

The racial state and resistance in Ferguson and beyond

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Abstract

This virtual special issue considers the empirical and theoretical resources that the back catalogue of *Urban Studies* specifically, and the discipline of urban studies more broadly, has to offer our understanding of the rapidly evolving contemporary moment in the USA, usefully dubbed ‘The Age of Ferguson’ (Bernard (2015); Derickson (forthcoming)). Mobilising the concept of the ‘racial state’, this article considers Ferguson in the context of state rescaling and globalisation to continue to flesh out the role that difference and its geographical expression play in smoothing out and justifying the neoliberalisation of urban governance (see Derickson (2014)), and to begin to develop ‘countertopographies’ (Katz (2001)) that link up the margins of the Global North and South. In so doing, I engage each of the papers included in the special issue to consider how they contribute to and stretch our understanding of the present racial conjuncture, and to provide a first cut at thinking the Age of Ferguson relationally (Derickson, forthcoming; Jacobs (2012), through urban governance, racialisation, territorial stigmatisation’ (Garbin and Millington (2012)), policing and urban social movements.

Keywords

Ferguson, racial state, racialisation, urban politics

This virtual special issue considers the empirical and theoretical resources that the back catalogue of *Urban Studies* specifically, and the discipline of urban studies more broadly, has to offer our understanding of the rapidly evolving contemporary moment in the USA, usefully dubbed ‘The Age of Ferguson’ (Bernard, 2015; Derickson, forthcoming). This phrase refers to a changing social and technological landscape, in which ubiquitous tools of surveillance (i.e. cell phones, security and police cameras) combine with the distribution channels provided by social media to offer a new window on

encounters between police and people of colour. These images and associated events have provided a platform for an emergent social movement that has coalesced around the phrase ‘Black Lives Matter’ (Garza, 2014). The apparent regularity of problematic encounters over the past year has breathed new force into claims that

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seemingly geographically disparate and unrelated events are in fact connected at the intersection of the cultural logic of racism, white supremacy, and the carceral/security state. The phrase 'Black Lives Matter' had circulated since the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager, by a man conducting a neighbourhood watch in Florida in 2012. Yet it is Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, that has become emblematic of the age.

In August of 2014, a white Ferguson police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager he suspected of stealing cigars. The shooting became a tipping point in an already tense relationship between people of colour in Ferguson and the police department, igniting a wave of protests in Ferguson and beyond. The protests had the effect of elevating the shooting to a national story. Journalists and pundits began searching for explanations for how this suburb of St. Louis, once a white-flight 'sundown town', came to be a majority African American city with a majority white police force, and tended to highlight the American trend toward 'white flight' from city centres, and later, ring suburbs (Vega and Eligon, 2014) as a function of preference and choice. Urban studies scholarship provides a different lens, however, that emphasises the role of the state and public policy in producing the received racial geographies of Ferguson (Rothstein, 2014).

The concept of the 'racial state' offers a compelling frame for capturing the complex ways in which political economy, governance and cultural politics come together to produce and reproduce powerful social formations expressed through institutions that comprise or are substantially shaped by the state (Derickson, 2014, forthcoming; Goldberg, 2002; Melamed, 2011, 2015. See also Massey and Denton, 1993; Melamed,

2006; Soss et al., 2011; Sugrue, 1996; Wilson, 2007). Work in this tradition focuses on the way that racialised difference is produced and reified through a range of processes mediated in part by state institutions with particular attention to epistemological blind spots afforded by white supremacy and positive feedbacks that perpetuate and intensify effects from overtly racist systems and fail to be remediated. Scholarship also focuses on the way racialised difference smoothes out contradictions in the liberal capitalist state (Derickson, 2014). In the US context, work in tradition has tended to focus on the Fordist-Keynesian period, which gave rise to the (white) American middle class through a particular blend of labour relations and government spending that also generated a massive and persistent racialised wealth gap (see, for example, Bakshi et al., 1995; Brahinsky, 2014; Gilmore, 2007; Goetz, 2013; Jackson, 1987; Omi and Winant, 1994).

The concept of the racial state provides a particularly useful frame through which to interpret the broader context of racist and racialised urban governance in Ferguson. Prompted in part by the protests surrounding Brown's murder, the US Department of Justice conducted investigations into the circumstances of Brown's death and the practices of the Ferguson Police Department more generally. In March 2015 the Justice Department released a report showing that city officials had directed the police department to raise revenues for the city budget through 'broken windows' policing tactics, or targeting small-scale offences with tickets and fines (US Department of Justice, 2015). The report showed that this approach to policing disproportionately targeted and impacted poor residents of colour in Ferguson.

While the events unfolding in Ferguson, Missouri USA in the late summer of 2014 might appear to be a uniquely American story about race and policing, what the

papers assembled here help us understand is that the processes that gave rise to the Age of Ferguson are hardly unique to the US context. Instead, these papers provide a first cut at thinking the Age of Ferguson relationally (Derickson, forthcoming; Jacobs, 2012), through urban governance, racialisation, 'territorial stigmatisation' (Garbin and Millington, 2012), policing and urban social movements. The papers in this special issue allow us to consider Ferguson in the context of state rescaling and globalisation to continue to flesh out the role that difference and its geographical expression play in smoothing out and justifying the neoliberalisation of urban governance (see Derickson, 2014), and to begin to develop 'countertopographies' (Katz, 2001) that link up the margins of the Global North and South.

The series of papers assembled here represent one cut at constructing the intellectual and analytical scaffolding for understanding the racialisation of space and the mechanisms that produce difference and marginalisation in cities. Taken together they cannot be understood as a comprehensive set of foundational literatures, but rather useful mobilisations of various elements of the canon of urban studies. In the following sections I put each paper included in the virtual special issue in conversation with the various processes that have produced and been amplified by the Age of Ferguson in order to consider how each contributes to an understanding of the contemporary geographies of the racial state and its urban and spatial expressions.

Racial segregation and urban governance

Squires and Kubrin's (2005) contribution to this journal is a good place to start. In their piece 'Privileged places: Race, uneven development, and the geography of opportunity in urban America', they mobilise the concept

of 'opportunity structure' to offer a thick description of the ways neighbourhoods and places influence life chances. Like other influential urbanists (Jackson, 1987; Sugrue, 1996), they emphasise the role of 'public policy decisions and practices of powerful institutional actors' (2005: 48) in producing the dominant social forces that link place, race and privilege: sprawl, concentrated poverty and segregation. Whereas some popular narratives of 'white flight' tend to emphasise individual choice and racist attitudes on the part of homeowners, contemporary urban scholars have offered a substantially different explanation for the received geographies of race and segregation by focusing on purportedly race neutral public policies as well as those that were meant to exclude on the basis of race (see, for example, Avila and Rose, 2009; Jackson, 1987; Sugrue, 1996).

Squires and Kubrin offer a detailed examination of the public policies that produced sprawl, concentrated poverty, and segregation, as well as the consequences of those policies for opportunity structure. For example, housing segregation results in Black homeowners receiving much lower rates of return on housing investments than white homeowners. They cite Raphael and Stoll (2002) to say 'As of 2000, no racial group was more physically isolated from jobs than Blacks, and those metropolitan areas with higher levels of Black-white housing segregation were those that exhibited higher levels of spatial mismatch between the residential location of Blacks and the location of jobs' (2002: 53). These patterns, they argue, 'are not just statistical or demographic curiosities. These spatial and racial inequalities are directly associated with access to virtually all products and services associated with the good life' (2002: 52).

Crucially, these dynamics shape and are shaped by policing practices, and are often productive of tense police-community relations. As cities and neighbourhoods become

segregated, they become marked as racialised in ways that influence how they are policed. 'This stems, in part', they write, 'from a recognition that color counts as a mark of suspicion used as a predicate for action – stopping, questioning patting down, arresting and so forth. Unwarranted stops, verbal and physical abuse, and racial bias toward residents of disadvantaged communities continue to strain minority residents' relations with the police' (Raphael and Stoll, 2002: 54).

While Squires and Kubrin set the stage broadly for understanding the racialisation of urban space, and consequences for quality of life and opportunity structure, Farrell's piece in this issue 'Bifurcation, fragmentation, or integration?: The racial and geographical structure of US Metropolitan segregation, 1990–2000' offers perspectives on how scholars research racial segregation. Residential segregation has important implications for socioeconomic mobility, not only with respect to homeownership and uneven practices associated with wealth accumulation, but also, as Squires and Kubrin point out, for educational outcomes, health disparities, and the 'spatial mismatch' (Kain, 2004) between the neighbourhoods where minorities are concentrated and job opportunities. Farrell proposes a way of measuring segregation that takes account of *racial and geographical structures* by considering intrametropolitan patterns, and by looking at multiple groups rather than simply Black/white segregation. This approach allows him to consider trends at a region level. 'Racial polarization between communities' he argues, 'might be more consequential than neighborhood segregation within communities to the extent that political jurisdiction – in the form of taxing authority, zoning and service provision – is organized along municipal boundaries' (Farrell, 2008: 470).

His multi-scalar analysis of 97 of the 100 largest cities in the US shows that

metropolitan areas are becoming less segregated overall, but still shows ample evidence of white/non-white segregation. He finds that inner core segregation is the most substantial, while in suburban communities segregation is decreasing owing to a rise in non-white residents. Whites in both major cities and suburbs, he finds, are 'less willing or less able to buffer themselves from minorities residing in neighborhoods within their community boundaries' (Farrell, 2008: 483). Yet this does not mean that community boundaries are less consequential. Instead, 'the increasing between-community bifurcation within the suburban ring effectively cancelled out the trend toward neighborhood integration within suburban communities' (2008: 482). This reorganisation suggests then that some communities that desired to do so were able to avoid integration while others either did not want to limit integration or could not prevent it.

While he finds that most metropolitan areas became less segregated overall during the 1990s, that trend 'obscures the shifting racial and geographical structure of metropolitan segregation' and he notes a trend to bifurcation occurring in the suburban ring, in which 'dissimilarities between suburban communities rather than neighborhoods are accounting for larger shares of metropolitan segregation' (Farrell, 2008: 489). 'To be sure,' he writes, 'neighborhoods have become more racially mixed over time and white residents have not been immune to this shift toward demographic integration. Yet the geographical decomposition clearly points to municipalities and their equivalents as the central organizing units in the new structure of metropolitan segregation' (2008: 489). His findings contribute further evidence that 'residential segregation is increasingly a function of formal political boundaries rather than neighborhood difference' (2008: 490).

Farrell's framing is helpful for understanding how Ferguson went from a white-flight suburb to 67% African American by 2010 (Rothstein, 2014) and the potential consequences of that demographic reorganisation in the larger context of austerity urbanism preceded by neoliberalisation. Farrell finds, for example, that some suburbs are becoming more integrated while others are managing to wall themselves off. Ferguson appears to have been at the epicentre of this divergence: a former white flight suburb that became rapidly integrated, yet remained segregated by neighbourhood. This suggests a reworking of the scalar dimensions of governance, in which racial difference becomes a crucial, though tacit, feature of spatial governing and policing strategies. If municipal boundaries are no longer impermeable for non-white residents, perhaps governing strategies are emerging or evolving in response to the reorganising suburb. The changing socioeconomic and racial geographies of metropolitan areas are crucial components of the economic, political and cultural context in which the Age of Ferguson. Yet as Gordon MacLeod's otherwise comprehensive analysis of urban politics included in this issue illustrates, there can be a gulf between analyses of changing racial geographies and analyses of urban politics.

MacLeod's piece in this issue 'Urban politics reconsidered: Growth machine to post-democratic city?' provides essential background reading on the changing nature of urban politics in relation to the emergence of neoliberal urbanism over the past four decades in European and American cities. In city centres, this new urban political economy is exemplified by 'deluxe landscapes coupled with spirited branding' to attract 'globally mobile investors alongside a creative class of professionals and revenue generating tourists' (MacLeod, 2011: 2630). The consensus of urban elites around this

approach to urban economic development and governance has been labelled 'New Urban Politics', in which the state takes on an entrepreneurial 'risk taking habitus more readily associated with the private sector' (2011: 2631). While new urban politics might seem irrelevant to a struggling suburb such as Ferguson, MacLeod drills down past the glossy veneer of entrepreneurial urbanism to identify the techniques through which these 'deluxe landscapes are achieved', some of which are suggestive of the dynamics in Ferguson. In particular, he flags the 'securitization and revanchist policing of downtowns' and the retreat to 'gated communities' of the suburbs. Read alongside Farrell's analysis showing that only *some* suburbs become de facto gated communities, as well as the changing dynamics of Ferguson, MacLeod's analysis helps us zoom out to the broader context of urban and regional governance.

Yet while theories of new urban politics attempt to make sense of the ways governments, publics and capital organise to facilitate accumulation, the ostensible but perhaps underacknowledged goal is also presumably to fund municipal budgets through tax collection. While the precise relationship between these governing strategies and tax revenue generation is an empirical question – urban development projects often include tax exemptions and entail city service retrenchment for at least some segments of the population – public buy-in for entrepreneurial urbanism is likely wrought through tacit expectations of a revitalised and serviced public realm.

Yet in Ferguson, this process appears to have mutated; instead of using surveillance and policing to make space for economic development as new urban politics would predict (and see Samara, 2010), the city of Ferguson seems to have been entirely reworking the process, raising revenue for redistribution directly from the poor. Thus, to understand municipal governance in

Ferguson and other cities where policing and budgeting are linked (see Jenkins, 2015; US Department of Justice, 2015), we might need to consider mutating circuits of municipal finance, policing and governance. More research is certainly needed on the relationship between private corporations, policing, and municipal budgeting, but much work has already been done to begin to sketch out a relationship between prisons, governance and economic development strategies (see, for example, Alexander, 2010; Bonds, 2013; Gilmore, 2007). At the municipal level journalistic reporting is beginning to develop the contours of private corporations facilitating funding for municipal budgets through various techniques at the nexus of policing, surveillance and administration (Jenkins, 2015). If events in Ferguson do signal a broader mutation of circuits of urban governance, it is nevertheless a variation on an old theme: managing urban populations to produce outcomes amenable to urban elites.

As is now well documented, the Fordist-Keynesian period both depended on and reinforced racialised difference and exclusion in ways that produced tremendous and persistent gaps in health, wealth and educational outcomes for people of colour in the USA (Bakshi et al., 1995). These social geographies and political economies created the conditions and possibilities for new urban politics, contributing to the need for cash-strapped cities to pursue entrepreneurial revenue generating strategies as their tax-bases fled to the suburbs. The Great Recession and the housing bubble that preceded it can arguably be understood as a reorganisation of those social geographies and political economies. Studies show that non-white households suffered substantially more pronounced setbacks in terms of household wealth during the housing market crash and subsequent recession (Burd-Sharps and Rasch, 2015). While subprime financial instruments expanded the pool of people

who could qualify for mortgages, it is also well-documented that people of colour who might have otherwise qualified for traditional mortgages with better terms were pushed into subprime mortgages; the US Department of Housing and Urban Development found in 2000 that borrowers in upper income Black neighbourhoods were twice as likely as homeowners in low-income white neighbourhoods to refinance with a subprime loan (Burd-Sharps and Rasch, 2015). As a consequence, by 2010, Blacks were 47% more likely to be facing foreclosure than whites (Rugh and Massey, 2010). This had far-reaching implications for the expansion of the wealth gap in the USA, and suggests avenues for extending an analysis of the racial state to the present. Moreover, institutions continue to play a central role in reinforcing the racial wealth gap. In 2014 the National Fair Housing Alliance found that bank-owned properties in minority neighbourhoods were twice as likely to be unmaintained by the bank, affecting quality of life in those neighbourhoods and depressing property values (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2014).

Thus, racialisation and racial difference are crucial axes of the creation and reworking of the social geographies and political economies in which new urban politics unfold. And yet these dynamics are often underexplored in neo-marxist urban political economy, and are notably absent from MacLeod's analysis. In addition to the through lines that can be drawn from Fordist economic development, neoliberal urbanism, the Great Recession and the present with respect to the political economy of the racial state, there is an underexplored synergy between the 'post-political' orientation to urban governance and the rise of what Mary Thomas (2011) has called 'banal multiculturalism' (see also Derickson, 2014). Whereas post-political governance can be understood as an attempt to govern in ways

that ‘neutralise dissent’ (MacLeod, 2011: 2650), banal multiculturalism attempts to neutralise and dehistoricise systemic racism. While work on racial capitalism (Melamed, 2011, 2015) has provided helpful foundations explored by some in relation to urban political economy and race (Brahinsky, 2014; Rankin and McLean, 2015; Wilson, 2000, 2007), more work is needed to assess the effects of the Great Recession and its associated state processes, particularly with respect to the reorganisation of policing and municipal revenue generation that has come to light after the killing of Michael Brown.

Power and the techniques of spatial domination in the USA and beyond

There is some work that provides guideposts for how analyses of neoliberal urbanism can be attentive to racialisation (see Soss et al., 2011). Gotham (2014) traces the way a particular programme in the wake of Hurricane Katrina articulated with the forms of rescaling now familiar in the context of neoliberal urban governance to reproduce racialised space, through the downscaling of responsibility for post-disaster redevelopment and ‘outscaling’ of programme management to private contractors, with the effect of reinforcing and reproducing longstanding racial segregation in the city. In this issue, Rhodes (2010) also attends to the empirical case of Hurricane Katrina to investigate the way that racialised space is produced in relation to neoliberal governing strategies, with particular attention to the ‘visibility’ of poor African Americans in urban spaces. Like Gotham, Rhodes draws attention to the role of outsourced firms in the rebuilding process.

In the case of New Orleans after Katrina, Rhodes finds a dismantling of services characteristic of neoliberal urban governance in the name of urban redevelopment, made

feasible through the exclusion of the racialised poor in the ‘imaginary’ of what a rebuilt New Orleans could be (see also Derickson, 2014). Taken together, Gotham and Rhodes illustrate the way purportedly race-neutral policies, practices and scalar processes of governance in the region – both before and after Hurricane Katrina – had the effect of intensifying, reifying and reproducing racial segregation, isolation and dispossession. Crucially, these analyses depend on both the intellectual resources of cultural geography as well as urban political economy. In this line of analysis, race cannot be reduced to a ‘merely cultural’ effect (Butler, 1997) of political economic processes, but rather race, space and political economy are in a mutually reinforcing relationship to produce the urban landscape and associated social structures and relations.

In her paper included in this virtual special issue, Chatterjee (2011) identifies the way that the deeply symbolic and discursive production of difference, othering and belonging – what she calls ‘governance as performed’ – works in tandem with the banal and administrative language of planning documents, or ‘governance as inscribed’ in her terminology. These two processes are ‘dialectically connected in the production of exclusion’ (2011: 2578). Using the case of Ahmedabad, India, she contrasts the evocative and colourful displays of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party that includes a ‘cultural nationalism plank, where India is envisioned as a land for Hindus and all other religious minorities are considered foreigners’ with the context of Ahmedabad, where Muslims account for over 10% of the population and tend to be concentrated in poor neighbourhoods in the city.

In the late 1990s, she writes, India moved away from the view of cities as serving the countryside to begin to follow the script of neoliberal urbanism in which cities became seen as ‘institutions of self-governance’

(Chatterjee, 2011: 2578) that would pursue public–private partnerships and land marketisation strategies. This governing strategy tends to depend upon the sanitisation of public space and the implementation of a bourgeois vision for the city. Chatterjee's framework calls particular attention to the way in which such a vision – for a 'vibrant, productive, harmonious, sustainable, environmentally friendly, clean and livable city' can hardly be understood as a universal vision, or one that seeks to accommodate the existing population of the city. Instead, such a vision functions as an aspirational accommodation of the needs of capital. In the process of 'inscribing' neoliberal governance, Chatterjee argues, the neoliberal planner is unhampered by the difficulties of balancing the needs of labour and capital. Thus the planning process becomes neatly divorced from the lived experience of the city. 'This is,' she writes 'an autistic science where technocracy is used by governance as a means and an end: here humans use modern technology to mystify the ethnophobia, casteism, grit, grime, tears and blood of the lived city' (2011: 2580).

By contrast, the performance of the city is intimately bound up in the production of difference and marginalisation in Ahmedabad, through the expression of ethno-religious dominance in the everyday and official spaces of the city, the exclusion of low-caste and Muslim applicants from housing lotteries, and their displacement as a consequence of urban redevelopment. Yet in the process of 'inscribing the city' these experiences do not register in the glossy planning documents. The case illustrates the conceptual mechanisms by which neoliberal entrepreneurial urbanism unfold, 'indicating how entrepreneurial neoliberalism is embedded in accordance with pre-existing ethno-cultural particularities of places' (Chatterjee, 2011: 2586). Chatterjee's case study is particularly useful for appreciating the schizophrenic

experience of banal multiculturalism (Thomas, 2011) and its careful entwinement with neoliberal revanchist urbanism that exploits and arguably depends on the 'performance' of difference.

In Ferguson, Missouri, for example, a purportedly race-neutral mandate came down from city hall, exhorting police to raise city revenues through the enforcement of 'nuisance laws' and minor driving infractions. Yet in practice, the Justice Department found that the enforcement of these laws and the consequences for quality of life in Ferguson was deeply racialised. Blacks were far more likely to be targeted for these infractions and their enforcement had spiralling effects on the livelihoods of Black residents of the region. Moreover, after the city became associated with ground zero of racialised policing, 'I love Ferguson' signs began springing up throughout the city (Williams, 2014). Chatterjee's analysis helps us appreciate the way this performance of urban citizenship and governance as purportedly generic can be understood as a deeply symbolic celebration of the racial/ethnic status quo.

Rhodes likewise attempts to think through the lived experience of difference in the neoliberal city in New Orleans. He contrasts the 'invisibility' of people of colour as they are pushed out of the gentrifying and tourist-oriented spaces of the city with their 'hypervisibility' as bodies out of place in these tourist spaces – 'a criminal interloper to be contained or expelled' (Rhodes, 2010: 2056). The case of New Orleans further mirrors that of Ahmedabad in the way that storm survivors were labelled 'refugees' conferring a degree of foreignness upon them in their own city. This 'othering', Rhodes argues, substantively informed and enabled the spatial response to the storm. Rhodes's piece also points out the way intensive policing and surveillance after the storm and narratives of 'law and order' failures

highlight and reinforce the criminalisation of African Americans. The overwhelming emphasis on limiting 'looting' and the authorisation of 'shoot to kill' responses in the wake of the storm should be understood as rooted, Rhodes argues, in the broader racialised carceral state.

Garbin and Millington (2012) delve further into the imposition and reproduction of territorial stigmatisation in the French *banlieues* in their paper 'Territorial stigma and the politics of resistance in a Parisian *Banlieue*: La Courneuve and beyond' included in this virtual special issue (see also Shon, 2010). Whereas Hurricane Katrina 'revealed the materiality of racial exclusion and the extent of the intimate link between socioeconomic marginalization and the deep-rooted racialized uneven geography of the US', they write, the 2005 uprisings in the French *banlieues* were 'symptomatic of an acute societal crisis characterized by the exclusion of a large section of its multiethnic population from the "Republican project"' (2012: 2068). Garbin and Millington attribute this crisis to the prioritisation of 'law and order' over and above urban regeneration with a profound effect on the lived experience of marginalisation in these spaces labelled 'no go zones'. Like Chatterjee, they use Lefebvre's familiar triad of lived, perceived and conceived space to think through how groups exert power over 'the production of cityspace' (Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2071). Their analysis finds strong resonances with Chatterjee's use of the concept 'governance as inscribed' to the degree that residents of the *banlieues* also have limited capacity to shape the administration of the city. More generally, however, what this article helps us understand is the spatial expression of the racial state in more than structural terms. Places become marked culturally, with consequences that are both material and social. Moreover, Garbin and Millington argue, the police are essential to

the reproduction of this spatiality, to the degree that they 'create a routinized climate of tension through daily harassment' (2012: 2074).

Samara (2010), included in this issue, extends the effect that policing has on habitus by tracing the role of security in urban renewal practices in post-apartheid Cape Town, South Africa. While Samara's example comes from what may be the most 'spatially segregated and unequal city in the world' (Samara, 2010: 198; McDonald, 2007), his analysis provides useful fodder for thinking about how security and policing are bound up in urban ambitions in the context of neoliberal globalisation. In Cape Town and beyond, policing is at the heart of the intersection between 'crime, security and development in the city'. In the context of neoliberal globalisation, policing becomes about containing and controlling in the face of stark inequalities, rather than facilitating development. Samara cites the 'global ubiquity' of police playing a crucial role in claiming space in cities and enforcing social control in ways that result in violent and hostile relationships between poor communities and the police, making 'the study of policing in the city and its relationship to development ... at once a new chapter in the story of the geopolitics of the world system and of governance at the scale of the everyday and the local' (2010: 199).

Samara traces the continuum of policing tactics and strategies from apartheid to post-apartheid Cape Town. The approaches not only sent the message that the state could manage the city centre as a space for development, but also 'provided a means through which older conceptions of security from the *apartheid* era, premised on the idea that the townships were areas to be controlled, could insinuate themselves into contemporary urban renewal discourse and practice which borrowed liberally from accepted international approaches' (Samara, 2010: 204).

While the context of Ferguson, MO is profoundly different from Cape Town in important ways, like Cape Town it is also a story of urban austerity in the context of neoliberal globalisation with policing strategies and tactics playing a central role. Yet there are ways in which Cape Town's story is more recognisable to the degree that poor people of colour and other marginalised groups were being removed from space to make it available for development (see also Belina and Helms, 2003; Pruijt, 2013) – a now well-documented technique in the neoliberal urbanism toolkit – whereas developments in Ferguson appear to be about generating revenue from poor communities themselves. Nevertheless, Samara's paper highlights the way territorial stigmas persevere, the way security becomes a crucial trope in neoliberal urbanism, and how increased contact with police creates feelings of vulnerability for some, even when the purported purpose is security.

Resistance

It would be a mistake, and an act of epistemological violence (McKittrick, 2014), to interpret Ferguson as a problem-event (Arondekar, 2009; Berlant, 2007) that invites reflection solely on the ways that institutions, urbanisation and political economic processes act upon people of colour and produce racial geographies. What is arguably notable about Ferguson, and what defines the 'Age of Ferguson' is tragically *not* the death of unarmed people of colour at the hands of police officers, but rather the momentum of the mass mobilisations to protest the social relations that render these killings normal. These protests have taken the form of sit-ins to shut down highways, encampments outside of police departments, 'die-ins', and traditional demonstrations on sidewalks and in shopping malls.

As Marom's (2013) paper 'Activising space in Israel', included in this virtual special issue, reminds us, the Black Lives Matter protests sparked in the wake of the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown did not occur in a vacuum, but rather in the midst of a wave of urban protest, from the Occupy movement, to the Arab Spring. Cities have been 'both a tactical terrain and a strategic objective, a counter-force and alternative to the neo-liberal agenda' (2013: 2827). Marom's paper focuses on protests in Israel in the summer of 2011 that 'activated urban public space' to communicate messages about social justice. He examines the 'spaces of politics' in the double sense, both in terms of the spaces occupied during protest and the way space came to be understood and reconceptualised politically through protest (2013: 2827).

Marom conceptualises the role of the city as a site of protest, and the role of the urban as a location of the lived experience of marginalisation. He cites Sassen's (2011) work to draw a conceptual distinction between the 'the global street', as a site of action and the public square as a site of ritual. The street, he argues, is a 'raw space'. His analysis is useful for considering the protest strategies central to the Black Lives Matter movement which has largely avoided the 'squares' and focused on the raw spaces of highways and streets. One exception is the regular protests at shopping malls, including the iconic Mall of America in Minnesota (Walsh, 2015). Marom's notion of a 'politics of space' is applicable here – the shopping mall protests can be read as a 'politics of space' aimed at drawing attention to the privatisation of public space. In the case of the Mall of America, the arrest of protestors ignited conversations about the massive amounts of public spending that had been channelled to the Mall for infrastructure improvements and tax breaks. The decision by the city's attorney to prosecute the protestors on

behalf of the Mall for lost revenues during the protest also emphasises the intimate relationship between the privately owned mall and the city government (Reinan, 2015).

Also in this issue, Allegra et al. point out that 'throughout history, cities have been the theatre of social and spatial struggles' and that these have long been of interest to urban scholars (see also Routledge, 2010). Yet they argue that rethinking urban protest has not happened alongside the growing interest in rethinking the 'theoretical and epistemological assumptions' of urban studies. Indeed, they argue, what cities and urban protest *are* is being reworked at the moment in ways that should caution us against using stale or rigid definitions or theoretical models. Instead, urban protest provides a 'key point of access to apprehend the urban dimension of politics' (Allegra et al., 2013: 1677).

Highlighting some central and emergent tensions in the discipline at the moment regarding what cities are and the way Eurocentrism continues to inform and shape disciplinary models and frameworks, Allegra et al., (2013) use the events of the Arab Spring to illustrate the insufficiency of Western/Anglophone urban scholarship in relation to the MENA region (see also Derickson, 2015; Lawhon et al., 2014). They advocate for urban ethnographies and thick case studies as a way to resist assumptions about the way globalisation, religion and politics act *upon* cities in the MENA region. Instead, they argue for an understanding of MENA cities as crucial and agential sites of the rescaling and reworking of urban political economy and urban politics.

Like Marom, they want to resist understanding the city as merely a venue for expressing dissent, and instead insist on the urban as space central to the realisation of claims, or as Marom put it, 'rights through the city'. Likewise, they call for a focus on dissent, rather than protest as such, in order

to bring in to relief the myriad forms and uneven timelines of resistance, or as Asef Bayat (1997: 2009) puts it, 'the collective actions of non-collective actors' (Bayat, 2009: 40). They advocate for 'understanding and interpretation rather than explanation of social reality in terms of theories and models' as a 'bottom up process'. For them, the Arab Spring is an incitement to revisit and rework urban scholarship in the MENA region and beyond, to conceive of and implement approaches that are responsive to the moment at hand.

Ferguson arguably offers a similar opening for reconsidering the state of urban studies. As Allegra et al. (2013) highlight, scholars influenced by postcolonial studies have been questioning the adequacy of frameworks for understanding the city and urbanisation from the Global North. Yet while this work is critical of the geography of urban theory and its application – i.e. from the Global North to the Global South, the critique is not simply about geography as such, but rather amounts to shorthand that conflates geography and lived experience. The reason why we want knowledge *from* these places is because we expect a different set of lived experiences to produce competing modalities of interpretation that are attentive to different details that will enable different kinds of analysis to emerge. Yet if this is what we are after, it cannot be reasonably assumed that urban scholarship originating within the geographical extent of the USA is meaningfully *of* or *accountable to* the neighbourhoods and publics that have been the sites of officer involved shootings and protests.

Engaged scholarship is one way to generate urban knowledge in ways that are accountable to the communities and neighbourhoods that the knowledge is about. In this issue, Oldfield (2014) considers the way that 'travel' between the academy and activism shapes how we understand urban

politics. As I have argued elsewhere (Derickson, forthcoming), urban scholars should be troubled by the fact that it appears few scholars understood the degree to which cities were using police forces to raise revenues. Residents of Ferguson, however, did have a clear and collective understanding that policing strategies had intensified and targeted them (local knowledge that was ultimately confirmed by the Department of Justice report) and this awareness fuelled the anger and frustration that led to and informed protests. This suggests a rationale for engaged scholarship that is accountable to and in conversation with various urban populations not only for political reasons that have been argued at length elsewhere (see Derickson, 2015, for an overview) but also for empirical reasons. That is, we can learn more and learn better by being engaged with and accountable to the communities that we study. As Oldfield argues, by working closely and thoughtfully with community-based organisations and activist groups and becoming intimately familiar with their political practice and struggle, we can better understand precisely how it is that we come to ‘know and understand the urban as political terrain’ (Oldfield, 2014: 2).

Oldfield’s piece draws on her engagement with ‘Civic’, an organisation in Cape Town, South Africa to argue for social movement scholarship that is more attuned to the various scales at which the urban terrain is struggled over and made. Through that work, she suggests that urban and social movement scholarship that is produced entirely in the domain of the academy is inattentive to empirical and conceptual complexity. ‘In opening up theorizations of activism and revolution to the knowledge practices of movements, we may more cogently take account of the strategic and intimate politics that characterize contemporary activism, and reshape notions of “revolution”, urban politics and research

practice in contemporary cities’ (Oldfield, 2014: 12).

The aim of this virtual special issue is to curate papers from the back catalogue of *Urban Studies* – some very recent and others less so – that can inform and advance our understanding of the social, political and economic processes that have influenced and shaped the context in which the events in Ferguson and beyond have unfolded. Taken together, these papers suggest the need to further integrate analyses of urban politics with analyses of racialisation and territorial stigmatisation. As Allegra et al. (2013) and Oldfield (2014) argue, and the case of Ferguson illustrates, such analyses are best done through sustained engagement with places and publics. While some worry that such close attention to the particular will undermine analyses of broader urban trends (Peck, 2015), the case of Ferguson and subsequent findings suggest there is much unfolding under our noses in banal urban and suburban spaces that is missed by focusing on the general laws of urbanisation. Yet this set of papers also illustrates that Ferguson and the American context are far from exceptional; instead they are expressions or sites of broader trends in urbanisation playing out relationally in the Global North and South. Thus the case of Ferguson illustrates the need for a renewed commitment to listening in order to enrich our understanding of urbanisation as Allegra et al. (2013) and Oldfield (2014) argue (this virtual special issue and see Derickson, 2015, forthcoming), but crucially, this listening must be infused with an ethos of thinking cities ‘relationally’ (Jacobs, 2012) to tease out emerging trends and topographies linking apparently disparate urban spaces (Katz, 2001).

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