Finding Space Beyond Variables: An Analytical Review of Urban Space and Social Inequalities

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Abstract

One of the legacies of the Chicago School of urban sociology is the enduring view of urban space as a proxy for demographic, structural, economic or behavioral variables. In this paper I review that approach in its multiple forms, but also appraise the other ways that urban space has been attended to in social theory and empirical studies, focusing on relations of race, class, and sexuality. I present three major theoretical dimensions of the intersection of urban space, social inequality and social difference: (a) urban space as inscribed by boundaries and reflective of patterns of social difference and inequality; (b) urban space as a site and object of struggle between social groups; and (c) urban space as a vehicle for social reproduction through the logic of its universe.

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ABSTRACT

Attention to the element of space in the urban setting illuminates how social inequalities and social difference are reproduced and contested. In this review essay, I draw upon urban social research to demonstrate the relevance and utility of spatial analysis in the city, focusing on the dimensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. I present a conceptual framework for analyzing the intersection of urban space, social inequality, and social difference: (a) urban space as inscribed by boundaries and reflective of patterns of social difference and inequality; (b) urban space as a site and object of struggle between social groups; and (c) urban space as a vehicle for social reproduction through the logic of its universe.

Edward Soja points to the recent "spatial turn" of the late 1990s, in which he finds a "renewed awareness of the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, historical, and spatial dimensions of our lives, their inseparability and often problematic interdependence" (2000:7). Drawing on Michel Foucault's (1984) attention to the intersections of space, knowledge, and power and Henri Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualization of the relations between spatiality, society and history, social researchers across disciplines have increasingly turned toward examining the social production of space, particularly urban space.

This synthesis between identities, social inequality, and geography, slowly coming to be recognized in greater part by social researchers, is a lesson that comes to us from the geographers, such as Lynn Staeheli and Patricia Martin (2000) who point out that a fundamental tenet of geography is that space is constructed in and through social relations that are as fluid as the social positions and identities that led to their production. However, while it is essential that we incorporate the wisdom of the geographers for future research, there is also a wealth of latent spatial insights to be culled from a wide range of authoritative social research on urban inequalities that either preceded the so-called spatial turn or does not necessarily claim

association with spatial analysis.

This analytical review of literature reveals the relevance and utility of spatial analysis in research on urban inequality and social difference. The spatial aspects of social inequality often lie under the surface, yet attention to spatiality can help to illuminate how social inequalities and social difference are distributed, operate, and are reproduced in the urban sphere. Other reviews of literature on urban space tackle elements of inequality separately (e.g., Bondi and Rose [2003] on gender and the city, or Gilbert [1998] on race, space, and the working poor), while others address space and inequality without focusing directly on the urban sphere (e.g., Tickamyer [2000]). This paper incorporates multiple axes of social difference and provides an analytic framework that can be used to address the urban spatial dimensions of a wide range of social relationships. By showing how inequality operates in urban space, not only in the maintenance of social boundaries, but also how struggles are situated in and over space and how spatial location contributes to social reproduction, this review article demonstrates that spatial analysis is important not only for geographers but for all scholars interested in social inequality in cities.

One of the legacies of the Chicago School of urban sociology is the enduring view of urban space as a proxy for demographic, structural, economic or behavioral variables in social research. In this paper I engage that approach in its multiple forms, but also appraise the other ways that urban space has been attended to in social theory and empirical studies. Conceptualizing space as "a social construction that shapes social action and guides behavior," Kevin Fox Gotham argues that "spatial boundaries, identities and meanings are negotiated, defined and produced through social interaction, social conflict and struggles between different groups" (2003:723). Neera Chandoke (1993) also points out that space is socially produced and socially mediated, highlighting the power relations that are embedded within space, as "spatial forms, in effect, symbolize the power arrangements of a society" (65). Space is simultaneously the material context for human activity, but also the product of social processes, and historically-created space molds and influences these processes (66).

APPROACHING THE LITERATURE

In this paper, I present three key analytical dimensions of the intersection of urban space, social inequality and social difference. They are (a) urban space as inscribed by boundaries and reflective of patterns of social difference and inequality; (b) urban space as a site and object of struggle between social groups; and (c) urban space as a vehicle for social reproduction through the logic of its universe. Most work on social inequality and urban space

combines in some variation these three categories, often without recognizing their analytical distinctiveness. For analytic purposes I separate them out here, drawing on different examples to illustrate the various theoretical points. In providing examples of each category I do not intend to be exhaustive of all work that implicitly connects urban space and the infinitely various forms of social inequality; instead, I selectively highlight cases that illuminate the ways spatial perspectives inform our understandings of the urban sphere. In general, these three analytical categories emerged from a broad reading of urban ethnographies, and I draw heavily from these ethnographies as on-the-ground witnesses of the intersection of urban space and inequality. What I might miss in breadth of coverage in topics (since both urban space and social inequality are each very broad subjects) I hope to make up for in fine-tuned attention to the details of urban spatiality and its relevance to issues of race, segregation, poverty, and sexuality.

In the first of the three sections, I engage with the large body of mainstream sociological research that views urban space as divided, segregated, and patterned by inequality in both objectively defined and measurable ways (such as quantitative rates of urban residential segregation) and in less easily detected but still crucial ways (such as the imagined and invisible boundaries that separate poor neighborhoods from gentrifying areas). This section is the longest and most extensive, since social research has tended to privilege this perspective on the relationship between space and inequality, from the earlier works in urban sociology to the more recent. This perspective also has the longest roots in classical theory and the Chicago School of urban sociology.

In the next section on urban space, politics, economics, and identity I present space as a resource of many forms that is fought over, utilized, and operated in for struggles as small as control over the courtyard of a housing project to the definition of appropriate uses for public park space. I draw on the spatiality of sexuality, both in the history of gay urban sociality and the patterning of sexuality as it relates to the establishment of identity. I briefly engage with the political economic perspective on space, which has a deep tradition in sociology. This has been crucial for understanding the impact of economics and politics on the shape and form of urban space, which in turn has an effect on the reproduction of inequality in urban space. In this section, I also turn to looking at the city street as a site of micro-social interaction patterned by structural relationships of inequality and social difference.

In the final section, I present a more subjectivist perspective, highlighting the role of space in the social reproduction of inequality. Here "the neighborhood" is shown to act as both a spatial form and a cultural form simultaneously. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, in this configuration, demonstrates how "the neighborhood" is a portable form of culture that has

serious implications for the life chances of its inhabitants. The habitus of residents in impoverished neighborhoods is seen as both a product of the setting and a mechanism for the reproduction of poverty and isolation from mainstream society.

Urban Space as Patterned by Boundaries

A basic observation about urban space is that there is a patterning of this space by different social categories. Social groups are clustered in various sections of the urban landscape; the rich do not tend to live in the same space as the poor, and neighborhoods often have a dominant racial category associated with that particular area. In its most basic form, urban space can be recognized as inscribed by boundaries and reflective of patterns of social difference and inequality. In this perspective, differentiated urban spaces are perceived as representative of social categories themselves; spaces are symbolically divided and associated with different social categories. Moreover, divisions in urban space are seen to both *reflect* and *reinforce* existing social and structural divisions in society. The notion of urban space itself is built upon division; without difference and division social space is considered to be meaningless. In an urban social context, space does not take on meaning until such meaning is attributed by association with social categories or interests.

Urban spatial boundaries can be appreciated in either their objective or invisible forms, or what Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar (2002:2-3) refer to as "social" and "symbolic boundaries." *Social* boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. *Symbolic* boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and space. They are tools by which people are separated into groups, and through which people acquire status and monopolize resources. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and structure social interaction in important ways, translating into social boundaries in the form of patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (2-3).

Taking the first category of boundaries, social boundaries, we see that urban spatial boundaries can be objectified in that they are measurable or detectable through such tools as surveying and census-taking, which illuminates such patterns of inequality as concentrations of poverty or wealth in one area of the city. It is the most well-established way of looking at urban space, with an emphasis on observable differentiation and distribution of social categories across space. It lends itself most easily to quantitative and large-scale study, in which the patterning of inequality can be demonstrated

through statistical calculations and is presumed to be most objective in its claims and evidence.

These patterns are simultaneously reflective of invisible boundaries, which are the form that boundaries take at the subjective or cultural level. Invisible boundaries reflect the meanings that urban spaces acquire through local knowledge or cultural attribution, such as areas deemed to be dangerous or neighborhoods associated with certain racial groups. These are symbolic boundaries that are distributed across spaces with meanings that exist in relation to one another. Most importantly, these invisible boundaries are the underpinnings for the reproduction of objective boundaries, but are equally powerful in their impact.

The city has always been seen as an excellent laboratory for examining how these two patterns of symbolic and social boundaries intersect, since the city is a site for intense territoriality and dramatic relations of inequality existing side by side. Moreover, the city makes visible the boundaries and categories that exist within society at a structural level and, using the terminology of Lamont and Molnar, at the symbolic level. The urban form is a socio-spatial pattern that reflects divisions operating at the level of structure and culture. How these boundaries are patterned (in the form of social boundaries) and how they are maintained (through symbolic boundaries) are two central concerns for urban social theorists.

Sociology has a long history of perceiving the inscription of social difference and categories in space, beginning with the classical theorists. Emile Durkheim was concerned with how categories are inscribed in space, the cultural origins of categorization, and how social integration and social organization are produced as a whole out of the different parts. In focusing on the basic social function of classification and the production of social groups out of an indistinct whole, he argued (1995[1912]:444) that society itself is only possible if the individuals and things that make it up are already divided up into groups by members of that society, and if those groups are classified in relation to one another. He saw this is as an inherently spatial process, in which space itself was the link between social categories and social organization.

The Chicago School and its followers were the first sociologists to systematically present a conception of the city as a socio-spatial form. The carving up of the city into spatial and social zones was central to the Chicago School ecology of urban areas, which sought to depict patterns of urban growth and patterns of social segregation. The Chicago School ecological model of urban growth presented the city as a product of human nature, with the structure of the city responding to the needs of its inhabitants. Urban growth was a process of succession, in which there was a tendency of the inner zones to extend its area by invading the next outer zone, similar to a process

in plant ecology. In the expansion of the city, a process of distribution occurs which sifts and sorts individuals and groups by residence and occupation in a setting of competition and accommodation (Park 1967; Burgess 1967). The city is likened to an organism (see especially McKenzie 1967), in which its growth is fundamentally natural, meaning uncontrolled and undesigned. The forms it tends to assume are those which represent and correspond to the functions that it is called upon to perform (Tonkiss 2006:33). In the models of urban space presented in the Chicago School (see Burgess 1967) there was a sorting process in which each racial, national, and cultural group will tend to find its habitat in the natural areas that the city provides.

Beginning with the Chicago School, lines of social difference were mapped around functional and cultural divisions of space. Chicago School theorists linked urban spaces to distinctive social groups, creating a spatiality to the urban form and to cultural difference that was previously undeveloped. Urban space came to be seen as divided and organized by social boundaries that were connected to class, race, ethnicity, and degree of assimilation. Simultaneously, ethnicity and race became more than just a cultural label; it was spatialized in a way that recognized the extent of concentration and segregation, and linked cultural assimilation to spatial movement from the inner city to the outer rings of the urban area.

Underlying the Chicago School's ecological model runs a current of functionalism, which brought it under attack in later years (see Logan and Molotch 1987) despite the utility of the models for connecting urban spatiality and social difference. In an attempt to demonstrate the urban form as a functioning and interdependent whole, the Chicago School theorists failed to account for tensions and struggles over material and symbolic resources that are inherent in the spatiality of social groups. In this conceptualization, social inequality exists, but it is an anticipated and natural relationship among parts of an organic whole that together forms the urban sphere.

Nonetheless, the Chicago School's emphasis on spatiality and urban form provides the basis for later theorization of cities as divided by social class, race, gender, and sexuality. While visible patterns of segregation by socio-economic class are easily detected within American urban space, it is racial segregation that has been afforded the most significant attention in American cities, both theoretically and in quantity of research production. Rates of racial segregation vary by city, but it is generally understood that different racial groups tend to be clustered in different parts of cities. The existence of entire neighborhoods that are exclusively one race or another is not a recent development. Residential segregation by race has not declined in recent years, but rather has persisted at high levels (Ovadia 2003; Charles 2003; Clark 1986; Adelman 2004), demonstrating that social boundaries are an enduring and durable feature of urban space. Tactics have been employed

in an attempt to reduce these spatial boundaries that exist between white and non-white residents, such as school busing (Olzak, Shanahan, and West 1994) and quotas for racial categories in schools to increase integration. Also, efforts to reduce the persistence of "redlining" (discriminatory lending or insurance practices based on geographic location) in housing markets are also in effect, which function to reproduce spatial boundaries between the races (Massey and Denton 1993). Despite the attention to racial boundaries, levels of urban racial segregation remain high. Below, I discuss how space configures into both the current conditions of and debates about the urban non-white poor, as well as the urban policies toward dealing with the urban poor. Social research has tended to focus heavily on the black-white binary, since it appears to be the most entrenched of divisions based on race, despite the increasing ethnic diversity of modern cities[1].

The urban ghetto has long been studied in both its objective spatial form and for the symbolic boundaries and meanings associated with it. Beginning with W. E. B. DuBois's (1899) intensive field work in Philadelphia's black community, the "inner city" has been conceived of as a symbolically bounded space whose residents are presumed to have a set of certain properties and attributes that can be measured, such as poverty rates, unemployment rates, and low rates of home ownership.[2] The study of urban neighborhoods and their social effects, which has a long history in urban sociology and especially in the study of such social questions as poverty, race or ethnicity, or community, has often been particularly attuned to questions of space as it connects to issues of social inequality. Classic urban ethnographies, both within what has been called "the ghetto" and other types of tightly knit communities, are often grounded in certain spatial locations, from the general neighborhood to the more specific location of "the streetcorner" (Whyte 1966; Liebow 1967; Anderson 1978, 1999). Nonetheless, this approach also has a few critics, which perceive this "neighborhood effects" model of urban poverty to be nothing more than a "space-as-container ontology" that places limits on understanding the dynamic relationship between urban poverty and the inner city (Gotham 2003:723).

Along the way, the term "the ghetto" has become shorthand for describing a set of economic realities, problems, attributes, and in some cases

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[1]Moreover, discussions of urban space and ethnic minorities other than African Americans are often framed in terms of cultural assimilation and immigration patterns, rather than race per se.

[2]DuBois, as well as black nationalists and black separatists, later came to see the potential benefits of voluntary segregation for the African American community. They argued that independence from white culture would lead to self-reliance, economic and political self-sufficiency, and racial pride.

a set of values and behaviors with which it has been associated. In this way, "the ghetto" has been used as a spatial coding for anything from culture to economic conditions to historical conditions. It is simultaneously a spatial and symbolic construct that represents both a physical location (in the center of an urban area and bounded by certain streets) and a corresponding set of social conditions. This same process has occurred with respect to other ethnic enclaves, such as the Chinatowns that can be found in many cities. Particularly in the 19th century, Chinatowns were seen as a spatially-located public health threat to the rest of the city, perceived as a "medical menace" and the site of sickness, crime, vice, poverty, and depravity (Shah 2001).

Placement of housing projects in the ghetto is also found to be simultaneously a political and spatial process. According to Steven Gregory (1998), the predominantly black and poor housing project of Lefrak City in Queens, NY, was viewed as a threat to the quality of life of the surrounding neighborhoods, a potent symbol linking anxieties about urban decline and crime to ideologies of black welfare dependency and family pathology. Housing projects are often built in socially and spatially isolated locations, within already impoverished neighborhoods and in areas with little contact with surrounding communities, particularly more stable white neighborhoods. Thus, the housing projects inevitably become labeled as a space of danger that needs to be contained and isolated to prevent spillage into local communities.

Diverging perspectives on the meaning of the "inner city" or "ghetto" as a socio-spatial construct are highlighted in the "race versus class" debate, in which the problems of inner city residents are alternately explained as a function of racial oppression or as a product of their social class status and dislocation from the labor market. For those in the "race" camp, the ghetto has always been and remains a *racialized* space, in which urban spatial boundaries are protected and defended to prevent racial integration (Massey and Denton 1993). For others, the spatial boundaries of the ghetto are constructed primarily through the dimensions of *class*, pointing to the fact that the more economically successful members of racial minority groups increasingly live outside the confines of the inner city (Wilson 1987).

Urban space is also dissected by symbolic racial boundaries, in which race operates at a more cultural and micro-interactional level. Members of racial groups are more likely to feel comfortable and welcome in certain public spaces, and boundaries are protected when interlopers are encountered. Certain neighborhoods are more or less open to members of different racial or ethnic groups, in which there is a symbolic coding of space as particular to that group. In a classic study of territoriality in urban slum neighborhoods, Gerald Suttles (1968) found that each ethnic group was taken to be a socio-spatial unit. The marking of territory and

the defense of boundaries were crucial for the various ethnic groups that he studied. Elijah Anderson, in his 1999 study of two adjacent neighborhoods, one undergoing a process of white gentrification while the other remained a province of the black lower-class, found that there were invisible boundaries separating the two. The two neighborhoods were separated by an avenue, on either side of which there were noticeable differences in housing values, skin color, and safety, operating as an invisible boundary that reflected the symbolic boundaries between the two groups of residents. These boundaries are defined and maintained in different ways by each community; through experiences of hostility and hospitality in the two neighborhoods, one learns where one can and cannot go without receiving an unfavorable reaction. Thus, interactional patterns based on symbolic boundaries of race and class support these invisible boundaries inscribed onto physical space within the neighborhood.[3]

Urban space is also marked by class boundaries, insofar as the segregation of economic classes is found in all cities to varying degrees and can be measured and compared (Swanstrom, Dreier, and Mollenkopf 2002). Neighborhoods are also symbolic markers of class status; residential or workplace addresses, and even spaces of consumption and leisure time (such as patronage of elite shopping areas) can be "read" for class status indicators. These invisible spatial boundaries of urban space correspond loosely to class boundaries as they exist in cultural form; the two reinforce each other through social associations such as in the neighborhood and the school system (c.f. Lamont and Fournier 1992).

Urban space is also imbued with invisible symbolic boundaries that are based on gender (for a general discussion of boundaries and gender, see Epstein 1988, 1992). Feminist geographers in recent years have begun to expose the connections between space and gender (Brown and Staeheli 2003). There is a long history in Western culture of the gendering of space in which symbolic boundaries are erected between the public and private sphere (MacKenzie and Rose 1983), with the separation of home and work in the industrial and post-industrial economy as the foundation of this distinction. Women in Western culture have traditionally been relegated to interior spaces, within the private arena of the home, leaving the public world to men.

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[3]Eric Avila, in his book *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, also points to a process of symbolic boundary construction in the process of suburbanization and white flight out of major cities in the postwar era. He notes that cities such as Los Angeles, which saw a rapid increase in its minority population during that time period, came to be associated with ethnic diversity while the suburbs became a spatial construction based on whiteness and (ethnic) homogeneity. Thus, symbolic racial boundaries are not only drawn *within* cities, but also *around* them.

This attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere has been shown to be a specifically spatial control on identity and independence (Massey 1994).

Within the urban sphere, the street itself has historically been implicitly gendered male, with sociality in the street reserved for interaction between men; women who ventured into public space until recently in Western culture risked association with prostitution or immorality. Today, women's fear of urban spaces produces subjective boundaries between "safe spaces" and "dangerous places," as women alter their behavior and patterns of movement in the city to avoid potential safety risks (Koskela and Pain 2000; Pain 2001; Koskela 1997). The city has alternately been portrayed as "liberatory" and "confining" for women, revealing an analytical divide between those who perceive how urban space constrains, disadvantages, and oppresses women and those who see it as allowing women to escape the constraints of patriarchal and heteronormative expectations (Bondi and Rose 2003). In order to fully understand how women interact with urban space, more work needs to be done in this area that accounts for changes in gender norms and the conditions of the modern post-industrial urban sphere. Attention to issues of spatiality, specifically to the formation of social boundaries, the defense and maintenance of those boundaries, and how they serve to reproduce social inequalities, will prove to be immensely revealing for the construction of gender in the urban sphere, as it has been for other dimensions of social difference.

Urban Space as Site and Object of Struggle

Urban space is also a "site and object" (Auyero 2005) of struggle between social groups and over control of resources. It is also the landscape on which social identities are created and negotiated, often through a process of social struggle. This perspective on urban space challenges the legacy of the Chicago School functionalist tradition by viewing cities not as an integrated unit but as a contested site for the production of inequality and the formation of social identities. Moreover, urban space is also rapidly changing in the era of globalization, which has significant implications for urban class inequality.

Urban space is a landscape of social struggle for the urban poor as they seek to establish residence and earn a living, from shantytown dwellers in India (Chandoke 1993), vendors in Chile (Stillerman 2006), and vendors in New York City (Duneier 1999). Marginalized social groups strive to carve out a space in the urban sphere to reproduce themselves while capitalist and civil interests seek to minimize their public visibility. The patterns of spatial practices of the urban poor have been shown to challenge the spatial order of planned urban spaces, disrupting the intended uses of space by authorities

and contesting the coherence of the urban sphere. From marginalized social groups such as outdoor prostitutes who deliberately seek to occupy the "spaces in between" as a site for illicit activity, to scavengers who seek to sell products they collect from dumpsters, spatial practices are strategic for the success of their activities. For those who actively challenge the social and political order, space is also a factor to be considered in the outcomes of collective action: "whether as a terrain to be occupied, an obstacle to be overcome, or as an enabler to have in mind, [space] matters in the production of collective action" (Auyero 2005:567).

The political economic perspective on the urban sphere points us toward an appreciation of urban space as the site for an extended struggle between people and institutions seeking to achieve opposing goals in the metropolis (Logan and Molotch 1987:vii). In *Urban Fortunes*, John Logan and Harvey Molotch locate this struggle in the basic tension between developers and elites interested in urban space for its exchange value as a commodity in the capitalist market, and residents whose primary concern for space is of its use value as a place of residence and community formation. It is through this contentious pursuit of use and exchange values, in the form of social action by neighborhood residents on the one hand and capitalist interests on the other, that the attributes of urban space are achieved and defined.

Space is also the site and object of struggle for the urban poor within public housing structures. In his ethnography of a housing project in Chicago, Sudhir Venkatesh (1999) finds that the battle for control over space occurs at several different levels. It is useful to examine these at length, since this example illustrates a wide host of important aspects of spatial properties. First, space mattered as a concern over where the housing project was situated within the city, and Venkatesh argues that the placement of the Robert Taylor Homes housing project in a socially isolated area of the city, away from white communities and even separated from more stable black communities, was a function of neighborhood interests which cohered to designate its location. This had a strong impact on the degree of social isolation of project residents from stores and businesses that are vital to a community. Next, after extensive debate over which building plans would be most conducive to the making of a livable public housing environment, in the end a final (and less expensive) plan was adopted that included little open space to allow for interaction, daily commerce, social control or neighborliness (17). This spatio-locational decision had a serious deleterious effect on the quality of life within the project. This case illustrates the modern antagonism between the administration of space for rational planning and economic accumulation, and the use of space for everyday purposes, or the inhabiting of space, as it is seen in the planning and development of housing projects (39).

Within the physical structure of Venkatesh's housing project, intense battles over the control of space ensued. As public spaces such as playgrounds, lobbies, elevators, stairs, and hallways were unsupervised, they became unsafe, and travel within the project became a source of anxiety and danger for residents. As gangs proliferated, these public spaces came under the control of gangs as their "turf," particularly the open spaces between the buildings. Space, for these gangs, was a resource to control for the purposes of dealing drugs and establishing territorial boundaries. Venkatesh also notes that the physical structure of the project was a serious deterrent to involving the police in crime control, as officers felt exposed when approaching buildings or entering public spaces because the galleries above provided areas in which gang members could fire upon them. In this context, space was both a resource (for the gangs) and an obstacle (for the residents and police) in negotiations for social control. Similar issues of control over space have been noted in other ethnographies of housing projects, such as Gregory (1998), in which quality of life in public spaces was threatened by crime, drug sales, and even police harassment.

Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, also highlights this question of how control over public space in cities is established. As she notes, "[t]he first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street of peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police…. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves" (1961:31-32). She criticizes orthodox city planning as lacking insight into the interaction between the physical urban structure, patterns of use by residents, and the potential impact on safety and civic life. For Jacobs, the "eyes on the street" of everyday pedestrian traffic and local resident observation is crucial to public safety and order in urban space, for the informal system of surveillance that it provides cannot be rivaled in its effectiveness. While city planners might call for "more open space," she finds open space with no traffic or integration into patterns of activity are like dead spaces or "bleak vacuums" such as the ones in dangerous parks or between housing project buildings. Interaction on the street by a variety of users, as a function of the integration of commercial and residential enterprises she notes, is what produces city vitality, quality of life, safety, and security.[4]

Use of urban public space also figures heavily in the history of gay urban sexuality. It is connected to the development of the gay identity, to the daily practices of gay populations, and to the potential for political

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[4]While Jacobs has been an influential figure in urban planning, her critics have also pointed to the ways in which she has ignored the role of real estate developers and state power in urban redevelopment, and inspired gentrification in her fondness for old working-class neighborhoods (Zukin 2006; Gans 2006).

power in electoral politics. I will address the relationship between sexuality, social struggle and resources, and urban spatiality by focusing on two key points: (a) the alternative uses of public urban space for social contact by gay populations, and (b) the significance of gay neighborhoods and territories as it relates to visibility and the potential for generating political power.

Urban space has consistently been coded in popular culture as a space of sexual liberation, of anonymity and density of population that allows for a certain sexual licentiousness and freedom unimaginable in small towns or suburbs. The city has drawn gay men and women toward its center for centuries, and a history of homosexuality in urban areas reveals a complex system and pattern of use of public space as an arena for sexual adventure, social contact, and community formation. In cities around the world, there has been a pattern of appropriation of public urban space for sexual activity while concealing these behaviors from the general public and police. These activities were generally situated on the margins of public life (Higgs 1999; Chauncey 1994).

From New York City to Paris and Moscow, throughout the ages, there have been similar patterns of use (with some local variation dependent upon political and cultural conditions) of non-commercial public space by homosexual men seeking sexual contact (Chauncey 1994; Higgs 1999). Public parks, riverbanks, public toilets, train stations, commercial arcades designed for window shopping, swimming pools, public gardens and monuments, in the bushes or along certain paths within wooded areas, along certain boulevards at certain times of day, and bath houses have all been noted as urban sites of "cruising" and sexual encounters for men engaging in homosexual activity. By occupying these spaces for unintended uses, homosexuals re-signify the spaces and give them meanings for which they were not intended by city planners and developers. A park used as a site for cruising at night becomes incorporated by homosexuals into a repertoire of locations that serve their particular interests, subverting the intended purposes of those spaces. Uses of the street in gay street culture historically came under attack by reformers because they challenged bourgeois conceptions of public order, the proper boundaries between public and private space, and the social practices appropriate to each (Chauncey 1994:180). The historical and contemporary context of prostitution reveals similar patterns of subversive use of public space (Gilfoyle 1992; Gaissad 2005) as well as the tensions that typically ensue when local residents and sex workers seek to claim the same residential streets for their own purposes (Tani 2002).

Disruption of the heteronormativity of public space has also been a goal for the gay movement, in which the visibility of homosexuality itself is perceived to be subversive (Binnie and Valentine 1999; Bell 2001; Davis 1995; Castells 1985). Leaders of the gay movement have traditionally drawn

upon the notion of "spectacle" as a tactic for creating visibility, from the dramatics of queer pride parades to staged public events by queer HIV activists. The Stonewall Rebellion, commonly referred to as the moment that launched the contemporary gay and lesbian movement, in which gay and transgendered individuals resisted police harassment at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, can be seen as a public acclamation of and defense of gay public space. Even the metaphor of movement from inside "the closet" to full disclosure about one's sexual orientation hinges on a type of spatial metaphor in which visibility is perceived as disruptive. In this context, public urban space is a site of struggle for social rights, and for validation as a marginalized identity. It is the landscape upon which identities are formed and produced, and upon which struggles over the definition of spaces are worked out between dominant and marginalized groups.

Spatial concentration of gays and lesbians in one area, either residential or commercial, is also seen as key to visibility and strength as a marginalized group. In this context, urban space is a *resource* that links density of population with political power. According to Manuel Castells (1985), spatial concentration is inseparable from the development of the gay community and vital for the establishment of gay culture and political power. Tim Davis (1995:284) also notes: "American gay politics has historically depended upon the establishment and use of residential territories (known as gay territories, gay ghettos or liberated zones) as a survival tactic, as the center for the creation of a common identity, [and] as a base for electoral power." Castells (1985) documents the development of the gay community in San Francisco, and its impact on electoral politics as the gay vote became increasingly important for local political outcomes. He links spatial organization to the emergence of a social movement and shows how it can become a political force. Here we see how culture impacts a city, its forms, its trajectory, and even its politics. This is contradictory to the traditional models, which evaluate politics and economics as distinct and separate from culture and cultural movements. Even further, the gay neighborhood can be seen as a spatial expression of the link between gay identity, urban space, and consumption, in which the cultural market plays an increasingly important role in the development of gay subjectivities (Binnie 1995; Davis 1995).

In another vein of thought on the interaction between culture, urban space, and the economic sphere we find the extensive debate over the impact of globalization on the city. David Harvey (1990) points to "time-space compression" as a mechanism for the increasing economic and cultural interdependence of cities and nations. This erosion of spatial boundaries points to the emergence of a universal global culture and "placelessness," reducing the heterogeneity of urban spaces across the globe. Urban space,

as the link between the local and the global, is also the site of struggle under increasing global inequality. As jobs move overseas and deindustrialization in American cities grows as a function of capital mobility, low-skilled inner-city urban labor is less capable of adapting to the new service economy and has become increasingly dislocated from the labor market. Urban class inequality has been noted to have increased under globalization as a result of this bifurcated labor market in which white-collar workers are poised to take advantage of the new opportunities. Thus, the impact of globalization on urban space and class inequality is extensive, pushing some ahead and others behind, and creating new connections between local issues and global forces.

Urban Space as Mechanism for Social Reproduction

Urban space can also be seen as a vehicle for social reproduction through the logic of its universe. Specifically, the neighborhood is simultaneously a spatial form and a cultural form that plays a crucial role in the reproduction of race and class inequality. The mechanism through which this has been shown to operate is the *habitus*, a term most closely associated today with Pierre Boudieu's social philosophy; it can be understood as "an embodied, as well as a cognitive, sense of place" in which a practical wisdom emerges from one's spatial location (Hillier and Rooksby 2002:21). The habitus is generally used by social reproduction theorists to link culture to social reproduction, but in locating culture within a spatial form such as the neighborhood the connections between urban space and the habitus clearly emerge.

Ethnographies of impoverished urban communities provide vivid accounts of how this process works. First, as a basic observation, urban ethnographies are typically situated within one (or sometimes more than one) neighborhood, with the basic presumption that to study a particular social condition it is necessary to locate that condition in space. Thus, the neighborhood itself is portrayed as encompassing a certain commonality between its residents, in which a relationship between them exists. This does not imply that all members of that spatial community are equally impacted by social forces from within and without that location, nor that they all live under identical conditions (same class, same race, same religion, etc.). Nonetheless, there is usually a spatial boundedness to an urban ethnography of poverty that delimits some sort of a "site" in which to observe social behavior and relations.

I draw here on two examples of urban ethnographies of impoverished communities, which can illuminate the latent connections between space, habitus, and the reproduction of social inequality. These two communities are

both "ecologically isolated" (Bourgois 1996:8), resembling a "holding pen for the economically immobile" (Young 2004:6). In these neighborhoods, there is a concentration of people who are socially dislocated from mainstream American society and especially from the legitimate labor market. This persistent economic and social condition within the neighborhood has led to the development of an inner-city street culture, which entails a complex web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values, and ideologies that emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society (Bourgois 1996:8). In a study of El Barrio, a neighborhood in East Harlem in New York City, Philippe Bourgois argues that this "street culture of resistance" offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity in a context where this is unavailable within the mainstream labor market. This oppositional culture, defined as a reaction to social marginalization, leads to a "cultural dislocation" from the new service economy, which requires obedience to the norms of office culture in entry-level jobs that operate in direct contradiction to street culture. Hence, the logic of the streets is both a reaction to and serves to reproduce actors' social dislocation from the mainstream economy.

      The cultural capital of inner city street culture is non-transferable to the legitimate capital market. Vastly different sets of cultural capital are necessary for success within the underground economy and the legal economy. Bourgois points to an example of a man who was capable of heading a flourishing drug empire but lacked the requisite knowledge for establishing a legitimate business outside of the drug market. This disjuncture in the applicability of cultural capital from within the urban ghetto to contexts external to the neighborhood milieu operates as a linchpin in the reproduction of social inequality. The logic of the inner-city neighborhood, as a socially and economically isolated entity, which imparts a certain form of knowledge and cultural capital to its inhabitants, serves to reproduce this social isolation.

      Alford Young Jr.'s (2004) study of men in a Chicago ghetto echoes these same social processes, but provides an additional wrinkle to the evidence that connects structure to social reproduction. He found that many of the men in his study had little exposure to the world outside the ghetto, and that their framing of issues having to do with racial and class inequality was intricately connected to their degree of contact with people of other races and classes. According to Young:

> The degree of exposure that men have had to the world
> beyond the Near West Side emerges as key to understanding
> the differences in the breadth and depth of their worldviews.
> Such exposure might have come about for some through a
> few months of work in a downtown fast food restaurant, for

others, though incarceration in a penal institution. Whatever the circumstances, such exposure provided opportunities for these men to interact across racial and class lines. Overall, interaction with other worlds led to the acquisition of a more profound understanding of the inequities in social power and influence, and how these forces can affect individual lives (2004:14).

Following Young's observations, it appears that the extent to which one has been isolated within the neighborhood has a crucial impact on one's knowledge about the social world. The neighborhood, then, is a spatial construct that organizes one's activities, behavior, even one's worldview and depth of knowledge about the world. "The neighborhood" here is both a description of a physically bounded spatial form, which includes parameters defined by streets and formal boundaries, but is simultaneously a social construct that has a great impact on one's knowledge about the social world, which in turn influences one's life chances.

The mechanism through which this social reproduction occurs is the habitus, a term that emerges from Bourdieu's extensive studies on class inequality (see Bourdieu [1990] for clear discussion of habitus). The habitus mediates between structure and practice within the inner city resident by generating schemes of perception, thought and action that are in synch with his or her social conditions. It is in the habitus that cultural capital, modes of interaction, values and ideologies are stored, where the logic of the universe in which subjects operate are deposited. These are the tools upon which people draw in order to tackle social situations, and these tools are the product of past experiences, which provided lessons for how to operate in social life. For the inner city dweller, the habitus includes forms of cultural capital and skills synchronized with his or her local environment; these may be significantly out of step with the capital necessary to be successful in dominant culture. Thus, it is in the habitus that social dislocation is reproduced, since the habitus is attuned to a social environment that is removed from mainstream society.

The habitus of the inner city dweller is a product of his or her neighborhood, which is simultaneously a structural, cultural, and spatial construct. The habitus is the link between the neighborhood as urban space and the neighborhood as cultural form, and a principle of the continuity of the reproduction of conditions which consistently affect the inner-city resident. Hence, the urban space of the neighborhood is not only the site for the reproduction of poverty, but also engenders a portable form of culture in the habitus that has an impact on life chances and success for inner-city residents.

CONCLUSION

Cities are dissected by lines of social difference that are at play within a broad political, economic and cultural field. As I have demonstrated here, urban space is alternately used as a site for claiming political rights, for the practice of a marginalized sexual identity, and as a place for capitalist reproduction or for the creation of community. It operates as a stand-in for racial and class categories, and as a mechanism for reproducing patterns of social inequality through the embodiment of place. Urban space has both objective boundaries, which can be measured and quantified, as well as invisible or symbolic boundaries, which operate through local knowledge and social meaning. We see that the neighborhood is simultaneously a structural, cultural, economic, and political construct, in addition to a spatial one. As the social relations through which urban space is constructed are produced through struggle, negotiation, and power dynamics, the spatial forms of the city take on these dimensions.

This review essay has illustrated the spatiality of social inequalities within the urban sphere, presenting a conceptual framework that moves the discussion of urban inequalities beyond demographic or behavioral variables toward a more comprehensive understanding of how urban space matters for city residents. Urban social research on inequalities has tended to take space for granted, drawing on it implicitly in their analyses yet failing to fully consider its effects and power in reproducing social inequalities or as a tool for social actors. Attention to spatiality can illuminate how social inequalities are reproduced in the urban sphere along multiple axes. Any further study of social inequality in the city, whether it is on race, class, gender, sexuality, or any other form of social differentiation, would be well advised to consider the dimension of space in its analysis.

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