartz" described by Mike Davis looking at Los Angeles has exploded globally into his more recent depiction of a "planet of slums" (2007). This deepening chasm between the rich and poor populations of the world is perhaps the most emphatic life-threatening expression of spatial injustice at a global scale.

Public Space and Private Property

Hidden behind the florid materiality of gated communities and privatopias is a more intricate web of spatial injustice deeply rooted in the naturalized sanctification of property rights and privileges. Every square inch of space in every market-based economy has been commodified and commercialized into parcels of valued land that are owned by individuals, corporations (usually considered as individuals under the law), or by the state (considered to be representative of the public at large). Direct social or collective ownership of land or common spaces has almost disappeared as the three-sided ownership model (individual/family, corporate, and state/institutional) has been accepted virtually without question, even when it leads to and sustains the production and reproduction of profound injustices.

This property blanket is the underlayer of a thick sedimentation of bounded spaces that powerfully shape our everyday life. Above (and below) each of us is a stratification of almost innumerable and virtually invisible spatial authorities. Decades ago, it was noted that looking out from the top of the Empire State Building in New York City one could see, if boundaries were visible, more than 1,500 governments. If we could see further into the thick layers of spatial regulation that enmesh us, the numbers would zoom even higher, boggling our geographical

imaginations. Every movement we make crosses some boundary whether we are aware of it or not. Understanding how unfair geographies are formed requires some attention to this underlying blanket of property rights.

The property ownership model upon which American and other capitalist societies have been built originated thousands of years ago in the ancient city-states, was filtered through feudalism, and constituted anew in the aftermath of the American and French revolutions as integral to emerging notions of liberal democracy aimed at combating the influential effects of more radical socialist thought. What became legitimized if not sanctified in this later process was the inalienable right to own property as the central principle in defining the capitalist nation-state, its system of laws, and its revised definition of citizenship. Human rights in general and such specific claims as the right to the city become subordinated to the primacy of rights to property. As a result, a finely grained netting of recorded but usually invisible boundaries was thrown over the earth's surface, creating a perpetual tension between private and public ownership and between private and public space that is played out in everyday life all over the world.

For some the essential starting point in the search for spatial justice is the vigilant defense of public space against the forces of commodification, privatization, and state interference. It is widely contended that public space has been rapidly eroding in contemporary cities, as neoliberal policies of deregulation remove the microspatial structures that maintained our "civil liberties" in place, literally and figuratively. Waves of privatization have been flowing into formerly public arenas of all kinds, compromising freedoms of speech, association, and political expression. Although seeking spatial justice should not be confined only to struggles over public space, such struggles are vital and can be extended in many different directions in the search for justice and the right to the city.

For example, we can see public space as a localized urban expression of the notion of common property or, as it was once called, the commons. These democratic spaces of collective responsibility extend to involve many geographical scales, starting with the microspatial mesh of property ownership itself. All the publicly maintained streets of the city as well as crossroads, plazas, piazzas, and squares are part of the

commons, and so too are the mass transit networks and the buses and trains (if not the automobiles) that move across the city. Think not just of the Bus Riders Union case but also of Rosa Parks demanding her democratic spatial rights to sit anywhere on a public bus. Are sidewalks also part of the commons? Are beaches and parks? Are forests and wilderness areas?

Actually, all these are zones of contention between public and private property rights and local points for social action aimed at assuring residents' rights to use city, in the sense of collective access to the common pool of public resources the city provides. Extending these arguments to the scale of the metropolitan or city region is relatively straightforward, creating the foundation for what some now call community-based regionalism, regionwide coalition building for local community development and environmental justice. The mobilizing idea of the commons can be extended still further to larger regional, national, and global scales, building on the strategies defined in struggles over the regional right to the city and associated demands for access to public goods and services no matter where they may be available. Raising the scale to national and global levels makes it possible to expand the notion of the collective commons to include all natural and cultural resources that are shared by all the world's inhabitants, from clean air and water to sites of natural beauty, ecological significance, and cultural heritage. It does not take much to see how local struggles for spatial justice, the right to the city, can be connected to global movements for planetary sustainability and universal human rights. The scales of spatial justice are not separate and distinct; they interact and interweave in complex patterns.

My purpose making these cross-scalar connections is not to attack property rights and private property ownership in themselves, or to call for a revolutionary transformation into collective ownership as the only solution to the problems involved, but to use a critical spatial perspective to open up a fresh look at the subject of public versus private space and to explore the possibilities for developing new strategies to achieve greater socio-spatial justice. The aim is to heighten awareness of the powerful grip on our lives that comes from the political organization of space as it is imposed from above as a form of social control and maintained by the local state, the legal system, and the land market.

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Endogenous Geographies of Spatial Discrimination

The whereness or taking place of spatial justice is not only shaped from above by the exogenous drawing of territorial boundaries and the impositions of hierarchical power. It is also configured from below through what can be broadly called endogenous processes of locational decision making and the aggregate distributional effects that arise from them. In this sense, spatial justice and injustice are seen as the outcome of countless decisions made about emplacement, where things are put in space.

Distributional Inequalities and Discriminatory Geographies

Distributional inequality is the most basic and obvious expression of spatial injustice, at least when emphasizing geographical outcomes rather than the processes that produce them. Take, for instance, the distribution of doctors, hospitals, clinics, and other health services. In every urban region, some effort is made to distribute health facilities in ways that will provide equal access to the entire population, but when seen from a spatial perspective, such equal access is virtually impossible to achieve. Some distributional inequality is inevitable, in part because of the differential effects of relative location and distance friction on consumers and in part due to the locational decisions made by individuals producing the services. Budget requirements, institutional inefficiency, personal greed, racial bigotry, differential wealth and social power, and a host of other factors add to this basic distributional inequality, creating locationally biased and hence discriminatory geographies of accessibility to health services and perhaps more seriously to public health itself.

Similar distributional inequalities arise with regard to all basic needs of urban life, ranging from such vital public services as education, mass transit, police and crime prevention, to more privatized provisioning of adequate food, housing, and employment. The end result is an often self-perpetuating interweaving of spatial injustices that, at least after passing a certain level of tolerance, can be seen as a fundamental violation of urban-based civil rights and legal or constitutional guarantees of equality and justice. This is what came to the surface in the Bus Riders Union case and underlies nearly all struggles for spatial justice.

Distributional inequalities are the more visible outcome of deeper processes of spatial discrimination set in place by a multitude of individual decisions made by many different, often competing actors. Urban